

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

2022/23 Year End

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: '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.	Yes	We have adopted the Housing Ombudsman definition and have published this on our website, written and media correspondence and within the Complaints Policy: <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>
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	RHL has adopted the HOS definition of a complaint which does not require the word complaint to be used. As per the HOS best practice requirements set out in 1.4, RHL recognises 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. We will accept complaints made by advocates who are authorised to act on the complainants' behalf, and these will also be actioned in line with the Complaints 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.	Yes	Where a customer requests an issue is dealt with as a complaint, and it meets the Complaint Policy this is recorded as a formal Stage 1 complaint.
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	All complaints are accepted and investigated with exception of clear exclusions stated in the Complaints Policy.
1.8	A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a	Yes	Clear exclusions are listed within the Complaints Policy which are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An initial request for service

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	matter will not be considered, and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the issue took place more than six months ago • Anti-social behaviour unless the complaint refers to our failure to deal with the matter appropriately • Legal proceedings have been started • Anything has already been considered by a Court • Dissatisfaction with the fairness of our Policies where our Policies have been correctly applied • Claims for compensation relating to personal injury – the complainant is advised to seek independent legal advice e.g. Derbyshire Law Centre or Citizens Advice. If a claim is received from a Solicitor on behalf of the complainant, we will refer this to our Insurer's for consideration • Attempts to reopen or reconsider complaints that have already been considered under the Complaints Policy. <p>Persistent Complaints:</p> <p>Where a customer makes complaints that are unreasonable, contain unreasonable demands, made in an aggressive/threatening manner or are unreasonably persistent we will consider restricting a customer's access to the complaints process.</p> <p>Exclusions relate to the definitions within the persistent complaints policy. In practice, RHL is seldom forced to use the persistent complaints policy. The exclusion lists provide a transparent Complaints Policy for Customers and RHL staff.</p>
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	If a complaint is not accepted, contact will be made to the customer to explain the reason behind this decision, and this will be followed up in writing.

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	Service requests or situations as described by the Housing Ombudsman in 1.4 are either resolved at customer contact or are investigated and responded to by the relevant Service Manager.
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	The customer will be contacted via phone to discuss their feedback and will be given details of how to pursue their dissatisfaction via the complaints process should they wish to do so.

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	Web form ContactUs Letter Complaints leaflet completion Telephone Via staff member Email Twitter Facebook Complaints are also accepted when made by advocates who are authorised to act on the complainant's behalf.
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 Policy leaflet offers help to submit a complaint. The leaflet also contains a customer service accessibility message in different languages. The Complaints process is the first item on the ContactUs tab on the front of the website and clearly outlines the number of stages, procedure and timescales.
2.4	Landlord websites, if they exist, must include information on how to raise a complaint. The	Yes	The complaints process is the first item on the ContactUs tab on the front of the website. Here customers can also

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	complaints policy and process must be easy to find on the website.		access the Complaints Policy and the Customer Annual Report which details the number of complaints received.
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	The RHL Diversity Policy sets out the Company approach in reference to legislation including the Equality Act 2010. All staff undertake E&D training to ensure they understand the requirements of the Equality Act 2020 and RHL's approach to deliver compliant services including reasonable adjustments.
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	The Complaints Policy and procedure is publicised via the following mediums: Website Leaflets Customer Newsletter
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	Contact information for the Ombudsman is publicised via the following mediums: Website Leaflets Letters issued throughout the complaints process Customer Newsletter.
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	Publicised on Website, Complaints Policy leaflet, social media and Customer Newsletter. Letters sent to the complainant throughout the complaints process confirm that we comply with the HOS Complaint Handling Code and provide a link to the HOS website.

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	Complaints received on social media will be responded to in writing to maintain confidentiality where a name and address is provided. This is contained within current Policy.

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	A Complaints Manager was appointed in February 2022.
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	The Complaints Manager has received appropriate training and has the experience and skills required to handle complaints sensitively, fairly, and efficiently. HOS online training and guidance is used/referred to. At Stage 2, complaints are independently reviewed by a Head of Service (different from the service area originating to complaint) and resolved in consultation with a Director.

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	<p>The Complaints Manager has the experience and skills required to handle complaints sensitively, fairly, efficiently and independently without conflict of interest and will have autonomy to resolve complaints at Stage 1.</p> <p>A positive working relationship is in place between the Complaints Manager, staff and partner agencies in order to ensure a quick resolution to complaints. They also have the authority and ability to access any information required to fully investigate and respond accurately to complaints at Stage 1.</p> <p>At Stage 2, complaints are reviewed by a Head of Service (different from the service area originating to complaint) and resolved in consultation with a Director.</p>

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</p>	Yes	<p>All official complaints are logged at Stage 1 within five days of receipt. An acknowledgement letter is sent to the customer confirming that this has been sent to the Complaints Manager for investigation and response. This also confirms the 10 day response time.</p>

