

Appendix A: Self-assessment form 2025 - 2026

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	Policy and Procedural handbook	The complaint definition as stated within the ombudsman code is included within Freebridge Community Housing (FCH)'s policy statement
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	Policy and Procedure handbook	Customers do not have to use the word complaints for it to be treated as such as set out within FCH complaints policy.
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	A definition of a complaint and service request is included within FCH complaints policy.
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	The reasoning behind the raising of complaints is set out within the FCH complaints policy.

1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes	TSM and transactional surveying contains information of how to raise a complaint.	All FCH surveys provide customers with information on how to make a complaint within the introduction.

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	Policy and Procedural handbook	FCH complaints policy sets out the circumstances under which a complaint will not be accepted.
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. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	The circumstances that complaints will not be considered is clearly defined within the FCH complaints policy
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	<p>FCH Complaints policy states the below:</p> <p>Complaints that have been referred more than 12 months since the issue occurring or the customer becoming aware of the issues</p>

	discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.			(we do reserve the right to apply discretion to accept complaints outside the time limit where there are good reasons to do so).
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	Our response to matters outside of the complaints process is defined within the FCH Complaints policy.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	FCH Policy states that each complaint will be considered on an individual basis.

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	Customers can make a complaint in person at any of our offices, by phone, email, in writing, via the tenant web portal or through social media	Further work to enable ease of reporting through Facebook is underway
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	Staff have received a briefing on complaints procedures.	Forms part of the 2025-2026 objectives for all staff to understand the official complaints processes
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	This is a message reinforced through staff briefings	A quarterly report regarding complaints performance is submitted to the chair of the Customer Ambassadors as well as FCH leadership team in order to provide comparison data on complaints and track performance.
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.	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook Complaints and Compliments	FCH complaints policy and process are available on our website along with easy read leaflets.

	The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.			Information regarding the Housing Ombudsman Service is also included in process leaflets, within response letters at all stages and on the website.
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	As detailed within the FCH complaints policy.
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	FCH policy states: Complaints sent by a third party or representative will be handled in line with this policy, after the necessary consent has been obtained from the customer concerned.
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedural handbook	Included within the website and complaints leaflet.

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		<p>Dedicated customer complaints team has been established comprising 3 complaint handlers and a dedicated complaints manager.</p> <p>Complaints data is collated and presented to FCH leadership team and board for scrutiny.</p>
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		<p>The complaints team receive corporate customer service training and role profiles set out role requirements clearly.</p> <p>Procedures are in place which sets out how complaints are investigated, and the corporation required from business leads to resolve.</p>
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes		<p>The responsibilities of colleagues with regards to complaints and learnings are set out within regular management briefings.</p>

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	Policy and Procedural handbook	FCH has one complaints policy.
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	FCH operates a clear 2 stage process as defined within policy.
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	FCH only operates a 2-stage process as defined within policy.
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.	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	FCH only operates a 2-stage process as defined within policy.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	Our response to complaints received by a third party is defined within FCH policy.

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	As Per FCH Complaints procedure	The acknowledgement letter sets out the understanding of the complaint and if this is unclear or does not meet the brief from the customer then contact is made to for clarification.
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	Requirements set out within procedure	A clear acknowledge template is in place to ensure clarity of the complaint that required investigation.
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	Requirements set out within FCH complaints procedure	Complaints are viewed with full impartiality.
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	Requirements set out within FCH complaints procedure	Contact agreements are made by the complaints team and documented on the complaint’s resolution forms.

5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	Freebridge Policy Statement	As per FCH policy statement, full considerations are made as per the Equality Act 2010.
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	Reasons for the non-escalation of a complaint are documented within FCH policy.
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	Complaints tracker	FCH operates a complaints tracker and document storage to ensure all correspondence is collated within one location relating to each complaint.
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	Detailed within complaints handling procedures	FCH procedures state that a resolution to the complaint must be made as reasonably practicable.

