



Housing Ombudsman Appendix B – Self-Assessment Form BeST Jan 2022

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and discussed at the landlord’s governing body annually.

Evidence should be included to support all statements with additional commentary as necessary.

Explanations must also be provided where a mandatory ‘must’ requirement is not met to set out the rationale for the alternative approach adopted and why this delivers a better outcome.

Section 1 - Definition of a complaint

Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.</i>	Yes	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk) Page 6
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	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk) Page 6
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.		



1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk) Page 7
1.8	A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered, and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents.	Yes	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk) Page 6
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	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk) Page 8

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
1.4	Landlords should recognise the difference between a service request , where a resident may be unhappy with a situation that they wish to have rectified, and a complaint about the service they have/have not received.	Yes	Staff Training has been rolled out during October /Nov 2021 delivered by HQN
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	TSS feedback is picked up individually by the Tenant Involvement and Engagement Officer this is provided via Acuity who undertake our biannual TSS We use voicescape as a TSS tool for repairs and maintenance service any complaints raise via this platform are logged on our system any dissatisfaction is also promptly investigated



Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
2.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which residents can make a complaint such as in person, over the telephone, in writing, by email and digitally. While the Ombudsman recognises that it may not be feasible for a landlord to use all of the potential channels, there must be more than one route of access into the complaints system.	Yes	<p>Leaflet and easy read on website www.bestha.co.uk/documents.php Tenants Annual Report www.bestha.co.uk/all-reports.php Complaints and Compliments form Complaints and Compliments - Bespoke Supportive Tenancies (bestha.co.uk) Feedback and Suggestion form www.bestha.co.uk/feedback-and-suggestions.php</p> <p>Registered Office: 2A Sentinel House, Albert St, Eccles, Manchester, M30 0NJ</p> <p>Telephone: 0161 786 6000</p> <p>Email: complaints@bestha.co.uk</p>

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	Leaflet Easy Read on website www.bestha.co.uk/documents.php
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	Leaflet Easy Read on website www.bestha.co.uk/documents.php
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	Equality Impact Assessment
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	Standard Letters templates Easy Read www.bestha.co.uk/documents.php
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	Snippets Tenants Newsletter www.bestha.co.uk/snippets.php Tenants Annual Report www.bestha.co.uk/all-reports.php
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	Standard Letters templates



Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
2.2	Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate with its residents via social media, then it should expect to receive complaints via those channels. Policies should contain details of the steps that will be taken when a complaint is received via social media and how confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.	Yes	www.facebook.com/BespokeSupportiveTenancies

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
3.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure complaints receive the necessary attention, and that these are reported to the governing body. This Code will refer to that person or team as the "complaints officer".	Yes	We have a portfolio Manager who is designated as our Complaints Handler
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: 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 • have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. 	Yes	Additional Training has been provided via links to TPAS https://www.tpas.org.uk/tpas-events/e-learning?eligibility=&search=Ombudsman Head of Housing Operations Complaint Handler (portfolio Manager) Tenant Engagement & Involvement lead

Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: 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.	Yes	

	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 .		
4.2	Within the complaint acknowledgement, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.	Yes	Standard letters
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	Complaints Handling Training has been delivered to all staff that ensures staff are aware of impartiality
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 thoroughly investigate the matter. 	Yes	All staff have been on a complaint handling training course delivered by HQN Nov 2021
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication	Yes	
4.12	The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position 	Yes	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	No	This is detailed in our procedure. Our Policy needs updating to reflect this
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.	No	Our Policy needs updating to reflect this
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	All complaints are logged on our Sassha data base on individual tenant's accounts
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	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk) Page 8 section 9

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
4.3	Landlords should manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic	Yes	All Housing Management Staff and Asset Management team have been on Complaint Handling courses with HQN Nov 2021

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	Our complaints data reported to our board details our response times
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	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk)
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	
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	All Housing Management Staff and Asset Management team have been on Complaint Handling courses with HQN Nov 2021 and are aware of this advice
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	Our procedure details updates to tenants
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.	No	Our Policy process needs to reflect this and
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	All Housing Management Staff and Asset Management team have been on Complaint Handling courses with HQN Nov 2021
4.19	Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their	Yes	Equality Impact assessment

	needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.		
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Section 5 - Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.1	Landlords must respond to the complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	Yes	Our procedure details timescales to tenants
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	Our complaints procedure details 5 working days
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	
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 stages • 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 	Yes	Our standard letters detail this

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer 		
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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	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk) Page 10 section 11
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	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk) Page 10 section 11
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	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk)
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk)
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	This is detailed in our Complaints procedure

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 stages 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	Our Standard letters detail this
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Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.17	<p>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.</p>	No	<p>Our policy is a three stage process the policy needs to be revised to reflect this code requirement</p>
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 stages the complaint definition the decision on the complaint 	Yes	Our Standard letters detail this

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		
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Best practice ‘should’ requirements

Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.2	If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	This is detailed in our Complaints procedure
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	This is detailed in our Complaints procedure. And detailed in our standard letters.
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.	No	This needs to be addressed in the policy and our process
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.	No	This needs to be addressed in the policy and our process

Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.14	If an extension beyond 10 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	This is detailed in our procedure
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	This is detailed in our standard letters

Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.18	Complaints should only go to a third stage if the resident has actively requested a third stage review of their complaint. Where a third stage is in place and has been requested, landlords must respond to the stage three complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a date for when the stage three response will be received should be provided to the resident.	Yes	This is detailed in our standard letters
5.19	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.	Yes	This is detailed in our standard letters

Section 6 - Putting things right

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
6.1	Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right.	Yes	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk)
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	complaints-and-compliments-policy-v1.pdf (bestha.co.uk)
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.	No	Our Standard letters will need to be reviewed and updated to reflect this
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.	No	Our policy and process needs to reflect this and updated

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
6.3	Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be 'put right' in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all residents.	No	Our policy and process need to reflect this and updated



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.	No	Our policy and process need to reflect this and updated
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Section 7 - Continuous learning and improvement

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
7.2	Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints in their annual report and more frequently to their residents, staff and scrutiny panels.	No	Board receive quarterly complaints data further analysis on learning needs to be undertaken. Complaints data is reported in the Tenants annual report however the learning from complaints needs further improvement www.bestha.co.uk/admin/uploads/file/best-annual-report-to-tenants-2021.pdf

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
7.3	A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.	No	This needs to be raised at board level and a decision made who is to have lead responsibility at board level on this matter

7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive:	Yes	
	<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 	No	Board are provided with minimum data no trend analysis is provided
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, 	yes	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable 	N/A	To date BeST have had no Housing Ombudsman finding of maladministration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	No	This is produced annually and needs to be presented to board for scrutiny and challenge
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.	No	A process needs to be agreed that reports on themes and trends should be reported to the Executive Team on an annual basis
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 	No	BeST should work toward having 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, collaborating with colleagues across teams and departments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing.
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Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
8.1	Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.	Yes	A self-assessment is carried out
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	No	There has not been a significant restructure within the organisation
8.3	Following each self-assessment, a landlord must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self-assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance 	No	This has not so far been reported to our boards