

Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment For Yorkshire Housing

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.

Date of self-assessment - October 2023

Completed with – Customer Complaints Forum members, Angela Havens, Head of Customer Service Delivery; Susan Godbold, Customer Insight and Engagement Manager and Neetu Singh, Customer Resolution Team Manager.

Assurance and approval from the Homes and Places Committee, 30 October 2023.

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	Defined in the Customer Feedback Policy. This policy is reviewed every three years (last review October 2023) or with every change in the Complaints Handling Code to make sure that it's compliant.
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	Referenced in the Customer Feedback Policy. Colleague training embeds how to recognise a complaint even when the word “complaint” isn't used.
1.6	...if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.	Yes	All complaints are logged. Expressions of dissatisfaction that can be resolved on the spot are done immediately and logged on our IT system. Complaints that cannot be resolved quickly or where the customer requests it are logged as Stage 1 complaints as part of the complaint's resolution process.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
			Colleague training promotes the right processes, ensuring that service requests and complaints are recognised and logged correctly. The customer resolution team triages and manages all complaints and feedback for the business.
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	Complaints are accepted in all cases unless outlined in the Customer Feedback Policy as an exclusion.
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	This is referenced in the Customer Feedback Policy in “what is not a complaint” section with examples.
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	We have a process for concerns raised that are exempt from the complaint process as set out within the Customer Feedback Policy. In this case, if the Complaint Team does not accept a complaint as it's outside the policy, a detailed letter explaining why is sent to the customer. We also let the customer know how they can contact the Housing Ombudsman for advice about our decision.

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	Customer Feedback Policy – referenced under what is not a complaint. All colleagues who investigate complaints have training in how to understand the difference between service requests and other different types of feedback.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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	All customer surveys are carried out by an external partner who offer details of how to raise a complaint if a customer expresses dissatisfaction.

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	Customers can make a complaint by email, letter, phone, in person, website, customer portal, social media or through a third party. This is referenced in the customer feedback guide here . All complaint channels are detailed in the Customer Feedback Policy and on our website.
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	The Customer Feedback Policy has an easy read customer version online here . This is also given to customers when a complaint is acknowledged.
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	Our website has a feedback page where all complaint information is available including access to the customer guide.
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	We have a separate Accessible Services Policy and all complaint handlers have had training on the policy and approach. This policy has been reviewed in partnership with our Customers, September 2023. There is a section on the YH website if customers need reasonable adjustments here .

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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	The Customer Feedback Policy and information about the complaint handling code is available on our website here .
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	The Housing Ombudsman's contact details are on the complaint letters from the acknowledgment stage. They are also included in the customer feedback policy and customer guide on the website.
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	As 2.7 plus we advise the customer that they can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage of the process in all of our correspondence.

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	Social media complaints are handled in the same way as all other complaints. This is detailed in our customer feedback policy.

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	<p>We have a dedicated Customer Resolution Team in place which consists of a manager, Customer Resolution Team Manager, 2 x Customer Resolution Experts, 3 x Complaints Officers and 2 x Customer Resolution Coordinators.</p> <p>Complaints performance is reported to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).</p> <p>The Homes and Places Committee (HPC) receives quarterly complaints reports and has delegated responsibility.</p> <p>Customer Voice and Review Committee (CVRC) and Complaints Forum monitor complaints handling from a customer perspective.</p>
3.2	The complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	<p>The Customer Resolution Team is independent of the rest of the business and intensively trained in complaint handling. Complaints are triaged within the Customer Resolution Team and any conflicts of interest are highlighted at the first point so that complaints are handled in a compliant way.</p> <p>The Stage 2 process provides further assurance there are no conflicts of interest as these are completed by Heads of Service and senior managers across the business. All have the necessary skills and training.</p>

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.3	<p>Complaint handlers should:</p> <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	<p>The Customer Resolution Team and Stage 2 complaint handlers around the organisation have received extensive training on all aspects of complaints. This includes training on positive complaint handling behaviours and the need to act sensitively and fairly, with empathy.</p> <p>The team have access to all systems and have a list of complaint service leads across the business to contact and get information quickly.</p> <p>They have the autonomy to resolve complaints quickly, offering customer focused remedies, including goodwill gestures and compensation.</p>

Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.1	<p>Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord's audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident's concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'pre-complaint stage') as this causes unnecessary confusion for residents. When a complaint is made, it must be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure within five days of receipt.</p>	Yes	<p>All complaints are logged onto the system including any resolved at first point of contact.</p> <p>The Customer Experience Centre (CEC) colleagues have been trained in how to resolve complaints at the first point of contact wherever possible, making sure that it's always in agreement with the customer. Details are then recorded on our customer record management system so that we have a full audit trail and can use the insight as learning.</p> <p>Processes, policy and systems are all aligned to make sure that customer complaints are logged and acknowledged within five days of receipt.</p>

