

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

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	Page 1 of Complaints Policy under 'Definitions' Definition of a complaint in Hellens Residential's complaints policy is the same as the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) 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.	Yes	Page 2 of Complaints Policy under the sections "Who Can Make a Complaint" & "How to Make a Complaint"
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	Page 1 of Complaints Policy under 'Definitions'
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	Carry out multiple surveys per year and follow up with any customers who have expressed dissatisfaction.
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	Page 2 of Complaints Policy under the section "How to Make a Complaint"
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	Page 3 of Complaints Policy under the Exclusions section clearly sets out the reasons why Hellens Residential might not accept a complaint. Each case will be considered on its own merits.

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	Page 3 of Complaints Policy under exclusions clearly sets out which matters might not be considered comply with the acceptable exclusions in the Complaint Handling Code.
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	Page 3 of Complaints Policy under exclusions clearly states "If Hellens Residential exclude a complaint, we will set out our reasons in writing and provide details for the Housing Ombudsman."

Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness

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	<p>Page 2 of Complaints Policy sets out the below channels to complain:</p> <p>Residents can raise a complaint in any way with any member of staff. All staff are trained in our Complaints Procedure.</p> <p>In person: With any member of our team Via you Hellens Hub account By Telephone: 0191 594 6666 By Email: info@hellensresidential.co.uk By website: www.hellensresidential.co.uk By Post: Teal House, 10 Teal Farm Way, Washington, Tyne & Wear, NE38 8BG</p>
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.	No	Where customers make complaints via social media we direct them to complain via the other methods provided as we believe it is a safer way to protect customer information and comply with GDPR.
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	Complaints Policy is on the website. Cited in the Tenant Handbook provided to all new customers. Emailed link to all customers annually. Each stage is clear set out in 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.	Yes	Yes documents section of website includes the Complaints Policy which details how to raise a complaint.
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	Hellens Residential website includes an Equality & Diversity section.
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	Included on website, new customers onboarding information, email to all customers on an annual basis.
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	Details of Housing Ombudsman provided on website, in Complaints Policy and to all customers to make a complaint at each stage of the complaint.
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	Details of Housing Ombudsman provided to all customers at each Stage of Complaint and verbally / in person where that method of complaint is chosen.

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel

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 Operations Manager is the 'Complaints Officer'
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	Complaints Officer undertaken e learning modules for complaints investigators
3.3	Complaint handlers should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be able to act sensitively and fairly 	Yes	Page 3 under 'What you can expect from Hellens Residential'

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 		<p>Members of staff have all been on a Complaints Handling training course to ensure at all levels of the business there is an awareness of how to act and deal with customers.</p>
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Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

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	<p>Page 2 of Complaints Policy We have a two stage complaints process. We work with our customers within the first two days of receiving notification of dissatisfaction to clarify the exact nature of the complaint and what is needed to resolve this. We have worked across our services to embed the importance of raising formally if customers have made repeated attempts to resolve as a service request.</p>
4.2	<p>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.</p>	Yes	<p>Page 2 of Complaints Policy clearly states below: We will contact customers to listen to their complaint and the details around it. We will discuss the complaint and the outcome that the customer is seeking. In response to the customer Hellens Residential's clearly sets out the understanding of the complaint.</p>
4.3	<p>Landlords should manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic</p>	Yes	<p>During the initial triage of the complaint we work with our customers to clarify the exact nature of the complaint and what is needed to resolve this. Where the outcome is unrealistic, we will advise the customer at the</p>

			earliest opportunity.
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 will confirm the issues we are investigating and what is required to put things right. We will take remedial actions as soon as possible and take action to resolve any urgent issues to the relevant service area for action. For example, following a Health and Safety incident.
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	Page 2 of Complaints Policy under 'Who Can Make a Complaint'. We will not prevent a customer from being accompanied or they wish to appoint a 3 rd party to act on their behalf.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	Complaints are investigated on their own merit.
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	All complaints dealt with by senior person at Hellens Residential to ensure responsibilities upheld.
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	We seek independent legal advice from a 3 rd party company where necessary.
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	We now do not generally refer to individuals by name but refer to the roles of employees.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	We have developed our CRM system which gives prompts to ensure that the timescales for replying are adhered to and updates provided regularly.
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication	Yes	During the initial triage of the complaint we collect information on preferred communication methods. We set out the timescales and how we will communicate the response.
4.12	The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the	Yes	Dealt with via the Complaints Policy in Stage One / Stage Two

	<p>complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 		
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	Yes	Page 2 & 3 of Complaints Policy sets out the timescales to request escalation of a complaint.
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	Page 3 of Complaints Policy under the Exclusions section.
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	We have developed a new process within our CRM to keep all records relating to complaints in one place.
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	We have measured perception in anticipation of the Tenant Satisfaction measures.
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 supported by giving online training through the Housing Ombudsman learning portal and independent in person Conflict resolution training.
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	Unacceptable behaviour policy is published on our website next to the Complaints Policy which outlines what will not be accepted.
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	Dealt with in line with Equality and Diversity policy published on Hellens Residential's website.

