

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>	Yes	Complaints policy page 2, paragraph 8 <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>	As evidenced the complaints policy reflects this point
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 3, paragraph 1 <i>“A complaint will be raised when the customer raises dissatisfaction...”</i> Complaints policy page 4, paragraph 2 <i>“A member of staff has triggered the formal complaints process with the agreement of the customer to reach a resolution”</i> Complaints policy page 4, paragraph 3 <i>“Complaints are welcomed from all customers, their advocates,</i>	As evidenced the complaints policy reflects this point. Staff training updated 2024 to ensure the policy and practices are embedded

			<i>representatives or third parties affected by Reliance services."</i>	
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 recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	Complaints page 3, paragraph 1 <i>"A service request, where the customer is letting us know about a particular issue for the first time; for example, reporting a repair or an incident of anti-social behaviour. Service requests will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint will be raised when the customer raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request"</i>	As evidenced in the complaint policy, under the section titled "What is not a complaint" the attached quote outlines the difference between a service request and a complaint
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 3, paragraph 1 <i>"A complaint will be raised when the customer raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request"</i>	As evidenced the complaints policy reflects this point
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	Yes	Complaints policy page 1, paragraph 2 <i>"We encourage feedback by providing different channels through which customers can easily make a complaint."</i>	Complaints can be submitted through email, social media, phone calls, website, community liaison officers, our 0800 number, notice boards, our resident satisfaction team or any other member of staff

	their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.			
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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	Yes	Complaints policy page 2, subheading 2 <i>“What is not a complaint – Exclusions”</i>	Under this subheading a list of exclusions has been outlined
2.2	<p>A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. 	Mostly	<p>Complaints policy page 2 and page 3</p> <p><i>“• A comment, or series of comments, where the customer is making a suggestion about how we may improve or maintain our service</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A question, or series of questions, where a customer is requesting information about a service we provide</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A service request, where the customer is letting us know about a particular issue for the first time; for example, reporting a repair or an incident of anti-social behaviour. Service requests will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint will be raised when the customer raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request</i> 	Point 1 – Our policy considers any complaint that is dated 12 months prior to its acknowledgment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago unless the complaint relates to safeguarding or health and safety issues</i> <i>Legal proceedings have been started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Matters that have already been considered under the Complaints Policy</i> 	
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.	No	<p>Complaints policy page 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago unless the complaint relates to safeguarding or health and safety issues 	Our policy considers any complaint that is dated 12 months prior to its acknowledgment
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.	Yes	<p>Complaints policy page 2, 3.2</p> <p><i>“When we decide not to accept a complaint, we will provide an explanation setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. Customers have the right to challenge this decision by making an approach to the Housing Ombudsman.”</i></p>	As evidenced the complaints policy reflects this point

2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Complaints policy page 2, 3.2 <i>“When we decide not to accept a complaint, we will provide an explanation setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.”</i>	The individual circumstances of each complaint are considered as a personalised justification is to be provided in each circumstance where a complaint is excluded
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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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 2 <i>"We will make it easy for our customers to make a complaint in a way that is the most convenient for them, this could be in writing, over the telephone, via text or email or in person to a member of Reliance staff."</i> Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 2 <i>"We will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act..."</i>	As evidenced Reliance endeavours to provide different channels through which residents may raise a complaint in line with the Equality Act 2010
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 2 <i>"...to a member of Reliance staff."</i>	As evidenced the complaints policy reflects this point. All staff under the tenant and support department are given training and guidance on our complaints policy as well as having complaints training courses conducted
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and	Yes	Complaints policy page 2, paragraph 1	As evidenced the policy highlights how complaints provide an avenue of

	accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.		<i>"...customer complaints, which allow us to learn from experiences... make amendments to our working practices... We encourage feedback by providing different channels through which customers can easily make a complaint."</i>	learning and allow working practices to be improved. Noticeboards are mandatory in all properties under our provision where there is easy access to ways in which complaints can be made. (ref: 1.6)
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.	Partial	Website, Welcome pack, available in different formats.	Complaints policy review currently under development is easy read and alternative languages.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	Complaints policy page 2, paragraph 5 <i>"Reliance has completed its self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, which promotes the progressive use of complaints and provides a useful framework to support effective handling and prevention of complaints. This will be uploaded onto our website in due course and will be reviewed annually"</i>	As evidenced the complaints policy reflects this point. The is available on the website Social Housing Reliance Social Housing England (reliancehousing.co.uk)
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their	Yes	Complaints policy page 2, paragraph 1	As evidenced the complaints policy reflects this point

