

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>	N	NLM’s policy defines a complaint as: “An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents”.	The definition is almost the same with the difference in the words ‘landlord’ and ‘organisation’. No change is required in the policy as NLM ‘the organisation’ is a landlord of all its properties.
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	NLM policy outlines: “The customer does not have to use the word complaint in order for it to be treated as such.”	
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	Section 6 of NLM policy describes service requests	

	recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.			
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	As per NLM policy	
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	Policy has been amended during the year to reflect this.	

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	Exclusions are under section 4 of the policy	
2.2	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: • 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	Exclusions are under section 4 of the policy which include: • Service failure over six months • Legal action • Repeated complaints	

	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	Policy has been changed during the year to 12 months	
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	NLM has signed upto the housing Ombudsman scheme and will comply with directions	
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Y	Every complaint is assessed on its merit	

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	NLM has various channels for residents to contact us including making complaints. Verbally over telephone, Written letter, email, in-person coming into the office. Section 5 of the policy also addresses reasonable adjustments where required.	
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	All staff have had training on dealing with complaints as well as review of the Policy.	
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	NLM has various avenues of receiving complaints and has proportionate number of complaints.	

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	Complaints policy is on NLM website and has clear defined days for dealing with complaints.	
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	Policy includes email address for dealing with complaints as well as details on how to contact the Ombudsman. Telephone number added.	
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	This is outlined in section 3 of the policy	
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	Section 8 is on the Ombudsman service	

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	NLM has the director of the department as the overall responsible person for receiving complaints and allocating it to be addressed. Usually the managers for the purpose of dealing complaints are then the 'complaints officer' and deal with complaints at stage 1.	
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	Officers work with all relevant departments and are given autonomy to resolve 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 core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Y	NLM has taken an approach of 'nip-it at the bud' in dealing with resident dissatisfaction. All staff have also had customer care training to ensure that residents receive a good service. Where residents complaint, these are taken seriously and a resolution is sought as soon as possible.	

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	Only one Complaints policy, which can be found on our website	
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	Policy has two stage complaint handling.	
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	Policy has two stage complaint handling.	
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 this Code. Residents must not be	Y	Complaint is monitored by NLM staff who ensure timescales are adhered.	

	expected to go through two complaints processes.			
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Y	Complaint is monitored by NLM staff who ensure timescales are adhered.	
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	NLM uses standard templates from the Ombudsman to respond to complaints. These letters clearly set out the nature of the complaint and resolution required by the resident.	
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	Complaints response template outlines the details of the complaint as well as resolutions.	
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: 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	All complaints are dealt independently, Complaints officer investigates and gathers information from SDM records, staff and residents. They review the information on its merit and make a decision based on their findings. If complaints are seen to create a conflict of interest,	

	c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.		these are assigned to officers who are independent of the situation.	
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	In policy document for both stages 1 and 2	
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	Reasonable adjustments in section 5 of the policy	
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	As per NLM policy	
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original	Y	All complaints and actions relating to complaints are	

	complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.		recorded in the SDM software against the tenant record.	
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.	Y	Managers have inter-department meetings on a weekly basis to discuss cases and provide resolutions.	
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	NLM has housing Management Policy which encompasses Anti-social Behaviour. All reports of ASB are dealt under this policy.	
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	NLM have not had any cases where restrictions on contact have been placed due to ASB. NLM has an Equality and Diversity policy which covers this area.	

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	Outlined under section 7 of the NLM policy	
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Y	Outlined under section 7 of the NLM policy	
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Y	Outlined under section 7 of the NLM policy	
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	Y	Outlined under section 7.2.2 of the NLM policy	

	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.			
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	Contact details of the Ombudsman are included at every stage of the complaint handling procedure	
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	All complaints are answered within the earliest timescales with actions being taken. Where repair jobs are carried scheduled, residents are notified of the dates.	
6.7	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	Response letters to residents provide answer and explanation of every-single point raised in the complaint	
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	Y	The scope of the complaint are agreed with the resident in writing to ensure clarity in providing a resolution. After the response is sent the resident is also given time to clarify any matters that they feel were not addressed	

	investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.			
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: 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	All provided in response letters to the complainant.	

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	2 stage complaint process, after which the complaint can be taken to the regulator	
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure	Y	Standard template used to produce acknowledgement letter	

	within five working days of the escalation request being received.		with relevant information as stated in the code	
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	No explanation required as per responses sent to residents outlining escalation process.	
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Y	Stage 2 is dealt with by the director of the department, whereas stage 1 was dealt with by managers	
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Y	As outlined by the policy under section 7	
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 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Y	As outlined by the policy under section 7	
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	Standard template used to produce letter with relevant information as stated in the code	
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the	Y	All complaints are answered within the earliest timescales with actions being taken. Where	

	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.		repair jobs are carried scheduled, residents are notified of the dates.	
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	Response letters to residents provide answer and explanation of every-single point raised in the complaint	
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: 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 the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.	Y	All provided in response letters to the complainant.	
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Y	Directors work with all relevant staff to gather information and delegate actions where required.	

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	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: • 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; • Changing policies, procedures or practices.	Y	This is evidenced in the complaint handling. One example of this was of a property with mould growth. Residents were decanted, apology was provided, remedial works were carried out and offer of financial remedy also provided. Cases was reviewed, but change in policy was not required.	
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Y	See above	
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where	Y	Offer of remedy was provided in writing and conditions of acceptance were outlined.	

	appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.			
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Y	NLM's complaints policy has been devised to be in-line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint handling code and taken consideration of various factors when deciding remedies, including vulnerabilities.	

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: 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 Complaints Performance and Service Report created for review by the Board of Management	

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	Report to be published once review has been carried out by Board	
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	N/A	No significant changes	NLM will review its self assessment following changes identified
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	N/A	No request received	NLM will review its self assessment if requested.
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.	Y	Directions Noted and to be actioned if circumstances arise	Directions Noted and to be actioned if circumstances arise

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.	Y	Exercise carried out as part of Annual Complaints Performance and Service Report	
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.	Y	Exercise carried out as part of Annual Complaints Performance and Service Report	
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 stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Y	Exercise carried out as part of Annual Complaints Performance and Service Report	
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.	Y	Directors of each department have responsibility to reflect on learning from complaints and effect change where required.	

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	NLM Board has appointed a Board Champion on complaints who is also the MRC. Complaints are also reviewed at the committee level with members scrutinising each compliant	
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	The MRC is working with the department director to retrieve information they require. The Housing and Services committee has also reviewed sample of individual complaints.	
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and	Y	Report on complaints are provided to the quarterly committee and board meetings. Extensive discussions take place on complaint handling during committee meetings	

	d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.			
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.	Y	We provide training on complaints across teams to ensure consistency in handling complaints. Teams carry out cross-department case reviews to resolve multi-faceted cases and enhance learning from complaints.	