Appendix B – Self-Assessment Form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and discussed at the landlord’s governing body annually. Evidence should be included to support all statements with additional commentary as necessary.

Explanations must also be provided where a mandatory ‘must’ requirement is not met to set out the rationale for the alternative approach adopted and why this delivers a better outcome.

Section 1 - Definition of a complaint Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **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 organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf,*  *affecting an individual resident or group of residents*. | See the source image | A stand-alone Housing Complaints Policy  has been produced which incorporates this  definition |
| **1.3** | The resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **1.6** | … if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy |
| **1.7** | A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |

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| **1.8** | A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered, and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents. | See the source image | The Complaints Policy clearly sets out the  circumstances when a matter will not be  considered as a complaint. |
| **1.9** | If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that  decision to the Ombudsman. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |

Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **1.4** | Landlords should recognise the difference between a | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **service request**, where a resident may be unhappy |
| with a **situation** that they wish to have rectified, and a |
| **complaint** about the **service** they have/have not |
| received. |
| **1.5** | Survey feedback may not necessarily need to be | See the source image | Transactional survey responses are  analysed and the response to any  dissatisfaction expressed will advise of the  complaints route. |
| treated as a complaint, though, where possible, the |
| person completing the survey should be made aware of |
| how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint |
| if they wish to. |

Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **2.1** | Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which residents can make a complaint such as in person, over the telephone, in writing, by email and digitally. While the Ombudsman recognises that it may not be feasible for a landlord to use all of the potential channels, there must be more than one route of access into the complaints  system. | See the source image | A range of ways are available and these will  be publicised. These include by telephone,  writing, face to face and via a dedicated  housing complaints email address. |
| **2.3** | Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the number of stages involved, what will happen at each stage and the timeframes for responding. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **2.4** | Landlord websites, if they exist, must include information on how to raise a complaint. The complaints policy and process must be easy to find on the website. | See the source image | Once the standalone policy has been  approved, all relevant information will be  included on the Council’s website. |
| **2.5** | Landlords must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual’s needs.  Landlords must satisfy themselves that their policy sets out how they will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act and that complaints handlers have had appropriate training to  deal with such requests. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **2.6** | Landlords must publicise the complaints policy and process, the Complaint Handling Code and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme in leaflets, posters, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with  residents. | See the source image | Once the standalone policy has been  approved, all relevant information will be  widely publicised with tenants using a  variety of methods. |

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| **2.7** | Landlords must provide residents with contact  information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents. | See the source image | Template letters produced by the Housing  Ombudsman will be used for all future  complaint responses and relevant  information to be included in other relevant  template and non-standard letters. |
| **2.8** | Landlords must provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint, not only when the landlord’s complaints process is exhausted. | See the source image | Residents will be advised of their right to  access the Housing Ombudsman service at  each stage of the process and via other  relevant correspondence. |

Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:**  **Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **2.2** | Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate | See the source image | The Council does not have a dedicated  social media channel for its tenants.  Handling of any complaints received via this  channel to be reviewed. At the current time,  the details of any complaints received would  be forwarded to the relevant team for  registering and responding to in accordance  with the policy. |
| with its residents via social media, then it should expect |
| to receive complaints via those channels. Policies |
| should contain details of the steps that will be taken |
| when a complaint is received via social media and how |
| confidentiality and privacy will be maintained. |

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **3.1** | Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure complaints receive the necessary attention, and that these are reported to the governing body. This Code will refer to that person or team as the “complaints  officer”. | See the source image | Responsibility for registering and initial  response will sit with the Tenant Relations  Team. Individual service managers will be  responsible for investigating the complaint  in accordance with the policy. |
| **3.2** | …the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of  interest. | See the source image | Any conflicts of interest will be declared and  an alternative approach to handling the  complaint agreed. |

Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **3.3** | Complaint handlers should: | See the source image | Any additional training identified as being  required will be sourced and delivered for  relevant staff. |
| * be able to act sensitively and fairly |
| * be trained to handle complaints and deal with |
| distressed and upset residents |
| * have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick |
| resolution of complaints |
| * have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve |
| disputes quickly and fairly. |

Section 4 - Complaint handling principles Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **4.1** | Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord’s audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident’s concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as ‘stage 0’ or ‘pre-complaint stage’) as this causes unnecessary confusion for residents. When a complaint is made, it must be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure **within**  **five days of receipt**. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |

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| **4.2** | Within the complaint acknowledgement, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both  parties. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy and  recommended template letters will be used. |
| **4.6** | A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **4.7** | The complaint handler must:   * deal with complaints on their merits * act independently and have an open mind * take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest * consider all information and evidence carefully * keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter. | See the source image | Complaint handling principles are  incorporated into the policy. |
| **4.11** | Landlords must adhere to any reasonable  arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **4.12** | The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:   * set out their position * comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **4.13** | A landlord must include in its complaints policy its  timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **4.14** | A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |

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|  | procedure and must have clear and valid reasons for taking that course of action. Reasons for declining to escalate a complaint must be clearly set out in a landlord’s complaints policy and must be the same as  the reasons for not accepting a complaint. |  |  |
| **4.15** | A full record must be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with  other parties and any reports or surveys prepared. | See the source image | All records will be held in line with the  Council’s Retention Policy. |
| **4.18** | Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents  and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. Corporate  policy on Managing Unacceptable  Behaviour is being developed. |

Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **4.3** | Landlords should manage residents’ expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic | See the source image | Full explanation will be provided as part of  the complaint response. |
| **4.4** | A complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible | See the source image | Response times and principles  incorporated into the policy. |
| opportunity, having assessed what evidence is needed |
| to fully consider the issues, what outcome would |
| resolve the matter for the resident and whether there |
| are any urgent actions required. |
| **4.5** | Landlords should give residents the opportunity to have | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| a representative deal with their complaint on their |
| behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any |
| meeting with the landlord where this is reasonable. |
| **4.8** | Where a key issue of a complaint relates to the parties’ | See the source image | Full explanation will be provided as part of  the complaint response. |
| legal obligations landlords should clearly set out their |
| understanding of the obligations of both parties. |

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| **4.9** | Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors. | See the source image | Stated within the policy. |
| **4.10** | Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation. | See the source image | Response times, exceptions and  complaint handling principles are  incorporated into the policy. |
| **4.16** | Landlords should seek feedback from residents in | See the source image | Satisfaction survey seeking feedback on  complaints process has been developed  and, once approved by tenant  representatives, will be part of the  complaints handling process. |
| relation to the landlord’s complaint handling as part of |
| the drive to encourage a positive complaint and |
| learning culture. |
| **4.17** | Landlords should recognise the impact that being | See the source image | Individual managers have responsibility for  supporting staff and any learning points  will be reviewed as part of the  performance review process. |
| complained about can have on future service delivery. |
| Landlords should ensure that staff are supported and |
| engaged in the complaints process, including the |
| learning that can be gained |
| **4.19** | Any restrictions placed on a resident’s contact due to | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their |
| needs and should demonstrate regard for the |
| provisions of the Equality Act 2010. |

Section 5 - Complaint stages Mandatory ‘must’ requirements Stage 1

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:**  **Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.1** | Landlords must respond to the complaint **within 10 working days** of the complaint being logged. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should  not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy |
| **5.5** | A complaint response must be sent to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue, are completed.  Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned expeditiously with regular updates provided to the resident. | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |

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| **5.6** | Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. | See the source image | Recommended template letters will be  used. All complaint responses sent will be  subject to internal review to ensure that  they adequately address the complaint. |
| **5.8** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language:   * the complaint stage * the decision on the complaint * the reasons for any decisions made * the details of any remedy offered to put things right * details of any outstanding actions * details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |

Stage 2

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:**  **Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.9** | If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident’s | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy |
| satisfaction at stage one it must be progressed to stage two of |
| the landlord’s procedure, unless an exclusion ground now |
| applies. In instances where a landlord declines to escalate a |
| complaint it must clearly communicate in writing its reasons for |
| not escalating as well as the resident’s right to approach the |
| Ombudsman about its decision. |
| **5.10** | On receipt of the escalation request, landlords must set out their | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| understanding of issues outstanding and the outcomes the |
| resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the |
| resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition |
| agreed between both parties. |
| **5.11** | Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy |
| has completed stage one and at the request of the resident. |

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| **5.12** | The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| the same person that considered the complaint at stage one. |
| **5.13** | Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint **within 20** | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| **working days** of the complaint being escalated. Exceptionally, |
| landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing |
| a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This |
| should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. |
| **5.16** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy and  recommended template letters will be  used. All complaint responses sent will be  subject to internal review to ensure that  they adequately address the complaint. |
| the completion of stage two in clear, plain language: |
| * the complaint stage |
| * the complaint definition |
| * the decision on the complaint |
| * the reasons for any decisions made |
| * the details of any remedy offered to put things right |
| * details of any outstanding actions |
| **and** |
| * if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate |
| the matter to stage three |
| * if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the |
| matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident |
| remains dissatisfied. |

Stage 3

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.17** | Two stage landlord complaint procedures are ideal. This ensures that the complaint process is not unduly long. If landlords strongly believe a third stage is necessary, they must set out their reasons for this as part of their self-assessment. A  process with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances. | See the source image | Policy sets out a two stage complaints  process. |

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| **5.20** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:   * the complaint stage * the complaint definition * the decision on the complaint * the reasons for any decisions made * the details of any remedy offered to put things right * details of any outstanding actions * details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied | N/A | See above comment. |

