

Self-Assessment Form - The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

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

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'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.'</i>	Yes	The definition is included in the introduction of the Complaints and Compliments Policy.
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.	Yes	The policy notes the different ways in which a complaint can be submitted, including the tenant, third party and a representative. It also notes that the word "complaints" does not need to be used.
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.	Yes	A complaints log is maintained and reported to the Director of Housing.
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	Noted in the introduction of the Complaints Policy, all complaints will be taken seriously and any unacceptable performance standards will be amended. It is noted that a first appeal for service or assistance will not constitute a complaint.

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.	Yes	Complaints received regarding the support service will be dealt with by the support provider and not Parasol. This is noted in the Complaints Policy.
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.	Yes	All complaints are logged on the register. The complaint handler will provide the explanation for the reason why the complaint has been closed, in line with the normal complaints process in place. This ensures that the dissatisfaction is still recorded and handled correctly, even if not appropriate as a complaint to be handled by Parasol.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
1.4	Landlords should recognise the difference between a 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.	Yes	The policy notes that a first appeal for service or assistance and a complaint towards a situation that needs to be rectified are different, and will be handled to best rectify the situation at hand.
1.5	Survey feedback may not necessarily need to be 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.	Yes	Tenant satisfaction surveys are undertaken annually where a tenant is able to feedback through a channel that is not as drastic as the formal complaint process. Should an individual want to form a complaint the policy sets out the different ways in which complaints can be formed.

Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness

Mandatory 'must' requirements

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.	Yes	The different channels are noted in the policy, including how the different parties can form a complaint.
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.	Yes	The Complaints Policy and self-assessment is accessible on the website in line with the code, there is also a webpage that notes the different channels to log a complaint, the timescales and external bodies (Housing Ombudsman) that can also be contacted should a complaint not be correctly responded to.
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.	Yes	Information is included on the website on how to raise a complaint. https://parasolhomes.co.uk/complaints/
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.	Yes	As we are a housing provider that mainly deals with Specialised Supported Housing, we diligently ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
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.	Yes	Complaints Policy is now on the website, and we are looking to reinstate our tenant newsletter which will include information around complaints. Also during our tenant meetings this is addressed and as an item during sign up.

2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	Noted on the website and in the policy .
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.	Yes	

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
2.2	Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate 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.	Yes	The policy explains about confidentiality as standard when dealing with complaints. Complaints can be formed via the website.

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel

Mandatory 'must' requirements

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".	Yes	The Head of Operations co-ordinates the central register of complaints and compliments who will then report to the Director of Housing on a monthly basis to ensure that the necessary attention is being given. Handlers of complaints are usually from the housing team, and managed upwards where necessary.
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	The policy notes that all personnel will attend training where needed, and that complaints will only be handled by individuals free of conflicting interests.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.3	<p>Complaint handlers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	Yes	Complaint handling skills have been aligned to the code and this informs training, and staff behaviour and competencies are supported through monthly 1-1s and annual objective setting.

Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.1	<p>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.</p>	Yes	The Policy notes the 3 stages to Parasol's complaint process, and noted that the complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days, which is line with the code.

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.	Yes	The policy has been updated to align to the code. Agreeing the understanding of the complaint is the responsibility of the complaint handler. <i>Improvement – spot checks on any complaint cases to ensure that the correct processes are being followed as per the Complaints Policy.</i>
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	A full investigation will be undertaken into the complaint at the earliest opportunity, records kept and the complainant informed of the outcome as a matter of priority in an impartial manner.
4.7	The complaint handler must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	Yes	Complaint handling skills have been aligned to the code and this informs training.
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication	Yes	Arrangements will be agreed with the resident on the acknowledgment of the complaint, and should there be any changes to this then the complainant will be contacted and kept informed.
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 	Yes	This is followed in line of the code, and the Policy has been updated to reflect this.
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	Yes	The timescales for the process of the complaint process is noted in the policy in detail and noted on the report.

4.14	A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints 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.	Yes	As noted in the policy, there are clear stages and explained channels for an individual to escalate their complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure. The policy also explains how the handler will handle a declined complaint throughout the complaints process.
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.	Yes	A complaint register is kept internally which documents the progress throughout the complaint.
4.18	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.	Yes	We have a working process which will include the Director of Housing if appropriate, and reference to such a circumstance is noted in the policy. <i>Improvement – Create a documented procedure in relation to unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.</i>

Best practice 'should' requirements

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	Yes	Managing expectations is a key requirement of the complaint handler's responsibilities.
4.4	A complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible 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.	Yes	Resolving complaints quickly and fairly is a key requirement of the complaint handler's responsibilities. The policy states that responding to complaints and ensuring they are rectified promptly is of importance, and that complaints will ideally be resolved within 7 working days, with a maximum of 20 working days.
4.5	Landlords should give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any	Yes	Representatives are noted to be able to form complaints on a tenants behalf and attend meetings/ be included in communication thereafter – noted in the policy.

	meeting with the landlord where this is reasonable.		
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4.8	Where a key issue of a complaint relates to the parties' legal obligations landlords should clearly set out their understanding of the obligations of both parties.	Yes	During the complaint process Parasol ensures that all obligations are met, and where there is uncertainty external advice will be sought.
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	This is noted and followed in line with the code.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	Noted in the policy
4.16	Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord's complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and learning culture.	Yes	Noted in the policy
4.17	Landlords should recognise the impact that being 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	Yes	Staff are involved in the reviewing and improving of the complaints process to ensure the best service delivery.
4.19	Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Tenant vulnerabilities are accounted for in any service adjustment, and will be recorded as necessary to ensure the best service can be provided.