	<p>behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.</p>		<p><i>“... from customers and their representatives”</i> Complaints policy page 4, paragraph 3 <i>“Complaints are welcomed from all customers, their advocates, representatives or third parties affected by Reliance services.”</i></p>	
3.7	<p>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.</p>	Yes	<p>Complaints policy page 6, paragraph 1 <i>“...Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint, not only when the landlord’s complaints process is exhausted. Making a referral to the Ombudsman is free and further details can be found at: http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/”</i></p>	<p>As evidenced the complaints policy reflects this point. Ombudsman information can also be found on our website</p>

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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 1 <i>"...will be co-ordinated by our dedicated Complaints Officer"</i>	A dedicated complaints team is in place and each case is assigned to a dedicated complaints officer
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 3, paragraph 9 <i>"...empower our staff to resolve any concerns"</i>	Complaint officers undergo the relevant training to ensure they have the autonomy and initiative to resolve complaints promptly and fairly in accordance with our Complaints policy and procedure
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	Yes	Complaints policy page 3, paragraph 10 <i>"Reliance also recognises that that every customer interaction represents an opportunity for to gain feedback and insight. We will record all complaints on our system and run</i>	Monthly and Quarterly reports allow senior management and board members to have oversight into the complaints department. Independent surveys are also carried out

	core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively		<i>regular reports from the system to identify if there are any trends in customer dissatisfaction and any lessons that can be learnt."</i>	with tenants to identify concerns around complaints. Staff also have undergone training: Conflict resolution Course, Training on Complaints Policy and Procedure, Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding Training
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Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	The complaints policy can be found on the website	Policy and procedure reflect this point. Reliance reviews all complaints inline with its complaints policy which is inline with the Housing Ombudsman
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 1 <i>"The process has 2 stages..."</i>	Our complaints policy covers two stages of any complaint. Stage 1 - Complaints officers Stage 2 – Manager

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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 1 <i>"The process has 2 stages..."</i>	Our complaints policy covers two stages of any complaint. Stage 1 - Complaints officers Stage 2 – Manager
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 expected to go through two complaints processes.	N/A	MA's are fully aware of our complaints process and are only authorised to manage early resolution and have to escalate anything stage 1 to the complaints department.	Our managing agents are addressing early resolution only.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	Our Managing Agents are inline with our Policy	All Managing Agents are required to ensure our policy and procedure is embedded within their framework of complaints handling
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 3 <i>"The Complaints Officer will set out their understanding of issues and the outcomes the customer 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."</i>	This is the code followed within our complaint policy and implemented within our procedures.

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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 3 <i>"The Complaints Officer will set out their understanding of issues and the outcomes the customer 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."</i>	This is the code followed within our complaint policy and implemented within our procedures.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 	Yes	Reliance staff are trained in complaints handling and impartiality. Updated training sessions are held with all complaint's handlers	Staff also have undergone training: Conflict resolution Course, Training on Complaints Policy and Procedure, Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding Training
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 4 <i>"We will provide a full written response within ten working days. If this is not possible, an explanation and a date when the stage one response will be received will be communicated."</i>	Any extension on a complaint is relayed back to the complainant in writing for a request of extension outlining the reasons to why.
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 2	The Complaints Policy sets out that