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	procedure within five days of receipt .		
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 reasons for the complaint and our understanding of this is contained within the acknowledgement letter. If the reason for the complaint is unclear the customer will be contacted to discuss this.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	Stage 1 complaints are impartially investigated by the Complaints Manager who works across the organisation and not in any particular service area. Stage 2 complaints are then reviewed by an impartial Head of Service (different from the service area originating to complaint) and resolved in consultation with a Director.
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	Each complaint is investigated thoroughly and independently in a confidential manner without bias, taking into account all the information and evidence before a decision is made.
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication.	Yes	The customer is contacted at each stage to discuss their complaint either over the phone or in person and any actions followed up in writing. Reasonable adjustments will be made to reflect the needs of the individual customer, as required.
4.12	The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must	Yes	Customers or staff members will be consulted throughout the complaints process and will be given the

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	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. 		opportunity to raise any points that they feel valid for consideration prior to a final decision.
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	Yes	The Complaints Policy advises complainants to raise an escalation to Stage 2 within 20 days of receiving their Stage 1 response.
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	The list of exclusions is outlined in Complaints Policy and extends to the reasons why we would refuse to escalate a complaint. The reasons for refusal will be discussed with the customer verbally and then followed up in writing.
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 full record of each complaint is retained which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dates of any actions taken • All written and verbal correspondence with the customer/other involved parties • Any reports or surveys undertaken • The outcomes at each stage • Any learning outcomes.
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	The procedure for managing unacceptable behaviour is outlined in our Customer Care Policy.

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	Customer's expectations are managed from the initial point of contact and our position clearly outlined.
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	We aim to investigate and resolve complaints in a swift and pro-active manner with a view to providing an acceptable resolution for the customer and all involved parties.
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 meeting with the landlord where this is reasonable.	Yes	We will accept complaints and actively communicate with any advocates who are authorised to act on the complainant's behalf or represent them throughout the process.
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		Where tenancy conditions are appropriate to the resolution of the complaint these will be referred to in the response.
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	The initial acknowledgement letter for Stage 1 and 2 complaints will identify who the case has been allocated to by name and job title. Responses to complaints, however, will be made on behalf of the organisation and refer to the service provided by the organisation and not individual members of staff. Job titles will be used where this is appropriate to the complaint resolution.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	Regular contact is maintained with the customer from when the initial complaint is received and logged. All actions/discussions are then followed up in writing.
4.16	Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord's	No	Complaint handling satisfaction is not currently undertaken. It is proposed in the RSH Tenant Satisfaction

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and learning culture.		Measures and will be introduced when required from 2023/24 with the appropriate industry standard definition when published.
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	Learning outcomes are identified and shared with staff in order to establish best practice and a 'get it right first time' approach. Policies will be changed in consultation with staff, where necessary, to improve 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	The RHL Diversity Policy sets out the Company approach in reference to legislation, including the Equality Act 2010. The procedure for managing unacceptable behaviour is outlined in our Customer Care Policy.

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 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.	Yes	We aim to respond to, investigate and resolve any complaints within the 10 day time frame, if in exceptional cases, further time is required to complete our investigation the customer will be notified verbally with a follow up in writing explaining the reasons for this.
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	Yes	A verbal response will be provided to the customer and followed up in writing once our investigation is complete, confirming any outstanding actions to be taken along with the expected timescales. Outstanding actions will be tracked to ensure they are completed in a timely manner and that we have fulfilled what has been agreed. The customer will be contacted and

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	regular updates provided to the resident.		consulted throughout this process until a satisfactory conclusion is reached.
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	Each point will be addressed individually with the customer both in a verbal context and in the Stage 1 conclusion letter with a clear and concise response, confirming any decisions or actions to be undertaken and with reference to any relevant policy, law and good practice procedures.
5.8	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language: <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	Each Stage 1 conclusion letter, clearly outlines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Stage of the complaint • the decisions made regarding the complaint • the reason why these decisions have been made • confirmation of any remedy offered to put things right • confirmation of any outstanding actions and the expected timescales • Details of how to escalate their complaint to Stage 2 should they not be satisfied with our response.

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	A complaint will be escalated to Stage 2 at the customer's request, unless it is refused in line with the list of exclusions outlined in Complaints Policy. The reasons for refusal will be discussed with the customer verbally and then followed up in writing.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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	The reasons for the escalation request and our understanding of this is contained within the acknowledgement letter. If the reason for escalation is unclear the customer will be contacted to discuss this.
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	All complaints are considered at Stage 1 first to ensure there remains a review stage. Customers are notified both verbally and in the Stage 1 response letter how they can escalate their complaint to Stage 2 should they be dissatisfied with the outcome and that they need to do so within 20 days of the receipt of the Stage 1 response. If the Customer confirms that they wish to do so this will be logged at Stage 2 and an acknowledgement letter sent confirming who is completing the investigation and that a response should be provided to them within a further 20 working day timescale.
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	Stage 2 complaints are reviewed by an impartial Head of Service (different from the service area originating to complaint) and resolved in consultation with a Director.
5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint within 20 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.	Yes	We aim to respond to, investigate and resolve any complaints within the 20 day time frame, if in exceptional cases, further time is required to complete our investigation, the customer will be notified verbally with a follow up in writing explaining the reasons for this.
5.16	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition 		Each Stage 2 conclusion letter, clearly outlines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Stage of the complaint • the definition of a complaint as set by the HOS • the decisions made regarding the complaint

