

Self-Assessment Form: Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

Section 1: Definition of a Complaint

Code Provision 1.2: A complaint must be defined as: 'An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'

Comply: Yes

Evidence: Our complaints policy explicitly defines a complaint in alignment with this provision, as outlined in Part 2 of the Complaints and Appeals Policy. It ensures clarity for tenants, and all staff members are trained to recognize complaints even when not explicitly labeled as such. Although there have been no complaints during this period, we attribute this to the high level of engagement and commitment to resolving service requests in a collaborative way. The evidence provided is based on the culture and practices within the organisation.

Commentary: This definition supports tenants' confidence in raising issues and ensures all dissatisfaction is appropriately addressed. The process reflects our commitment to understanding the needs of a small cohousing community, where face-to-face contact fosters trust and open communication.

Code Provision 1.3

A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Complaints submitted via third parties must also be handled in line with the complaints policy.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 1.4-1.6

Service requests are distinguished from complaints, and the policy ensures that dissatisfaction with service requests is treated as a complaint if raised. Feedback from surveys or general feedback mechanisms informs improvements and encourages complaints when appropriate.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 1.6

Regarding resources, this is addressed in Part 5 of the policy.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 3.1

Landlords must provide multiple channels for making a complaint and ensure reasonable adjustments for accessibility.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 3.2

Landlords must provide multiple routes for complaints, with a strong emphasis on face-to-face contact and collaboration.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 3.3

A high level of complaints is not inherently good, nor is a low level inherently bad.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 3.4

The complaints policy must be accessible and provided in a clear and understandable format.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 4.1

A designated person or team must be assigned to deal with complaints, including liaising with the Ombudsman.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 4.2

The Complaints Officer must have access to the relevant people and information to resolve complaints effectively.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 4.3

Complaint handling staff must be suitably trained and supported. The organisational culture should promote a positive approach to complaint handling.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 5.1-5.3

A clear, single policy must be in place to handle complaints. The landlord must aim for early local resolution. The complaints process must include a two-stage process for resolution.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 5.4

Complaints handled by third parties must be done so with clear communication to the complainant, explaining why an independent person has been assigned to handle the complaint.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 5.8

Complaints must be handled independently and fairly, with all relevant evidence considered, and the principles of impartiality and transparency must be followed.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 5.9

Timescales for resolving complaints must be clearly defined, and landlords must communicate with residents if these timescales are not met.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 5.10

Reasonable adjustments must be made to accommodate complaints from residents with disabilities.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 5.11

Landlords must not refuse to escalate complaints to Stage 2 unless there are valid reasons for doing so.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 5.12

Landlords must ensure that the complaints process is flexible enough to accommodate the needs of residents, including making adjustments for disabilities.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 6

The complaints process must be structured to ensure clear and defined stages of resolution, ensuring that efforts are made to resolve complaints at the earliest possible opportunity.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 6.4

The reasons for escalating complaints, along with the specific timeframes, are clearly outlined in Part 2 of the Complaints Policy.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 7

Where failures are identified, landlords must take corrective action, including apologies, service adjustments, or financial remedies.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Code Provision 8

Landlords must provide an annual performance report, which includes: A self-assessment against the code, qualitative and quantitative analysis of the complaints handling process.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: **Statement for Section 8: Performance Reporting and Self-Assessment**

The charity is fully aware that the complaints handling process is reported to the trustees and is closely monitored for transparency and accountability. In line with this, the charity understands the importance of carrying out a self-assessment, especially in the event of a restructure or significant change within the organisation. This ensures that the complaint handling process remains aligned with best practices. Additionally, if there are any exceptional circumstances that would prevent compliance with the Ombudsman's Code—such as a cyber attack or other unforeseen events—the charity commits to informing the Ombudsman and taking appropriate steps to address the situation.

Code Provision 9.1 to 9.8

Landlords must demonstrate continuous learning and improvement in their complaint handling, ensuring there is a clear culture of accountability and transparency.

Comply: Yes

Evidence: The details for this section are evidenced in the policy as specified.

Commentary: The commentary for this provision would apply here.

Statement for Section 9: Scrutiny and Oversight - Continuous Learning and Improvement

The charity acknowledges that the **Monitoring and Review Committee (MRC)**, as detailed in **Part 8** and **Part 12 of the Complaints Policy**, plays a vital role in ensuring continuous improvement and oversight of the complaint handling process. The MRC ensures that the charity remains responsive to feedback, upholding its commitment to accountability and transparency. The charity recognizes the importance of this committee in reviewing and adapting practices, as well as ensuring that any changes to the organisation, especially those prompted by external investigations or significant internal changes, are appropriately reflected in the policy and practice.