

The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code: settle's self-assessment 2022

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent watchdog that resolves complaints between tenants and leaseholders of social landlords. Every year, all social housing providers have to complete a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to demonstrate how they comply with its requirements.

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Section 1 - Definition of a complaint

Mandatory 'must' requirements

	Code requirement	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>	Y	We have adopted the Ombudsman's definition and our policy and procedure reflect this.
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.	Y	Our policy reflects this, and this message is reinforced in internal training.
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.	Y	We will always try to resolve a matter there and then for a resident. However, if we can't and the matter requires further enquires or if the resident requests it, we will always log a complaint.
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Y	This is outlined in our complaints policy and detailed below.
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.	Y	Our Complaints policy states: In some circumstances it may not be appropriate to consider the complaint, such as when the complaint occurred over six months ago; legal proceedings have been started; or matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy. In these cases, the customer will be clearly told why and given the option to state their case or bring it to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
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.	Y	Exclusions are limited to the reasons provided above, which are in line with the complaint handling code. Support and the appropriate steps would be provided to any resident unable to access our complaint procedure. We will always inform the resident of their rights to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Best practice 'should' requirements

	Code requirement	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	Y	We provide clear training and guidance to all colleagues around the difference between a service request and a complaint. We will not open a complaint without the resident's consent.

	about the service they have/have not received.		
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.	Y	We treat all escalations from feedback as an enquiry in the first instance, only registering a complaint following a conversation with the resident.

Section 2 – Accessibility and awareness

Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

	Code requirement	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.	Y	A resident can raise a complaint with us through any channel we’re on.
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.	Y	Our policy and procedure are available on our website and available in paper form.
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.	Y	How we handle complaints – settle (settle.org.uk)
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.	Y	We have a reasonable adjustments policy on our website. When reviewing all policies, we carry out Equality Impact Assessments, ensuring that equality and diversity needs are considered when making decisions that impact our residents. They will help us identify where our policies or practices have the potential to unfairly disadvantage certain groups, enabling us to take steps to address this.
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.	Y – room to improve	We publicise our complaints policy and procedure, referencing the service provided by the Housing Ombudsman on our website and we regularly share information on complaints in our quarterly service update. Over the coming months, we will be looking at how we can develop the type and

			regularity of complaints-related communication we share with residents to include things like leaflets and posters.
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Y – room to improve	As above, plus we will include the Housing Ombudsman’s contact details in our service updates and customer annual reports. It is also included in our newly published customer offer.
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.	Y	We have updated our policy and procedure to reflect this. All communication and guidance provided to resident’s signposts how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

Best practice ‘should’ requirements

	Code requirement	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.	Y	A resident can raise a complaint with us through any channel we’re on.

Section 3 Complaint handling personnel

Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

	Code requirement	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”.	Y	At settle, we have a central customer resolution team who work in the capacity of “complaints officer”. Complaints are reported throughout our governance structure.
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Y	Our customer resolution team are fully trained in complaint handling and work with all levels of staff across settle to provide fair outcome for residents.

Best practice ‘should’ requirements

	Code requirement	Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.3	Complaint handlers should: <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 	Y	As above, our customer resolution team are dedicated to listening to and acting on what our residents tell us. We look to work in partnership with residents and colleagues across all levels at settle to find a quick and fair resolution when things go wrong.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. 		
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Section 4 – Complaint handling principles

Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

	Code requirement	Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.1	Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord’s audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident’s concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as ‘stage 0’ or ‘pre-complaint stage’) as this causes unnecessary confusion for residents. When a complaint is made, it must be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure within five days of receipt.	Y	<p>We will always work to resolve a resident’s concern as quickly as we can. When something has gone wrong, we will proactively seek a resolution that works for the resident. We will clearly explain the steps we have taken, ensuring that the resident is happy with this.</p> <p>Where a resident asks to register a complaint, or we recognise that this is the right thing to do, we will always log and acknowledge a complaint within 5 working days.</p>
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.	Y	We always send an acknowledgement of a customer complaint that outlines the complaint that has been made and the outcome the resident is looking for.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Y	All complaints are investigated by our central customer resolution team in line with the principle outlined in the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
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. 	Y	As above, all complaints are investigated by our central customer resolution team in line with the principle outlined in the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication.	Y	We will always ask the resident for their communication preference, explaining and adjusting our communication frequency as appropriate.
4.12	The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the	Y	We will always provide the opportunity to discuss the outcome of the complaint before

	complaint, must also be given a fair chance to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 		we issue our written response, unless the resident has asked us not to.
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint.	Y	We will accept complaint escalations within 6 months; this is outlined in our complaints policy and written response to the resident.
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.	Y	This is clearly outlined in our policy and procedure.
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.	Y	All details relating to complaint cases are kept in our data management system.
4.18	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.	Y	Our unacceptable behaviour policy is available on our website.

Best practice 'should' requirements

	Code requirement	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.	Y	A member of our customer resolution team will speak to the resident about their complaint and the outcome they are looking for, explaining clearly where this is unrealistic.
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.	Y	We assess all complaints at the point of contact, resolving there and then wherever possible. Where urgent action is needed, the complaint will be escalated to a senior leader.
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.	Y	We accept complaints via advocates of residents where they prefer to communicate with us through someone else. These are handled in line with our complaints procedure as normal.
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.	Y	We will always clearly outline where a complaint relates to the parties' legal obligations, referencing the relevant section in their tenancy agreement.

