

Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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 landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'</i>	Y	Complaint policy section 2.2	
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	Y	Complaint policy section 2.3 and 3	
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be	Y	Complaint policy sections 2.4	Harbour Light maintains a full system of all maintenance and service requests through its online repairs management portal, requests are logged and updates are posted until

	recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.			matters are resolved and signed off accordingly.
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Y	Complaint policy section 5.9	Individual service requests cannot be removed from the system until resolved to the satisfaction of the relevant Maintenance Manager, if there is any dispute over the nature of a request being resolved these are discussed each week with the relevant Property Manager and senior management team at Harbour Light
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Y	Complaint policy section 2.4	In addition to tenant meetings and engagement on a daily basis with support workers Harbour Light undertakes satisfaction surveys across the estate, it is within these that details of how to complain, should it be felt necessary, are provided.

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Y	Complaint policy section 5.5	
2.2	<p>A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. 	Y	Complaint policy section 4	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 			
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Y	Complaint Policy section 4	
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an 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. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Y	Complaint Policy section 5.5	
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Y	Complaint Policy section 5.4	

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Y	Complaint policy sections 5.2	As we run supported living schemes, the easiest way our tenants can raise a complaint is direct to on-site support staff, they may also with or without assistance do this by post/email or phone if preferred.
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Y	Complaint policy sections 5.1 and 5.2	As above, support staff are based at all of our properties and our property managers are also briefed and aware of the Complaints Policy and Procedures
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Y	Complaint policy section 6.3	

3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Y	Complaint policy section 6.4	The complaints policy is drafted so as to be as short as possible whilst covering essential information about the process, being available through the website, in communal areas and in the handbook.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Y	Complaint policy section 6.4	As above
3.6	Landlords must 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.	y	Complaint policy section 6.5	
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Y	Complaint policy section 5.8	

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5	Harbour Light has a 'Property Manager' for each scheme, this person is the individual assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling within that setting, in the first instance this is the 'Complaints Officer' for the purpose of complaint handling.
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Y		The Complaints Officer will have full access to necessary resource, be it through the maintenance operations lead, estates operations lead or board, weekly meetings take place to review all issues inclusive of any live complaints.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a	Y	Complaint policy section 8.4	All staff potentially involved with complaints handling will be provided with copies of the relevant policies and receive additional online training in how to achieve good customer service in

	core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively			responding to complaints and managing the complaints process.
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Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Y	Harbour Light Assisted Living CIC Complaints Policy & Procedure	
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Y	Complaint policy section 5	Only two complaint stages
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Y	As above	As above
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in	Y	The complaint policy section 5.3	If for some reason the Complaints Officer deems it necessary for third party involvement the process then there must be an

	this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.			alignment of that process with the first stage of investigation and with no further requirements placed upon the complainant.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Y	As above	
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Y	Complaint policy sections 5.11	
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Y	Complaint policy sections 5.11	
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; 	Y	Complaint policy section 6	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 			
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Y	Complaint policy section 5.12	
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Y	Complaint policy section 7.2	Any reasonable adjustments made during the process under this provision will be recorded by either the Complaints Officer or Appeals Officer on our secure access tenant database.
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Y	Complaints policy section 2 sets out reasons and section 5.5	
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original	Y		All documentation pertaining to a complaint will be stored electronically

	complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.			within password protected internal database systems
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.		Complaint Policy section 5.9 and 10	
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Y	Complaint Policy section 9	In addition to Section 9 of the Complaints Policy our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy is available on request.
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Y	As above	

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Y		Harbour Light provides exclusively supported living services across the North West of England, we try to engage with tenants through our support worker colleagues, through tenant meetings and attending MDTs with relevant parties, during the course of any complaint all of these processes will still be in place, this active dialogue means that early resolution of complaints should be quite possible, we exist to support our tenants to maintain their tenancy so by very reason of our purpose we hope to be able to deal promptly with such issues.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure within five	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.3	

	<u>working days of the complaint being received.</u>			
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.3	
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.3	
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.15	
6.6	A complaint response must be provided 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 promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.11	
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions,	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.14	

	referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.			
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.6	
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. 	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.7	