	<p>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.</p>		<p><i>“We will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act...”</i></p>	<p>Reliance will ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged in accessing its services. Reliance make reasonable adjustments and will adapt the normal Complaints policy and procedure to accommodate an individual’s needs in line with the Equality Act and the Reliance Complaint handlers have had training to deal with such requests</p>
5.11	<p>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.</p>	Yes	<p>Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 6</p> <p><i>“If all or part the complaint is not resolved to the customer’s satisfaction at stage 1, the customer can request a review of the complaint within 10 days of receipt of the outcome unless an exclusion ground applies. If Reliance declines to escalate a complaint based on the exclusions listed above in “What is not a complaint”, we will set out the reasons for this in writing and also advise of the customers right to approach the Ombudsman about this decision.”</i></p>	<p>The Policy addresses this requirement.</p>

5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, 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 relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	Evidenced in our complaints database/ folders	Our complaints database records the aforementioned details
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.	Yes	Complaints Policy, Process and SOP's addresses this requirement.	The Policy addresses this requirement. Complaints officers have the authority to apply remedies that are appropriate and justified to resolve complaints at an early stage
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.	Yes	ASB Policy Unreasonable Behaviour Policy Residents Licence Agreement	This is evidenced in our ASB Policy, Unreasonable Behaviour Policy and Our Residents Licence Agreement
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.	Yes	Unreasonable Behaviour policy	The restrictions at Reliance are set out in the Unreasonable Behaviour policy

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.	Yes	Early Resolution and stage 1 complaints managed by complaint handlers. Policy page 3, 4.0	Complaint officers are trained to consider factors of every complaint and offer early resolutions such as apologies and early intervention.
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>	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 2 <i>"The complaint will be acknowledged within two working days."</i>	This is set out in the Complaints Policy
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 4 <i>"We will provide a full written response within ten working days"</i>	This is set out in the Complaints 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 of the expected timescale for response.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 4 <i>"We will provide a full written response within ten working days. If this is not possible, an explanation and a date"</i>	This is set out in the Complaints Policy

	Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.		<i>when the stage one response will be received will be communicated. This should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason."</i>	
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.	Yes	Policy page 4 5.1 and 5.2	Letter template for extensions
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.	Yes	This is set out in the complaints form, attached to complaints policy as appendix 1	This is set out in the Complaints Policy as appendix 1
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.	Yes	Response template used by case handlers prompting to provide relevant information.	Letter templates are used as a guide for staff, currently being developed using ombudsman's outcomes as a guidance.
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 5 <i>"Where a customer introduces new information or raises additional complaints during the investigation, these will be incorporated into the stage one response if they are relevant and the stage one response has not been issued. Where the stage one</i>	The Complaints Policy details this.

	delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.		<i>response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint will be logged as a new complaint."</i>	
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. 	Yes	Complaints policy page 4, paragraph 5 <i>"At the completion of each stage of the complaints process we will ensure that customers are communicated with and advised of the following information:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the complaint stage</i> • <i>the outcome of the complaint</i> • <i>the reasons for any decisions made</i> • <i>the details of any remedy offered to put things right</i> • <i>details of any outstanding actions</i> • <i>details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied"</i> 	The policy adheres to the code requirement and Reliance staff use Ombudsman letter templates as a guide.

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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 4, paragraph 5 <i>"Stage 2 Review - If all or part the complaint is not resolved to the customer's satisfaction at stage 1, the customer can request a review of the</i>	This is set out in the Complaints Policy

			<i>complaint within 10 days of receipt of the outcome..."</i>	
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaint's procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	Complaints policy and procedure page 4 and 5	Policy is aligned with complaints code 2024
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.	Yes	<i>Complaints policy page 5 "A senior Manager will set out their understanding of issues that have not been resolved and the outcomes the customer is seeking."</i>	This is set out in the Complaints Policy
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 7 "A senior Manager..."	Stage 1 is addressed by a complaints officer and Stage 2 is to be addressed by a senior manger
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 8 "...completed within 20 working days of the request."	This is in line with the Housing Ombudsman code
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 8 "If this is not possible, an explanation and a date when the stage two response will be received will be communicated. This should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason"	This is in line with the Housing Ombudsman code