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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	The customer resolution team contact the customers by phone where possible to make sure that we have full understanding and record this on our customer record management system. The complaint acknowledgement letter includes the expected outcome.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	Referenced in the Customer Feedback Policy. The Customer Resolution Team are independent of the business and are impartial. Stage 2 process - complaints are reviewed by managers and Heads of Service that are impartial to the original complaint and may not be from the service area where the complaint occurred.
4.7	<p>The complaint handler must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with complaints on their merits • act independently and have an open mind • take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest • consider all information and evidence carefully • keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter. 	Yes	All complaints handlers receive training on how to investigate complaints fairly, fully and independently. Quality checks are completed by the Customer Resolution Team Manager. All colleagues receive General Data Protection Training (GDPR) training which is clear around the responsibilities of not sharing information unless necessary.
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication.	Yes	As part of the investigation process, the Customer Resolution Team makes an agreement with the customer on how and when the customer will be contacted. This is recorded in the customer record management system.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.12	<p>The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 	Yes	<p>Outlined in the Customer Feedback Policy. Customers are contacted at the beginning of the complaint by the Complaints Officer. If a colleague is the subject of the complaint, their line manager is contacted with the full details who then investigates the customers concerns in- line with internal people procedures. The evidence of which is shared with the Complaints Officer and is considered as part of the investigation outcome. The customer and the colleague are updated with the outcome of the investigation.</p>
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	Yes	This is included in the Customer Feedback Policy.
4.14	A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure and must have clear and valid reasons for taking that course of action. Reasons for declining to escalate a complaint must be clearly set out in a landlord's complaints policy and must be the same as the reasons for not accepting a complaint.	Yes	The Customer Feedback Policy clearly sets out the reason why we would not accept or escalate complaints. Where we've been unable to resolve this for the customer, they're advised of their right to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman.
4.15	A full record must be kept of the complaints, 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 details of the complaint and any evidence is saved within the customer record management system. A timeline of the complaint is also created by the Customer Resolution Team for all complaints and saved within team shared folders.
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	There is an unreasonable, persistent and vexatious customer section in the Customer Feedback Policy. We also have an Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy in place which covers customers and their representatives. Details of unreasonable behaviour are on the YH website here .

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	The expected outcome is recorded when complaints are raised. Complaints officers receive training on what is expected from the complaint investigation process, including managing customer expectations.
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	Stage 1 timescales – 10 days. Stage 2 timescales – 20 days. Complaints officers receive training on what is expected from the complaint investigation process, including resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity. The customer resolution coordinators also triage all complaints to resolve complaints at that point.
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	The opportunity for customers to have a representative is set out within the Customer Feedback Policy. Complaints are assessed against the policy "what is a complaint". Any reasonable adjustments for customers, including being accompanied at any meeting are considered in the Accessible Services Policy.
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	Tenancy agreements are used as part of the complaints resolution process to set out any legal obligations. Other related legal obligations are checked through with a legal partner through our Claims Team.
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	All colleagues receive GDPR and refresher training via e-Learning. Quality checks are in place on Stage 1 and Stage 2 letters and form part of the complaint's procedures.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	Communication is a key point of the complaints handling process and the complaints officers have been trained in the importance of this. All contact with the customer during the complaints process is added to the customer record management system.
4.16	Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord's complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and learning culture.	Yes	Satisfaction surveys are sent out after each complaint by a third-party survey provider. All feedback, including lessons learnt, is provided to the Customer Complaints Forum and is assessed monthly to continually improve the complaints process. This is done through an action log that is tracked by the Customer Resolution Team Manager.
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	The Customer Resolution Team supports the whole business with the handling of complaints. Managers ensure colleagues are supported and engaged across the business via 1:2:1s. Case reviews for complex complaints are completed with operational teams.
4.19	Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	This is outlined in the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy.

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	This is detailed in the Customer Feedback Policy. Also monitored and tracked by the Customer Resolution Team Manager through a live performance management dashboard. KPI's are in place to measure performance, they are reviewed monthly by the SLT. Any extensions due to exceptional circumstances are agreed with the customer in line with the complaint handling code at the earliest opportunity. This is recorded on our customer record management system.
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 carried out expeditiously with regular updates provided to the resident.	Yes	The Customer Resolution Team records outstanding actions on an action tracker. Customers are advised at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of follow up actions with timescales. All actions are monitored within the Customer Resolution Team by the customer resolution coordinators and escalated to service teams and managers as required.
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	Included in Stage 1 and Stage 2 outcome letters. Also outlined in the Customer Feedback Policy. The complaint officers ensure that all points raised in the complaint are responded to and detailed reasons for the decisions that have been made following the investigation of the complaint. Quality checks in place conducted by the Customer Resolution Team Manager.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.8	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer. 	Yes	This is covered in the customer resolution team training. Referenced in the Customer Feedback Policy and incorporated into the outcome letter guidance templates and internal complaint guides. Included in Stage 1 and Stage 2 outcome letters. Quality check in place, conducted by the Customer Resolution Team Manager to ensure compliance.

