Appendix 1 – Self-Assessment Form- November 2022

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

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

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

Section 1 - Definition of a complaint

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: '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.	Yes	Our policy incorporates the HOS definition.
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	Our policy and customer leaflet is available on our website https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/media/mbhler2b/complaints-march-2022-version.pdf
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	Our policy and customer leaflet is available on request. https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/media/mbhler2b/complaints-march-2022-version.pdf
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	Our policy has exclusions and is available on request.

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	Our policy has exclusions and is available on request.
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.	No	This is done outside the complaint handling process. To record this formally we will make amendments to our systems by 31/03/23.

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 reflects the difference between service requests and a complaint.
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	We review survey outcomes and act on additional information provided. We will make clear in future surveys that customers are advised they can make a complaint.

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	We accept complaints regardless of medium. These include by telephone, email, in writing and social media.
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	Customer leaflet available on request and it can be found on our website. https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/media/mbhler2b/complaints-march-2022-version.pdf
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	Customer leaflet available on request and it can be found on our website. https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/media/mbhler2b/complaints-march-2022-version.pdf
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	An EIA has been completed with the complaints policy. Our policy also includes references to 'reasonable adjustments' for customers making complaints.
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	Complaints performance is reported on our website. Complaint handling code self-assessments are uploaded to our website. Complaints are reported through the customer annual report. We periodically add articles to our quarterly newsletter. All complaints standard letters make reference to the HOS scheme. Our

		customer leaflet makes reference to the HOS scheme.

2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	HOS details are incorporated into all standard complaint process letters and in our customer leaflet. We do not provide HOS contact information on day-to-day contact with customers. We do refer potential complainants to our customer leaflet on a case-by-case basis.
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.	Incorporated into all standard complaint process letters and in our customer leaflet.

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.		Complaint policy which is available on request. Any complaints received through social media is dealt with on a one-to-one basis with direct messaging and direct contact.

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure complaints receive the necessary attention, and that these are reported to the governing body. This Code will refer to that person or team as the "complaints officer".	Yes	We have a complaints team that oversee our process. They produce all reports for Committees and Board. They undertake training for complain handlers. Complete the annual self-assessment.
3.2	the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	We undertake regular training for complaint handlers. Where the complaint handler is the subject of a complaint, the matter is dealt with by an another complaint handler.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.3	Complaint handlers should: 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	We undertake regular training for complaint handlers. They are able to act with autonomy and authority. Delegated authority limits apply in matters like compensation.

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	At the outset every effort is made to resolve the customers concern. A complaint can also be logged while such matters are being attending to. All complaint handlers ensure appropriate actions are undertaken to address the concern raised, where it is appropriate to do so. Such as logging necessary repairs. We acknowledge all formally logged complaints within 24 hours in line with our service standards.

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.	No	When a complaint is formally logged the complaint handler must contact the customer to agree the scope of the complaint. And the full response covers all matters raised. We do not add a summary of the complaint in acknowledgement letters and we will work toward achieving this requirement through system changes by 31/03/23.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	We undertake training for complaint handlers on a regular basis. Complaints handlers work in line with our values which can be found on our website https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/about- us/corporate-publications/the-msv-way/
4.7	The complaint handler must: 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	We undertake training for complaint handlers on a regular basis. Complaints handlers work in line with our values which can be found on our website https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/about-us/corporate-publications/the-msv-way/
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication	Yes	This is done on a case by case basis and is reflected in our policy.
4.12	 The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to: set out their position comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 	Yes	We treat complaints about staff in a fair and open manner. Someone independent of the complaint is identified to handle complaints made about staff. The staff member who is the subject of the complaint is given the opportunity to et out their position. Our HR policies are applied when required based on the findings of the complaint. And staff have access to our Employee Assistant Programme for support.

4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	All our standard letters stipulate the time frame within which a complaint can be escalated.
4.14	A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints	We escalate complaints at the customers behest. We plan to update our policy and associated documents to reflect the reasons why a complaint cannot be escalated by 31/01/23.

	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.		We plan to update our policy and associated documents to reflect the reasons why a complaint cannot be escalated by 31/01/23.
4.15	A full record must be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared.	Yes	All communications are recorded against the complaint.
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	Our policy includes a vexatious complainants appendix which will be updated by 31/01/23.

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	This is done when the complaint handler contacts the customer after the complaint has been acknowledged.
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	Regardless of whether the complaint is formally lodged or not, we establish what we need to do to resolve the issues raised.
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	Subject to GDPR, a customer can have their complaint dealt with by any advocate or intermediary on their behalf. We only exclude legal representatives from doing so.
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.	No	We do not routinely make reference to legal obligations when dealing with complaints.

4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	We only mention staff and contractors where it is appropriate to do so, as part of the complaint. For example where a complaint relates to a named individual or contractor.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	Complaints handlers keep complainants up to date with complaint handling, in line with our service standards.
4.16	Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord's complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and learning culture.	No	We do not undertake a post case closure satisfaction survey. In the past, when we have, the returns have been low. As part of our system changes we will incorporate a phone call survey from members of the complaint team to conduct a survey by 31/03/23
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	Staff have access to an 'Employee Assistance Programme' should they require it. We establish themes within complaints which translate in to learning outcomes.
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	An EIA has been completed with our policy and the policy refers to 'reasonable adjustments'.