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.	Yes	Extension letter templates includes the required information.	Being reviewed at present inline with code updates.
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.		This is set out in the Complaints Policy, Process and Appendix 1	Appendix 1 in policy.
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.	Yes	This is set out in the Complaints Policy, Process and Appendix 1 Response template used by case handlers prompting to provide relevant information.	Appendix 1 Letter templates are used as a guide for staff, currently being developed using ombudsman's outcomes as a guidance.
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	Yes	Complaints policy page 4, paragraph 5 <i>"At the completion of each stage of the complaints process we will ensure that customers are communicated with and advised of the following information:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the outcome of the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions 	This is in line with the Housing Ombudsman code

	g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied</i> 	
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.		<p>Complaints policy page 4, paragraph 5</p> <p><i>"The senior Manager will then consider the initial findings of the complaint investigation and may choose to take further action."</i></p>	This is set out in the Complaints Policy

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; 	Yes	<p>Complaints policy page 5, paragraph 6</p> <p><i>"Reliance will consider the following actions to put things right:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>acknowledging where things have gone wrong</i> • <i>providing an explanation, assistance or reasons</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>apologising</i> • <i>taking action if there has been a delay</i> • <i>reconsidering or changing a decision</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>amending a record</i> • <i>providing a financial remedy</i> • <i>changing policies or procedures"</i> 	This is in line with the Housing Ombudsman code

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing policies, procedures or practices. 			
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	<p>Complaints policy page 4</p> <p>"Complaints can be resolved in a number of ways. Any proposed remedy will reflect the extent of service failure and the level of detriment caused to the customer as a result"</p>	This is set out in the Complaints Policy
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	<p>Complaints policy page 4</p> <p>"Complaints Outcome"</p>	This is set out in the Complaints Policy
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	<p>Related policy, Documents, Legislation for the Complaints Policy is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulator of Social Housing - Consumer Standards - Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Reliance Anti-Social Behaviour Policy 	The complaints policy is built upon the legislation listed, one of which is the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	<p>Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 	Yes	Complaints policy page 6 "Reporting Structure and Learning Points"	The quarterly reports to Board have been provided since 2022 and are embedded in the governance framework.

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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 6 "Reporting Structure and Learning Points"	The quarterly reports to Board have been provided since 2022 and are embedded in the governance framework
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	Website	Most recent Self-Assessment Is shared on the Reliance website May 2023.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	This will take place should the ombudsman request this	This is being carried out in 2024
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.	Yes	Policy page 5, 4	Policy and letter template.

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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 6, paragraph 6 <i>"We will continue to monitor and share trends arising from complaint handling and any learning or changes made as a result of complaints."</i>	This is in line with the Housing Ombudsman code
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.	Yes	Complaints policy page 6, paragraph 6 <i>"We will continue to monitor and share trends arising from complaint handling and any learning or changes made as a result of complaints."</i>	This is in line with the Housing Ombudsman code
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.	Yes	Reports to be published in 2024 on website and Complaints cases will be reviewed as part of the resident's panel.	New website and resident's panel.
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,	Yes	Department Manager and Head of Operations.	Department Manager and Head of Operations.

	serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.			
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').	Yes	Board Member (COO)	Board Member (COO)
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.	Yes	Board Member (COO)	Board Member (COO)
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	Yes	Within current reports monthly, quarterly, yearend.	Within current reports monthly, quarterly, yearend.

	orders related to severe maladministration findings; and 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.	Yes	Internal Framework	All departments are trained in our complaints policy. Complaints officers undergo additional training throughout their employment. Regular reviews are done on our systems to ensure there is an equal and impartial response to all complaints in line with our policy which is in line with the Ombudsman code.

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy Checklist	
Policy Owner	Chief Operating Officer
Author	YDC
Version No.	1
Approved by Chief Executive	Yes
Approved by Board	Yes 27/04/2023
Date of Implementation	28/04/2023
Date of Last Review	15/04/2023
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Published on Website	Yes 28/04/2023
Policy Reference Number	

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Reliance Housing (Reliance) welcomes all feedback from customers and their representatives and recognises that this feedback provides valuable information that we can use to improve the services we offer.