Section 5 - Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.1	Landlords must respond to the complaint <u>within 10 working days</u> 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.	Yes	Acknowledgement of the complaint will be responded to within 3 working day, and a response to the complaint will be responded to within 7 days, in extenuating circumstances the maximum time for a response is 20 working days.
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.	Yes	This is complied with via the policy and noted complaint process. All progress of a complaint will be logged on the complaints register.

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.	Yes	This is noted in the Complaints Policy.
5.8	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	Yes	Noted in the policy.

Stage 2

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 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.	Yes	This is noted in the Policy during the explanation of the complaint process.

5.10	On receipt of the escalation request, landlords must set out their 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.	Yes	These points in the code are noted in the Policy during the explanation of the complaint process.
5.11	Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident.	Yes	
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	
5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint <u>within 20 working days</u> 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.	Yes	
5.16	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language: the complaint stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	Yes	

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• remains dissatisfied. | | |
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Stage 3

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.	Yes	The policy notes a 3 stage complaint process, with the 3 rd stage being escalation to the Director of Housing at Parasol. The 3 rd stage is never desired to be used but is available for circumstances where it is deemed necessary.
5.20	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	Yes	The policy notes this area of the code.

**Best practice 'should' requirements
Stage 1**

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 landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	The maximum timeframe for Parasol to respond to tenants is 20 days, should there extenuating circumstances – the complainant will be notified if this is the case.
5.3	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, 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.	Yes	The Housing Ombudsman's details are provided in the policy and on the website should it be needed.
5.4	Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident.	Yes	It is the complaint handler's responsibility to investigate the complaint and look to see if there are any previous reports regarding the same issue.
5.7	Where residents raise additional complaints during the 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.	Yes	This is noted in the Complaints Policy.

Stage 2

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 Landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	This is noted in the Complaints Policy.
5.15	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, 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	Yes	In circumstances where complainants feel their complaint is unresolved, or has not been handled satisfactorily, they may report their complaint directly to an organisation external to Parasol. Details to the Housing Ombudsman are provided in the policy and on the website.

Stage 3

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 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.	Yes	This is complied with in the complaints process and policy.

5.19	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, 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.	Yes	Noted in the policy.
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Section 6 - Putting things right

Mandatory 'must' requirements

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.	Yes	The policy sets out the process and steps that will be taken by the complaints handler and Parasol as a whole to correct the issue at hand.
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.	Yes	The policy gives clear commitments to agreeing a resolution and informing the complainant of what has been agreed, including when this will be completed by
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.	Yes	This is noted accordingly in the policy.
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.	Yes	The policy notes compensation and we will ensure to meet all requirements necessary.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
6.3	Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be 'put right' in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all residents.	Yes	This is noted accordingly in the policy.
6.7	In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. The landlord should still offer a resolution where possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolution should be worded.	Yes	The policy notes that Parasol may, at any time, make use of external services.

Section 7 - Continuous learning and improvement

Mandatory 'must' requirements

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.	Yes	Improvements identified would be communicated to the complainant and stakeholders. Should improvements be made, then this will be enclosed in the annual report where necessary.

Best practice 'should' requirements

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 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.	Yes	The Director of Housing/ Executive Director of the Board, is the lead individual of the complaints process.
7.4	<p>As a minimum, governing bodies should receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	Yes	<p>Update reports are presented to the Board throughout the year on complaints.</p> <p>This self-assessment once completed will be shared with the Board.</p>

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.	Yes	The Director of Housing is sent the complaints register on a monthly basis by the Head of Operations as is reported in the Complaints Policy.
7.6	Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	Yes	The aim of the policy is to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pro- actively seek comments and feedback regarding the accommodation and service we offer - Provide guidelines for handling and resolving complaints and dealing with compliments concerning the accommodation and service offered by Parasol Parasol will implement these aims through the areas noted in the code.

Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

Mandatory 'must' requirements

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.	Yes	This self-assessment is evidence of compliance and will be undertaken each year and reported to the Board.
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Yes	The last restructure was this year, and this self-assessment is evidence of compliance with this area of the code.

8.3	Following each self-assessment, a landlord must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	Yes	The self-assessment and policy is reported to the Board. The policy and the self-assessment is available via the Parasol Website.
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