

Self-Assessment Form

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

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

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

Section 1 - Definition of a complaint

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'</i>	No	The definition in the Complaints Policy 2020 is 'an expression of dissatisfaction with the Council, however made, whether justified or not. We aim to have our Corporate Complaints policy updated in December 2023 to ensure our definition of a complaint is in line with the Ombudsman's requirement.
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	A complaint is recorded upon an expression of dissatisfaction
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	As above
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	Section 5 of the complaints policy has a list of exclusions

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	Section 5 of the complaints policy lists circumstances under which we would not consider a complaint.
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	Where we are unable to accept a complaint would send out a letter/email to the complainant explaining our reasons for doing so. We would also refer the complainant to the relevant ombudsman scheme if they are unhappy with 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	Our policy lists examples of service request and complaints. We also provide training to our designated complaints officers to differentiate between the two
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.	No	Where a person is unhappy with the service received from the council we would signpost them to our complaints process. We are working to update our customer satisfaction surveys to incorporate this.

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 may make a complaint by telephone to any member of staff, via letter to the Complaints Team, Email to any service, in writing, in person or online via the online form.
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	Where a person has requested to have the policy in an accessible format, we would work to meet their requirements.
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 complaints process and policy is easy to find using the search function on the Croydon Council's webpage
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	Our policy states multiple ways in which a complainant can raise their concerns with the Council. We will update our policy to include that our approach is in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010.
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.	Partially Yes	We publicise our complaints policy, process and the Housing Ombudsman scheme on our webpage.

2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Partially Yes	As part of our complaints process we would inform residents of their right to refer their concerns to the ombudsman. We will look to increase our communication in our regular correspondence with residents.
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	We encourage our designated complaints officers to call complainants to acknowledge a stage 1 complaint at which point we would explain the next steps of the complaints process and the right to refer to the ombudsman. We also provide details of how to contact the ombudsman in our stage 1 responses and holding letters.

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.	No	We will look to update our complaints policy and process in 2023 to accept complaints via social media.

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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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	The Local Authority have a dedicated Complaints Team, comprising of a Manager and 4 Complaints Officers. We also have designated complaints officers assigned for each service team which investigates cases at stage 1 of the complaints process.
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	We provide ongoing training and support to all complaints staff.

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>Complaints Officers have authority to facilitate the resolution of complaints and escalation processes are in place for high profile cases.</p> <p>Officers are provided with training on effective dispute resolution. We have a learning page dedicated to complaint handling which details our complaints process and templates for responses. In addition to the training portal, we carry out training workshops with service teams and hold complex case forums to encourage a culture of learning. We also have a weekly newsletter issued to all DCO's to keep staff updated on key changes.</p>

Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.1	Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord's audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident's concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. 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 .	Yes	We aim to work with our residents to seek swift resolutions to complaints. All records relating to a complaint are kept on our case management system, Infreemation. As per our policy, we have a 2 stage process for complaints and all complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days as per the process.
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	Our complaint form requests for a complainant to confirm their desired outcome of a complaint. Our acknowledgments and responses to complaints include our understanding of the complaint and what the complainant has requested in order to resolve the case
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	We have a dedicated Corporate Complaints team and Designated Complaints Officers who are responsible for complaints.
4.7	The complaint handler must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deal with complaints on their merits act independently and have an open mind 	Yes	Our designated complaints officers are provided with effective complaint handling training prior to investigating complaints

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 		which includes the requirements set out in this code
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication	Yes	We make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010 and record this information on our CRM system. We take a complainants needs into consideration when corresponding with them in relation to a complaint.
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	We would take into consideration each parties comments before issuing a final decision.
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	Yes	We do not currently have any limitations in this regard.
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	Section 4 of our complaints policy explains our reasons for refusing to escalate a complaint and the process we follow in this regard
4.15	A full record must be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all	Yes	We record all details pertaining to a compliant on our case management system

	correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared.		
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	We have a Persistent and Vexatious complainants policy which details the procedure in place for managing unacceptable behaviour. Section 2.11 and 2.14 details where a restriction is put in place a review of the decision is carried out after 3 months.

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	We encourage all complaints to be acknowledged over the telephone with an aim to try and resolve the complaint as quickly as possible. We would use this opportunity to explain what is within our remit for consideration to manage the complainants 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	As above
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	We accept complaints made by representatives in line with our 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	Where a need is identified to clarify legal obligations we would look to share this information in our complaint response
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	We would communicate with any individuals associated with the investigation of a complaint where it assists the resident in understanding what we took into consideration and how we work to resolve the concerns raised. We would also provide contact details of any relevant people, where necessary as part of the resolution to the complaint.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	We agree how frequently we will keep a resident up to date about their complaint when acknowledging the case and in any event we provide our contact details for is a complainant wishes to discuss their case at any time.
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	We have a housing residents engagement panel who reviews cases and performance. We also have a customer satisfaction survey carried out to obtain feedback about our complaints handling process which feed into our transformation and improvement projects and programmes.
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	We hold regular performance review meetings with services to discuss trends and where support is required to improve services.