A key part of this feedback is customer complaints, which allow us to learn from experiences where things may have gone wrong and make amendments to our working practices to ensure that they don't happen again. We encourage feedback by providing different channels through which customers can easily make a complaint.

The Board and Senior Managers at Reliance recognise that complaint handling is an important strategic role, providing vital insight on our performance and reputation.

Performance data on complaint handling will be considered by the Board alongside other key performance indicators to provide assurance, assess any risks, identify emerging trends and learning points to improve services to customers.

Reliance has completed its self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, which promotes the progressive use of complaints and provides a useful framework to support effective handling and prevention of complaints. This will be uploaded onto our website in due course and will be reviewed annually.

The Board has visibility of the volume and type of complaints received and the impact of our complaint handling on customers. In addition, it also considers any improvements made as a result of learning from complaints.

What is a Complaint - Definition

Reliance recognise that effective complaint handling is a customer focused process that enables customer voices to be listened to and understood.

We have used the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint which is "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".

What is not a complaint - Exclusions

There are a number of circumstances in which a matter will not be considered a complaint, and which we consider to be fair and reasonable in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code. These are:

- A comment, or series of comments, where the customer is making a suggestion about how we may improve or maintain our service
- A question, or series of questions, where a customer is requesting information about a

service we provide

- A service request, where the customer is letting us know about a particular issue for the first time; for example, reporting a repair or an incident of anti-social behaviour. Service requests will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint will be raised when the customer raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago unless the complaint relates to safeguarding or health and safety issues
- Legal proceedings have been started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court
- Matters that have already been considered under the Complaints Policy

When we decide not to accept a complaint, we will provide an explanation setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

Customers have the right to challenge this decision by making an approach to the Housing Ombudsman.

Reasonable Adjustments

Reliance will ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged in accessing our services. To this end we will make reasonable adjustments and will adapt the normal policy and procedure to accommodate an individual's needs. We will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act and the Reliance Complaint handlers have had training to deal with such requests. Examples of adjustments we can make include:

- Allowing more time than we would usually for someone to provide information
- Providing additional support such as a sign language interpreter
- Providing a copy of this policy in a clear and accessible format for all customers

Making a Complaint

We will always attempt to resolve a complaint at the first point of contact and empower our staff to resolve any concerns there and then. At this stage we will confirm our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes being sought with the customer.

Reliance also recognises that that every customer interaction represents an opportunity for to gain feedback and insight. We will record all complaints on our system and run regular reports from the system to identify if there are any trends in customer dissatisfaction and any lessons that can be learnt.

When we receive a complaint, we aim to deal with it there and then if we can.

If we are unable to resolve the complaint at the first point of contact, we will investigate under the formal complaints process.

A formal complaint can occur when:

- A customer is unhappy about a service that they have received from Reliance or the attempts that Reliance has made to resolve the issue

- A customer requests that the service they have received be reviewed by a Manager, or the customer has expressly asked for a complaint to enter the formal complaints process
- A member of staff has triggered the formal complaints process with the agreement of the customer to reach a resolution

Complaints are welcomed from all customers, their advocates, representatives or third parties affected by Reliance services.

A full record will be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage, including all correspondence with the customer, correspondence with other parties etc.

At the completion of each stage of the complaints process we will ensure that customers are communicated with and advised of the following information:

- the complaint stage
- the outcome of 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 if dissatisfied

Complaint Outcomes

Complaints can be resolved in a number of ways. Any proposed remedy will reflect the extent of service failure and the level of detriment caused to the customer as a result. Reliance will consider the following actions to put things right:-

- acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- apologising
- taking action if there has been a delay
- reconsidering or changing a decision
- amending a record
- providing a financial remedy
- changing policies or procedures

Reliance will consider the length of time that a situation has been ongoing, the frequency, the severity of any service failure, how the situation has impacted on the customer and their circumstances or vulnerabilities when considering the complaint remedy. In some cases, a complainant may have a legal entitlement to redress. In such cases, Reliance will offer a resolution where possible, as that may remove the need for the resident to pursue legal remedies.