Best practice ‘should’ requirements Stage 1

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.2** | If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable the | See the source image | Incorporated within the policy |
| landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed |
| by both parties. |
| **5.3** | Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, | See the source image | Incorporated within the policy. |
| landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman’s contact |
| details so the resident can challenge the landlord’s plan for |
| responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord’s |
| response. |
| **5.4** | Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should | See the source image | Will be included in the investigation of the  Complaint. |
| consider any older reports as part of the background to the |
| complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident. |
| **5.7** | Where residents raise additional complaints during the | See the source image | All cases will be reviewed on individual  circumstances and merits. |
| investigation, these should be incorporated into the stage one |
| response if they are relevant and the stage one response has |
| not been issued. Where the stage one response has been |
| issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the |
| complaint should be logged as a new complaint. |

Stage 2

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.14** | If an extension beyond 10 working days is required to enable the | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed |
| by both parties. |
| **5.15** | Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, | See the source image | Incorporated into the policy. |
| landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman’s contact |
| details so the resident can challenge the landlord’s plan for |
| responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord’s |
| response |

Stage 3

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.18** | Complaints should only go to a third stage if the resident has | N/A |  |
| actively requested a third stage review of their complaint. Where |
| a third stage is in place and has been requested, landlords must |
| respond to the stage three complaint **within 20 working days** of |
| the complaint being escalated. Additional time will only be |
| justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a |
| date for when the stage three response will be received should |
| be provided to the resident. |
| **5.19** | Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, | N/A |  |
| landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman’s contact |
| details so the resident can challenge the landlord’s plan for |
| responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord’s |
| response. |

Section 6 - Putting things right Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:**  **Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **6.1** | Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has  already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. | See the source image | Remedial actions will be clearly set out in  complaint responses. All complaint  responses will be subject to internal review  to make sure they adequately address the  complaint. |
| **6.2** | Any remedy offered must reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. A landlord must carefully manage the expectations of residents and not promise anything that cannot be delivered or  would cause unfairness to other residents. | See the source image | Principle incorporated into the policy. |
| **6.5** | The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion. | See the source image | Responsibility will rest with service  manager responding to the complaint. |
| **6.6** | In awarding compensation, a landlord must consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, the time and trouble a resident has been put to  as well as any distress and inconvenience caused. | See the source image | This information is required as part of  internal compensation request. |

Best practice ‘should’ requirements

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:**  **Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **6.3** | Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the | See the source image | Quarterly review of complaints will take  place, enabling any improvement items to  be identified and actioned. |
| individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be |
| ‘put right’ in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all |
| residents. |
| **6.7** | In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to | See the source image | Suitable advice will be obtained from the  Council’s Legal team where applicable. |
| redress. The landlord should still offer a resolution where |
| possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolution |
| should be worded. |

Section 7 - Continuous learning and improvement

**Mandatory ‘must’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:**  **Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **7.2** | Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints in their annual report and more frequently to their residents, staff and scrutiny  panels. | See the source image | Following implementation of stand alone  policy, information will be included in  annual reports, reports to Tenants Panel  Scrutiny Panel and reported to the internal  Landlord Services Group. |

**Best practice ‘should’ requirements**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:**  **Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **7.3** | A member of the governing body should be appointed to have | See the source image | Corporate Director (Operations and  Delivery) has lead responsibility for  housing complaints. Quarterly reports will  be presented to the Council’s  Management Team. |
| lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint |
| handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the |
| governing body receives regular information on complaints that |
| provides insight to the governing body on the landlord’s |
| complaint handling performance. |
| **7.4** | As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: | See the source image | Quarterly reports will be presented to the  Council’s Management Team covering  these issues. |
| * Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of |
| complaints, alongside complaint handling performance |
| including compliance with the Ombudsman’s orders |
| * Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint |
| handling, |
| * The annual performance report produced by the |
| Ombudsman, where applicable |
| * Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including |
| where the Ombudsman made findings of severe |
| maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The |
| implementation of management responses should be |
| tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. |
| The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling |
| Code for scrutiny and challenge. |

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| **7.5** | Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training. | See the source image | Review of complaints received is included  as a recurring item on the internal  Landlord Services Group agenda which  will enable any systemic issues or service  revisions to be identified. |
| **7.6** | Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to:   * have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments * take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others * act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing. | See the source image | Reflected in the policy |

Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **8.1** | Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its  requirements. | See the source image | Review to be carried out by end of June  each year to enable previous year’s  performance to be evaluated. |
| **8.2** | Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures. | See the source image | Incorporated into procedures |
| **8.3** | Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:   * report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self- assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members * publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents * include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance | See the source image | Self-assessment and standalone policy to  be the subject of consultation with the  Housing Portfolio Holder and self  assessment will be published on the  Council’s website and details included in  the annual report. |