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.8	
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.8	
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Y	Complaint policy Section 5.13	
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Y	Complaint policy section 5	Complaint officer stage 1 Appeals officer stage 2
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Y	Complaint policy 5.8	
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than	Y	Complaint policy section 5.8	

	20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.			
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Y	Complaint policy section 5.15	
6.17	A complaint response must be provided 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 promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Y	Complaint policy section 5.14	
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Y	Complaint policy section 5.14	
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and 		Complaint policy section 5.10	

	g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.			
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Y	Complaint policy section 5.16	

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>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. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; 	Y	Complaints policy Section 10	Harbour Light strives to meet its own high expectations but where this will occasionally fall short we will always look to acknowledge where things have gone wrong and make changes for the future. Over the last few years we have invested significantly in management software which updates our tenants and interested parties as to the position with service requests keeping a clear and accurate record for both parties, this was done in response to previous issues

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing policies, procedures or practices. 			<p>raised. Our policies and related documents are constantly kept under review and are evolving with the needs of the business and our residents.</p>
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Y	Complaint policy section 10	Charity's compensation policy
7.3	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.	Y	Complaint policy section 10.3	Any such remedy will be recorded within the tenants individual (secure) electronic records.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.		Complaint policy section 10.4	<p>Harbour Light takes account of the Ombudsman guidance in deciding an appropriate remedy, as found here:</p> <p>https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/centre-for-learning/key-topics/our-orders/ombudsmans-policy-and-guidance-on-remedies/</p>

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	<p>Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 	Y	Annual complaint's performance and service improvement report providing all the information requested	Copy provided alongside this self-assessment

8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Y	The board of trustee's statement must be in response to the Annual complaint's performance and service improvement report 2023/2024 Publish on the Charity's website	Available on Harbour Light Website
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.		N/A	Harbour Light understands the nature of this question but if it not relevant to recent operations or activities.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.		N/A	Harbour Light understands the nature of this question but has not been asked to undertake such a review.
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.		N/A	Harbour Light understands the nature of this question but if it not relevant to recent operations or activities.

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.		Annual complaint's performance and service improvement report	Harbour Light will assess whether the complaint could be incurred again or if it is an isolated incident, if the latter it is possible the remedy actioned will suffice, if the former then systems and processes will be reviewed to see if they are meeting desired outcomes
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.		Annual complaint's performance and service improvement report	Harbour Light sees complaints as a useful guide and indicator of our performance levels in seeking our chosen objectives of providing good quality safe housing in a supportive environment, through assessment of complaints positive changes can be made
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to		Annual complaint's performance and service improvement report	Annual self-assessment and performance and improvement record is available both on our website and in other formats on request to ensure

	stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.			engagement with tenants and other stakeholders.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.		Complaint Policy Section 9.5	This role is allocated to the CEO of Harbour Light
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Y	Complaint Policy section 9.6	This role is allocated to the CEO of Harbour Light
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Y		Harbour Light will ensure that the MRC is kept apprised of any complaints which have been logged and accepted with details of whom the relevant parties are and relevant policies involved so as to ensure a positive complaints handling culture is being promoted
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive:			Whilst emails will be provided to the MRC detailing 'live' complaints, a quarterly review will take

	<p>a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;</p> <p>b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;</p> <p>c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman’s investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and</p> <p>d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.</p>			<p>place at board level ensuring scrutiny and oversight or issues and allowing a full and proper assessment of performance and service levels.</p>
9.8	<p>Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</p> <p>a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;</p> <p>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</p> <p>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</p>			<p>The Harbour Light Complaints Policy and Procedure appropriately sets parameters and goals which engender a positive attitude to complaints, in seeking to resolve them expeditiously where possible and through a spirit of fairness, impartiality and understanding allow us to investigate and remedy any shortfalls in our service provision. Harbour Light takes very seriously its responsibility to tenants and other stakeholders and only through continual</p>

				assessment, development and improvement can this goal be achieved.