The Complaints Process

The process has 2 stages and will be co-ordinated by our dedicated Complaints Officer:

Stage 1 - Investigation

We will make it easy for our customers to make a complaint in a way that is the most convenient for them, this could be in writing, over the telephone, via text or email or in person to a member of Reliance staff. The complaint will be acknowledged within two working days. We'll investigate the complaint and then discuss with the customer what needs to be done to resolve the issue.

The Complaints Officer will set out their understanding of issues and the outcomes the customer 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.

We will provide a full written response within ten working days. If this is not possible, an explanation and a date when the stage one response will be received will be communicated. This should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

Where a customer introduces new information or raises additional complaints during the investigation, these will 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 will be logged as a new complaint.

Stage 2 – Review

If all or part the complaint is not resolved to the customer's satisfaction at stage 1, the customer can request a review of the complaint within 10 days of receipt of the outcome unless an exclusion ground applies. If Reliance declines to escalate a complaint based on the exclusions listed above in "What is not a complaint", we will set out the reasons for this in writing and also advise of the customers right to approach the Ombudsman about this decision.

A senior Manager will set out their understanding of issues that have not been resolved and the outcomes the customer 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.

The senior Manager will then consider the initial findings of the complaint investigation and may choose to take further action. The review outcome will be completed within 20 working days of the request. If this is not possible, an explanation and a date when the stage two response will be received will be communicated. This should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

Housing Ombudsman

If the customer remains unhappy or dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, they can appeal to the Housing Ombudsman. Customers also have the right to access the Housing

Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint, not only when the landlord's complaints process is exhausted.

Making a referral to the Ombudsman is free and further details can be found at: <http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

This can either be done by the customer directly or can be co-ordinated through the dedicated Complaints Officer. The Housing Ombudsman Service considers complaints referred to them within 12 months of a landlord's final decision.

Related policy, Documents, Legislation

Regulator of Social Housing - Consumer Standards - Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Reliance Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Reporting Structure and Learning Points

- Quarterly performance reports will be presented to the Board on the volume, category, and outcome of complaints.
- We will continue to monitor and share trends arising from complaint handling and any learning or changes made as a result of complaints.
- The Board will review any orders from the Ombudsman and findings of severe maladministration of the Ombudsman, or any referrals by it to regulatory bodies.
- The Board will review annually the self-assessment to confirm that the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code is being applied.
- Any themes or trends will be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They will also be used to inform staff and contractor training.



Board Response to Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment for 2023/24

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024 Reliance Social Housing Board has considered the following documents:

- Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024 Self-Assessment
- Quarter 4 Complaints performance Board Report (April 24–June 24. Presented September 2024)

In reviewing these documents, the Board are assured that the self-assessment demonstrates that Reliance Social Housing is compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024 and that any complaints received from our customers will be handled in accordance with this code.

To provide added assurance to the Board, the Resident Experience Committee, examined and scrutinised the Complaint Code Self-Assessment and sought out evidence and clarification of various points contained within the self-assessment where it felt necessary. This level of challenge and scrutiny provided opportunities for Reliance to further improve and expand upon various areas of compliance within the self-assessment. All feedback was actioned either by incorporating into the report prior to it being presented to Board or as an agreement to build into ways of working for 2024/25.

The Board is aware that since the self-assessment was completed, a new complaints policy and procedure has been put in place with the new way of reporting to be used in quarter one. Training related to the rollout of this procedure has been delivered and will continue during 24/25 to ensure it is fully embedded and all staff will approach complaints in a clear, simple, empathetic and fairly.

It should also be noted that the Board are assured the new policy and procedure takes into account the recent actions arising from the Housing Ombudsman Determinations received by Reliance.

The Board take this opportunity to highlight their eagerness for progress reports during the year and to see how compliance with the new Consumer Standards and Tenant Satisfaction Measures will strengthen the evidence in next year's self-assessment.