Section 5 - Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements

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	At all stages of our complaint process, full responses must be issued within 10 working days. Where this is not possible, the complaint handler must agree extensions with the customer.
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 full responses as soon as we can. We will leave complaints open after the full response has been issued if the customer expressly wishes to leave the complaint open. This is often so that agreed follow up actions can be completed. For example, repairs.

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	All complaint full responses cover all aspects of the complaint. Complaints handlers are required to call the customer at the outset to establish the scope of the complaint.
5.8	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language: 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	In our training with complaint handlers we cover all the points in 5.8. Where compensation is offered, it must be stipulated in the full response.

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.	No	We escalate complaints at the customers behest. We plan to update our policy and associated documents to reflect the reasons why a complaint cannot be escalated by 31/01/23. Reasons for declining escalation of a complaint will be referenced in contact with the customer and they'll be given details of the HOS scheme.
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	When a complaint is escalated, it is handled by a Senior leader within the business. Following acknowledgement,. The process requires them to contact the customer to understand why they remain dissatisfied and address such matters in their full response.
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	When a complaint is escalated, it is handled by a Senior leader within the business.
5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint <u>within 20</u> 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	Our standard is to respond to the complaint in full within 10 working days. Where more time is required to investigate the complaint and issue a full response, time extensions are agreed with the customer.
5.16	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language: • 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 and • if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage three • if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied.	Yes	In our training with complaint handlers we cover all the points in 5.8. Where compensation is offered, it must be stipulated in the full response. In all our standard full response templates, the customer is advised how to escalate the complaint to the subsequent stage. In all our standard full response templates, the customer is given contact details of the HOS.

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.	N/A	We operate a 3 stage complaints process.

	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:	Yes	In all our standard full response templates, the customer is advised how to escalate the
	 the complaint stage the complaint definition 		complaint to the subsequent stage.
5.20	 the complaint definition the decision on the complaint 		In all our standard full response templates, the
5.20	the reasons for any decisions made the details of any remarks offered to not things right.		customer is given contact details of the HOS.
	 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		

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	Complaints are kept open at the behest of the customer if for example, there are repairs that have been agreed.
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.	No	We plan to update our standard full response templates to reflect this best practice by 31/01/23.
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 considered at each stage of our process.
5.7	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these should be incorporated into the stage one response if they are relevant and the stage one response has not been issued. Where the stage one response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint.	No	We plan to update our practices in this regard to reflect this best practice by 31/01/23.

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.		Extensions to are agreed with the customer by complaint handlers.
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		We plan to update our practices in this regard to reflect this best practice by 31/01/23.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.18	actively requested a third stage review of their complaint. Where a third stage is in place and has been requested, landlords must respond to the stage three complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a date for when the stage three response will be received should be provided to the resident.	Yes	We have amended our policy to reflect an increase in the time we allow ourselves to issue a full response in light of the fact that the final stage includes a hearing which the customer can attend. We have found that we are unbale to respond in full within 10 working days, the current required timeframe because of the time it takes to arrange the hearing. Hearings are arranged on a date, time and venue that suits the customer.
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.	No	We plan to update our practices in this regard to reflect this best practice by 31/01/23.

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	In each case we address the matters that caused the customer to complain and put them 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	In addition to putting things right, we offer compensation where we feel it necessary. Or if the customer has requested compensation, we have a compensation policy which guides complaint handlers in assessing and issuing compensation. Delegated authority limits apply to each stage of our process.
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	All remedies are detailed in the full response.
66	In awarding compensation, a landlord must consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have	Yes	We have a compensation policy which sets out how we assess and consider compensation.

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.		We review all complaints to understand the themes which have caused dissatisfaction. And thereafter update operational plans to reflect 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	We do this on a case by case basis.

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.		We plan to start publishing what we have learnt from complaints and what actions we have taken to improve services from 31/03/23.

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
7.3	A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.	No	We regularly report on complaints performance to our Customers & Communities Committee.
7.4	 As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: 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	We report every quarter on complaints to our Customers & communities Committee. These reports include volumes, service area, day to day contacts from the HOS which commenced September 2022, themes within complaints, formal adjudications by the HOS and outcomes. Our annual self-assessment against the HOS complaint handling code is reported to and approved by our Board.

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.		Themes are extrapolated from complaints by the senior officer within our complaint team. This person is a Senior leader within the business and reports direct to the Executive Director, Customers.
7.6	 Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to: 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	

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	Completed in 2020, 2021 and 2022.
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: 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	Our complaint handling code self-assessment was reported to our Board at their meeting on 14/12/22 and approved. Our complaint handling code self-assessment will be uploaded to our website before 22/12/23 and a curtesy email will be sent to the HOS.