Stage 2

Best practice 'should' requirements

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	We would escalate all complaints, unless the exclusion criteria applies to Stage 2 for final resolution. The Customer Feedback Policy sets out the reason why we would not accept or escalate a complaint. In these circumstances, the customer is informed in writing the reasons why. The customer is also informed by letter of their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman.
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	The Customer Resolution Team set this out as part of the complaint acknowledgement process and in the acknowledgement letter. Customers are contacted directly to confirm their understanding.
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	This is set out in the Customer Feedback Policy and the Stage 2 internal complaint guides. Compliance is also checked routinely with the Complaints Team.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	The YH processes are designed to ensure complete segregation of responsibilities at each stage. Stage 1 complaints being investigated by the Customer Resolution Team and Stage 2 complaints investigated by senior colleagues in the business.
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 the Customer Feedback Policy and is monitored and tracked by the customer resolution team manager through a live performance dashboard. We have a process for complaint extensions called “stop the clock” which are approved by the Customer Resolution Team Manager to ensure compliance. All extended complaints are tracked and monitored through the live dashboard. Bi-weekly updates are also shared with the business to ensure visibility of complaints. Progress is monitored within service areas and at senior level. KPI’s are in place and reviewed on a monthly basis by the leadership team and actions for improvement tracked and monitored.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.16	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage three. <p>if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied.</p>	Yes	<p>Incorporated into Stage 2 outcome letters.</p> <p>Referenced in the customer feedback policy and in our internal Stage 2 complaint guides.</p> <p>Stage 2 complaint handlers are trained in these expectations. The outcome letter templates also support this element with mandatory details about how a customer can escalate their complaint.</p> <p>Stage 2 outcome letters are also checked by the Customer Resolution Lead and or the Customer Insight and Engagement Manager to ensure compliance.</p> <p>There is no third stage, so this is not applicable.</p>

**Stage 3
Mandatory ‘must’ requirements**

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>	NA	We do not have Stage 3.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply : Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.20	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied. 	NA	We do not have Stage 3.

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	We have a process for complaint extensions called “stop the clock” which is approved by The Customer Resolution Team Manager to ensure compliance. The process ensures that the customer agrees.
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	A stop the clock letter is always shared with the customer in cases where a complaint has been extended, detailing the reason for the agreement, details of the new timescale and how the customer can contact the Housing Ombudsman.
5.4	Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident.	Yes	This is completed as part of the fact finding at Stage 1. All complaints officers are fully trained to investigate this.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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.	Yes	The complaints officers will record any additional issues raised on the complaint system during an open stage of one complaint.

Best practice 'should' requirements

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	We have a process for complaint extensions beyond 10 working days which are approved by the Customer Resolution Team Manager to ensure compliance. The process includes seeking agreement from the customer on the time extension. A complaint extension is shared with the customer, detailing the reason for the agreement, details of the new timescale and how the customer can contact the Housing Ombudsman.
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	A complaint extension letter is shared with the customer in cases where a complaint has been extended, detailing the reason for the agreement, details of the new timescale and how the customer can contact the Housing Ombudsman.

Best practice 'should' requirements

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.	NA	We do not have Stage 3.
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.	NA	We do not have Stage 3.

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	<p>Stage 1 and Stage 2 letter templates and procedures include the dispute resolution options - letters sent to customers set out what went wrong and how we'll put things right. It also identifies specific lessons learned.</p> <p>Lessons learned are reviewed at the Heads of Service meetings monthly and reviewed by our Customer Complaints Forum. We also hold round table learning sessions for individual complaints where necessary to examine the root cause to prevent repeat complaints.</p> <p>Internal complaint guides outline this requirement and are in addition to the training undertaken by the Customer Resolution Team.</p> <p>Stage 1 and Stage 2 outcome letters are also checked by the Customer Resolution Team Manager and or the Customer Insight and Engagement Manager to ensure compliance.</p>
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	<p>Outlined in the Customer Feedback Policy under the complaint remedies and resolution section.</p> <p>We also have an internal compensation guide that is aligned to the Housing Ombudsman Service Remedies Guidance.</p> <p>All complaints officers are trained and empowered to provide the right remedy considering the service failure and detriment in each case.</p>