4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Y	As far as possible, we will not refer to individual colleagues or contractors in our communications with residents.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Y	Residents are allocated a case handler who will agree with the resident when and how updates will be provided.
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.	Y	We issue a survey to residents once their complaint has been fully resolved. We also discuss our complaint handling with our resident complaints panel and more recently drop-in sessions which all residents have been invited to.
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.	Y	Learnings from complaints are shared with all colleagues and help drive continuous service improvement.
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.	Y	Before any restrictions are placed on a resident, we will carry out an Equality impact Assessment. We will always be honest and transparent with our residents, provide a warning before action is taken under our unacceptable behaviour policy.

Section 5 – Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements - STAGE ONE

	Code requirement	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.	Y – room to improve	Complaints are responded to within 10 working days and where an extension is required due the complexity of some complaints, agreement is obtained with the resident and a response will be sent within 20 days. If agreement to extend is not obtained, or the target is missed, this is reported to our Executive Team and Operations Committee who are a subsidiary of the Board.
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.	Y	Our complaint response will clearly outline any actions and next steps, including when we expect them to be completed by. Any agreed actions are recording on our records and monitored by our Customer Resolution Team.
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.	Y	We investigate all complaints in line with the good practice outlined by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

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. 	Y	This is reflected in our policy and procedure and written responses to residents.
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Mandatory ‘must’ requirements - STAGE TWO

	Code requirement	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.	Y	We will always aim to resolve a complaint at stage one, reviewing any matters the resident escalates to stage two. We will always review matters at stage two that have been investigated at stage one and provide the resident with escalation rights to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
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.	Y	Our stage 2 complaint acknowledgment will always outline our understanding of the complaint escalation and the outcome the resident is seeking, ensuring a clear understanding by both parties.
5.11	Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident.	Y	We will always aim to resolve complaints at stage one, only escalating to stage two at the request of the resident.
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Y	All stage 2 complaints are reviewed by a member of the senior leadership team.
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.	Y – room to improve	Complaints are responded to within 20 working days and where an extension is required due the complexity of some complaints, agreement is obtained with the resident and a response will be sent within 30 working days. If agreement to extend is not obtained, or the target is missed, this is reported to our Executive Team and Operations Committee who are a subsidiary of the Board.

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 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. 	Y	This is reflected in our policy and procedure and written responses to residents.
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Mandatory ‘must’ requirements - STAGE THREE

	Code requirement	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	
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 • 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	

Best practice ‘should’ requirements – STAGE ONE

	Code requirement	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.	Y	We will always agree any extension with the resident, explaining the reason for the extension and the rights to contact the Housing Ombudsman.
5.3	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide	Y	As above, we provide the Housing Ombudsman contact details when agreeing an extension.

	the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.		
5.4	Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident.	Y	As part of our investigation, we will always seek to understand if the matter is reoccurring when considering how we reach a resolution with the resident.
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.	Y	We will always include any relevant additional complaints during the complaints process providing it would not cause an unreasonable delay to the resident.

Best practice 'should' requirements – STAGE TWO

	Code requirement	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.	Y	We will always contact the resident to discuss any extension that we may need to investigate their complaint.
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.	Y	We will always contact the resident to discuss and agree any extension that we need to investigate a complaint, providing the Housing Ombudsman details in line with the Complaint Handling Code.

Best practice 'should' requirements – STAGE THREE

	Code requirement	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	We do not have a third stage in our complaints process.
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	N/A	N/A

	proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.		
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Section 6 – Putting things right

Mandatory 'must' requirements

	Code requirement	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.	Y	We will always clearly outline where something has gone wrong and the actions we are taking to remedy the complaint in our response letter to the resident. This will include the lessons learnt that help inform process improvements.
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.	Y	All remedies offered are assessed in line with our internal policies and the guidance provided by the Housing Ombudsman Service.
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.	Y	We will always clearly set out the actions we will take and by when. We will not close a complaint until all actions have been completed.
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.	Y	All compensation payments are considered in line with our compensation policy and the guidance provided by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Best practice 'should' requirements

	Code requirement	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.	Y – room to improve	We look at complaint themes on a monthly basis and use this insight to help drive our continuous improvement activity. This is an area we want to continue to improve, working closely with our Voice of the Customer panel once established.
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.	Y	

Section 7 – Continuous learning and improvement

Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

	Code requirement	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.	Y	We are establishing a Voice of the Customer panel where we will regularly share learnings from complaints. We also share learnings from complaints in our Customer Annual Report and regular service updates. Complaints are discussed regularly at team meetings and at our all employee meetings.

Best practice ‘should’ requirements

	Code requirement	Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
7.3	A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord’s complaint handling performance.	Y	settle Board member and Chair of Operations Committee, Simon Oates, will hold responsibility for complaint handling at settle.
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. 	Y	This information will be shared at the Operations Committee on a quarterly basis.
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.	Y	We share complaint information with the senior leadership at settle on a monthly basis.

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 • 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. 	Y	We have introduced a standard objective for all frontline colleagues at settle.
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Section 8 – Self-assessment and compliance

Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

	Code requirement	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.	Y	We will complete this self-assessment annually in October, or if we carry out a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Y	This self-assessment will be reviewed in line with any significant change in structure or procedure.
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. 	Y	This self-assessment will be shared with our Operations Committee, a sub Committee of Board annually.