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	Unacceptable behaviour policy	Included within policy handbook. FCH has a clear violence and aggression policy
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Unacceptable behaviour policy	As set out in 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	Detailed within FCH procedure	FCH procedures state that a resolution to the complaint must be made as reasonably practicable.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaint's procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	Detailed within FCH 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	Policy and Procedural handbook	Detailed within FCH 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. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	Detailed within FCH policy

	reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.			
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes		Ombudsman details are present within all FCH written communications with regards to complaints.
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	Detailed in procedure	The complaint responses adhere to the 10-working day timeframe with updates on any outstanding actions provided after the response letter is issued.
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	Detailed in procedure	Complaint response templates set out clearly the need to address all points raised within the complaint.
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related, and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Detailed within procedure	FCH will respond to all points raised by the customers within the complaint.
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:	Yes	Detailed within procedure	Letter templated are reviewed in conjunction with our

	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.			communications colleagues to ensure plain language is used. Plain language is also trained as part of all colleagues' customer service input.
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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	Policy and Procedural handbook	Detailed within FCH complaints policy and procedure.
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	Detailed within FCH complaints policy and procedure.
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	As detailed in procedure	Customers are not required to explain reasoning for escalation.

6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	As detailed in procedure	Heads of service complete stage 2 responses.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	As detailed within FCH Policy
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	As detailed within FCH Policy
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	Policy and Procedural handbook	As detailed within FCH policy
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.	Yes	As detailed within procedure	FCH procedures state that a resolution to the complaint must be made as reasonably practicable.
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	As detailed within procedure	FCH will respond to all points raised by the customers within the complaint.
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language:	Yes	As detailed within procedure	Letter templated are reviewed in conjunction with our

	a. the complaint stage. b. the complaint definition. c. the decision on the complaint. d. the reasons for any decisions made. e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right. f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.			communications colleagues to ensure plain language is used. Plain language is also trained as part of all colleagues' customer service input
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes		All stage 2 responses are completed by Heads of Service or above

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologising. Acknowledging where things have gone wrong. Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons. Acting if there has been delay. 	Yes	Detailed within procedure	Detailed within procedure and set out in template response letter

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsidering or changing a decision. • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum. • Providing a financial remedy. • 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	Compensation policy	Detailed within procedure with guidance for compensation being set out within FCH compensation 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	As per our response letter template	All offers will be followed up appropriately.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Policy and Procedural handbook	Detailed within compensation policy

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept. c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman. d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints. e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.	Yes		Annual complaints performance paper completed and submitted to FCH board. All relevant documentation added to FCH website.
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.	Yes		Annual complaints performance paper completed and submitted to FCH board. All relevant documentation added to FCH website.

	The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.			
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	Re-structure currently in progress May 2025	Self-assessments published on FCH website.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	N/A		
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.	N/A		

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	Detailed within procedure	Learnings from complaints are reported to board, leadership team and available online through the annual performance report.
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	As a thread throughout our complaints policy and procedures.	Complaints performance reported to FCH leadership team and board as well as scrutinised by customer service champions.
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	As set out within the quarterly and annual complaints performance reports from 2025-26.	Reported in annual report, via website, via service champions and to board. Anon case studies presented to service champions for scrutiny with learnings shared.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	As referenced within the chair (who is also a FCH board member) of the Customer Ambassadors job description	Information provided to the chair through quarterly performance reports.
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for	Yes		Role profile for the chair of the Customer Voice Panel includes this responsibility

	complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').			
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		Chair of the customer ambassadors' group (who is also a FCH board member) has responsibility through the quarterly performance reports and scrutiny over 2025/26.
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 orders related to severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	Yes		Quarterly reporting and scrutiny from engaged tenant groups, FCH leadership team and the MRC will be issued from 2025-26.
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments. 	Yes		The following objective is in all frontline staff and manager annual objectives: Being informed of your responsibilities within our Complaints and Compliments Policy and process, to assist

	<p>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</p> <p>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</p>			customers when things go wrong.
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