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
6.5	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	<p>Outlined in the Customer Feedback Policy under the complaint remedies and resolution section.</p> <p>Complaints officers are trained on what is expected from the complaint investigation process, including agreeing effective, fair and proportionate remedies with clear timescales.</p> <p>All remedies and action are logged and tracked by the complaints team and followed through to completion keeping the customer up to date throughout.</p>
6.6	In awarding compensation, a landlord must consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, the time and trouble a resident has been put to as well as any distress and inconvenience caused.	Yes	<p>Outlined in the Customer Feedback Policy under the compensation section.</p> <p>Complaints officers are trained in compensation consideration requirements, including agreeing effective, fair and proportionate remedies, with clear timescales.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman Service Remedies Guidance is used by complaints officers to decide the right outcomes.</p> <p>The internal compensation guide has also been developed to align with the remedies guide and gives clear guidance on what must be considered when agreeing compensation, including quantifiable losses and impacts on the customer.</p>

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.	Yes	<p>The Customer Resolution Team are responsible for recording and tracking all individual lessons learned from complaints. Wider learning identified is reported at a senior level on a monthly basis. This highlights wider business themes from complaints, including where a process or system change is needed to benefit all customers. Actions from decisions made at a senior level are tracked and monitored.</p> <p>Customers are also informed regularly what has changed as a result of complaints, through customer feedback processes and “you said, we did” reports on social media, the website and wider customer publications including the customer annual report.</p> <p>Updates are provided to CVRC, HPC, Your Voice Matters group, scrutiny pool members and YHL Board.</p>
6.7	In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. The landlord should still offer a resolution where possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolution should be worded.	Yes	<p>Complaint resolution experts have responsibility for handling complaints that also have a legal entitlement element. The process includes working alongside our Claims Team to find the quickest and fairest route to redress for the customer. The process also includes obtaining legal advice where needed.</p>

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.	Yes	<p>The Customer Resolution Team are responsible for recording and tracking all individual lessons learned from complaints. Wider learning identified is reported at a senior level on a monthly basis. This highlights wider business themes from complaints, root causes, including where a process or system change is needed to benefit all customers.</p> <p>Actions from decisions made at a senior level are tracked and monitored.</p> <p>Customers are also informed regularly what has changed as a result of complaints through customer feedback processes and "you said, we did" reports on social media, the website and wider customer publications including the customer annual report.</p> <p>Complaints are visible at Your Voice Matters group, scrutiny pool members in addition to the YHL Board receiving regular reports and updates.</p>

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.	Partial	Lead responsibility for complaints to confirmed by 31 March 2024.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
7.4	<p>As a minimum, governing bodies should receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman’s orders • Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, • The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable • Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge. 	Yes	<p>Complaints Reporting Framework – HPC review quarterly performance information on behalf of YHL Board. The self-assessment will be reviewed and signed off at the HPC annually in October or when there has been a major business change/re-structure. The self-assessment is reported for information to YHL Board annually in November.</p>
7.5	<p>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.</p>	Yes	<p>This was marked as an area for improvement at the last assessment and has now been agreed with customers that we are compliant. The Customer Resolution Team are responsible for recording and tracking all individual lessons learned from complaints. Wider learning identified is reported at a senior level on a monthly basis. This highlights wider business themes from complaints, root causes, including where a process or system change is needed to benefit all customers. Action from decisions made at a senior level are tracked and monitored. Customers are also informed regularly what has changed as a result of complaints through customer feedback processes and “you said, we did” reports on social media, the website and wider customer publications including the Customer Annual Report.</p>

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
			Complaints are visible at, Your Voice Matters group, scrutiny pool members in addition to the YHL Board receiving regular reports and updates.
7.6	Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments • take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others • act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing. 	Partial	We have ‘customer obsessed’ as one of our three strategic priorities within our Business Strategy. These are tracked as behaviours for each colleague through our people feedback systems. We don’t however have standard objectives in relation to complaint handling. This is an area of development and will be in place by the 31 March 2024.

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	The annual self-assessment is carried out together with the Customer Complaints Forum and completed by the Customer Insight and Engagement Manager and Head of Customer Service Delivery incorporating customer feedback. It is reviewed and signed off by our HPC and a copy shared with the YHL Board for information annually.
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Yes	The self-assessment process is owned by the Head of Customer Service Delivery and Customer Insight and Engagement Manager. The process includes mid-year assessment where necessary following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
8.3	<p>Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self-assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members • publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents • include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance. 	Yes	<p>For assurance and input, the self-assessment is also reported to governance committee, HPC and forms part of the terms of reference for this group. It is also shared with YHL Board for completeness.</p> <p>Following HPC approval, all self-assessments are shared on the Yorkshire Housing website and with the Housing Ombudsman on request.</p>