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	Our policy on vexatious and persistent complainants are in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and we review any restrictions every 3 months.
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Section 5 - Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.1	Landlords must respond to the complaint <u>within 10 working days</u> 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.	No	Our corporate complaints policy states we will issue responses to stage 1 complaints within 20 working days. We commit to updating our policy and process in December 2023 to 10 working days, in line with the code.
5.5	A complaint response must be sent to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue, are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned expeditiously with regular updates provided to the resident.	Yes	We issue a response to complaints as soon as we are able to clarify what we aim to do to put matters right. For stage 2 and ombudsman cases we track and monitor any actions to ensure the case is seen through to resolution.
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	Our templates require investigating officers to address each complaint point separately to resolve the complaint
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 	Yes	All complaints officers use templates to formulate responses to stage 1 complaints as per the guidance issued by the ombudsman

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer 		
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Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.9	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage one it must be progressed to stage two of the landlord's procedure, unless an exclusion ground now applies. In instances where a landlord declines to escalate a complaint it must clearly communicate in writing its reasons for not escalating as well as the resident's right to approach the Ombudsman about its decision.	Yes	Where a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint at stage 1, we would escalate this to stage 2 of the complaints process. In cases where we refuse to do this we would issue a letter/email to the complainant explaining our reasons for this as well as their right to refer to the 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	We would contact an individual and clarify a complaint and the desired outcome where necessary
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	
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	Stage 2 complaints are investigated by the Corporate Complaints Team which sits independently from the service.
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.	Partially Yes	Our complaints policy confirms the timescale to respond to stage 2 complaints is 20 working days We will update our policy in December 2023 to ensure extensions do not exceed 10 days without good reason.
5.16	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:	Yes	All complaints officers use templates to formulate responses to stage 2

	<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 • if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied. 		complaints as per the guidance issued by the ombudsman
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Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.17	Two stage landlord complaint procedures are ideal. This ensures that the complaint process is not unduly long. If landlords strongly believe a third stage is necessary, they must set out their reasons for this as part of their self-assessment. A process with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances.	NA	
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	

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	Where we are unable to respond to a complaint within 20 working days we would contact the resident to explain our reasons for this and agree a revised date.
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	Our holding letters advise complainants of their right to escalate a case to the ombudsman if they are unhappy with the time we have taken to respond.
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	We aim to consider all relevant history to a complaint case before making a decision
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	Where possible we will look to address additional concerns as part of the original complaint, if the matter is relevant.

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	Our complaints policy confirms the timescale to respond to stage 2 complaints is 20 working days

			We will update our policy in December 2023 to ensure extensions do not exceed 10 days without good reason.
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	We advise complainants of their right to refer to the ombudsman in cases where we are unable to agree an extension to provide a response.

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.	N/A	
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.	N/A	

Section 6 - Putting things right

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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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	Our complaints policy and training for staff sets out our approach to resolving complaints which includes the actions we intend to take to put matters right.
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	Our remedies offered are in line with the ombudsman guidance
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	Our complaint responses outline what we aim to do to put matters right and when. We also track and monitor commitments made at stage 2 of the complaints process to ensure a swift resolution.
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	We use the Ombudsman's remedies guide when awarding compensation and are updating an internal guide for Designated Complaints Officers to use when calculating redress.

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	We record lessons learnt for each complaint and complete a trend analysis with service teams to help make service improvements
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	When calculating redress, we would consider a residents legal entitlement alongside the guidance issued by the ombudsman.

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	We record lessons learnt for each complaint and complete a trend analysis with service teams to help make service improvements. We use feedback from complaints as an opportunity to drive transformation and improvement. Our performance data is shared quarterly and annually with the governing body, CMT and DMT

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.	Yes	Our appointed lead is the Mayor for Croydon
7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe 	Yes	The Mayor has access to our case management system and receive performance reports in this area. Reports issued to the governing body are in line with the guidance in the code

	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.		
7.5	Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training.	Yes	Feedback from lessons learnt are shared with operational groups and key stakeholders for service improvement.
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. 	Yes	We have objectives in relation to complaint handling for all employees who deal with complaints

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	
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Yes	
8.3	Following each self-assessment, a landlord must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self-assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members 	Yes	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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		
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