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the decision on the complaint the reasons for any decisions made the details of any remedy offered to put things right <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the reason why these decisions have been made confirmation of any remedy offered to put things right confirmation of any outstanding actions and the expected timescales details of how to contact the HOS should they remain dissatisfied.

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.	N/A	No Stage 3
5.20	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the complaint stage the complaint definition the decision on the complaint the reasons for any decisions made <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the details of any remedy offered to put things right details of any outstanding actions 	N/A	No Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied 		

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	If, in exceptional cases, further time is required to complete our investigation, the customer will be contacted to discuss this with a follow up in writing confirming the reasons for the extension.
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	Letters sent to the complainant throughout the complaints process confirm that we comply with the HOS Complaint Handling Code and provide a link to the HO website.
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	As part of the complaint's investigation process, a full review is completed of all former correspondence both oral and written, any records, surveys, reports or repairs completed, and any other actions taken, where applicable, in order to establish what has happened historically and with a view to providing a swift and satisfactory resolution for the customer.
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	Any additional complaints raised by the customer whilst investigations at Stage 1 are being completed will be recorded and responded to as part of the Stage 1 response. If the Stage 1 response has already been issued or if this would delay our response within the specified timescales then this will be logged as a new complaint and investigated separately.

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	If, in exceptional cases, further time is required to complete our investigation, the customer will be contacted to discuss this with a follow up in writing confirming the reasons for the extension.
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	Letters sent to the complainant throughout the complaints process confirm that we comply with the HOS Complaint Handling Code and provide a link to the HO 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.	N/A	No Stage 3
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.	N/A	No Stage 3

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	Where, after investigation, a complaint is upheld, either in part or in full, we will respond to the customer verbally and acknowledge where we have gone wrong, what actions we have already taken and any further proposed resolutions. We will then follow this up in writing in an attempt to seek to restore the customer to the position he/she enjoyed before the complaint was made.
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	Proposed remedies will be reasonable, consider the detrimental impact on the customer, be fair and proportionate, without detriment to other residents/ customers. These may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apology • Provide requested service • Review working procedure • Review Policy • Staff training or guidance • Staff disciplinary action • Financial redress – compensation or refund.
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	Any identified remedies will be discussed with the customer verbally, agreed with them and then confirmed in writing. The letter will confirm what actions have been agreed and the expected timescales for completion.
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	This is covered in the Compensation and Claims Policy.

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	Policy or procedures will be reviewed and changed, as required, where it is identified that this will lead to a service improvement.
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	We will still investigate a case which has legal implications via our complaint's procedure, working with the appropriate parties to offer a resolution as part of the Pre-Action Protocol Alternate Dispute Resolution requirement. This will continue up until Court Proceedings have commenced.

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	Information on the number of complaints received, our performance and learning outcomes where relevant are published as part of our Annual Reports to customers, members of staff, Board, Operational Board and Partnership Forum with NEDDC.

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		RHL will propose the appointment of Board level complaints lead in 2022/23.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	landlord's complaint handling performance.		
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. 		This will be included in the Quarterly Performance Report 2022/23.
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	Complaints reporting and analysis is considered by the Head of Business Development and reported through the Senior Management Team. All staff mandatory complaints training – includes lessons and changes made to policy as a result.
7.6	<p>Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments 	Yes	<p>RHL's Complaints Policy and delivery of complaints service is consistent with the principles set out in the CIH Professional Standards.</p> <p>RHL's mandatory all staff Complaints Training includes the Housing Ombudsman's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Fair, treat people fairly and follow fair processes

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put things right • Learn from outcomes.

Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

Mandatory 'must' requirement

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	Self-assessment completed for 2021/22 against the requirements of the Code.
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure or change of procedures.	Yes	In the event of any restructure or change of procedure a re-assessment against the Code and its requirements would be completed.
8.3	<p>Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:</p> <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	<p>The Annual Report is approved by Board, Operational Board, Partnership Forum with NEDDC, following self-assessment against code on the website.</p> <p>The Customer Annual Report is published on the website which details the number of complaints received, our performance and learning outcomes where relevant. This information is also published in our Customer Newsletter.</p> <p>The Self-Assessment will be reported to the NEDDC/RHL Partnership Forum which includes the Member with Portfolio for Housing.</p>