Section 5 - Complaint stages

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	Have met the 10 working days where possible. Only exceeded in exceptional circumstances where more time was required to investigate as agreed with the customer.
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	We aim to respond within 20 working days (unless there are mitigating reasons to extend this timescale). Any extension will be in agreement with the customer. However, the customer has the right to stop the investigation and refer themselves to the Ombudsman if they do not agree with the new timescales.
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	Provide Housing Ombudsman's details should customer not agree with any proposed timescales.
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	Complaints handlers have a log of all previous issues, service requests, feedback and complaints to refer to should they require.
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	Hellens Residential never delay a complaint response unnecessarily.
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	Hellens Residential have produced template responses to ensure all sections of a complaint are responded to.
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	Yes	If any additional issues come to light during the Stage 1 complaints investigation process, then we will address those within

	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.		our response wherever possible. If it is a separate issue that requires significantly more investigation, then we would log this as a separate complaint.
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	Use a formatted template letter to respond to complaints.

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	Page 3 of Complaints Policy titled 'Stage Two'
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	Page 3 of Complaints Policy titled 'Stage Two'
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	Page 3 of Complaints Policy titled 'Stage Two'
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.		Page 3 of Complaints Policy titled 'Stage Two' states: "This is a process whereby the initial complaint will be reviewed by another member of staff."

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	Hellens Residential have consistently met this target.
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	Page 3 of Complaints Policy under 'Stage Two'
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	Provide Housing Ombudsman's details should customer not agree with any proposed timescales.
5.16	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two 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 • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions <p>and</p> <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 remains dissatisfied. 	Yes	<p>We use a letter template based on the Housing Ombudsman's sample on their website.</p> <p>We do not have a stage 3 therefore provides details of how to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman.</p>

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	Yes	Two stage process in place.

	with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances.		
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	Two stage process in place.
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	Two stage process in place.
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 	N/A	Do not have a stage 3.

Section 6 - Putting things right

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	If we have identified through the complaints process that something has gone wrong, then we will look to address this and put things right in our response. We will ask the customer the resolution that they are seeking for their complaint to help

			achieve this.
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	Page 2 of Complaints Policy During the initial triage of the complaint we work with our customers to clarify the exact nature of the complaint and what is needed to resolve this. Where the outcome is unreasonable, unrealistic and would be unfair to our other customers we will advise the customer during triage.
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	Trends are monitored for systemic issues or patterns. Information provided to the Directors to ensure lessons are learned and service improvements implemented.
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	Page 2 of Complaints Policy Outlined in Complaints Response section.
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	Any compensation requests reviewed on their own merits and all requests for compensation are reviewed by a Director.
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	Where necessary we consult an independent legal firm for advice and put the appropriate redress in place should it be required.

Section 7 - Continuous learning and improvement

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	Annual Report published on our website. Annual insight report provided to the Board. Briefing notes provided to the Board on all complaints. Findings discussed at Monthly Management meetings.

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	Whilst we do not have a complaints Board Champion due to owning fewer than 300 properties and a small team of employee's; the Managing Director of Hellens Residential takes responsibility for ensuring information is provided to the Governing Body.
7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: <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	Provide the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code. Due to owning fewer than 300 properties the volume and severity of complaints to date is very small therefore information to provide is limited.
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	Monthly review with Managing Director to review the themes of the complaints and whether there are any system issues identified.
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	Hellens Residential are committed to working collaboratively to resolve complaints quickly and effectively for customers. Learning from complaints is paramount to try to ensure the processes are put in place to avoid any repeat complaints. All employee's receive training on complaints and other key skills such as conflict resolution to ensure we are communicating with our customers in the best possible way.

Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

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 provided for 2023/24. Not required in previous years due to number of units owned.
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Yes	Will do when / if necessary going forward.
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	Self-assessment has been reported to the Board.