

Appendix A – Self-Assessment Form 2022_2023

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>	Yes	Published on website: https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/7939/Complaints-compliments-and-feedback-on-housing-repairs
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	All third-party complaints are accepted and logged, we accept any expression of dissatisfaction as a complaint whilst also differentiating between an initial request for service and a complaint.
1.6	... if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.	Yes	All complaints are logged via a complaint email inbox and are allocated a reference number at acknowledgement stage.
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	We will treat any matter as a complaint if it falls within the definition of our policy as at 1.2. unless the complaint is considered to be: a request for service, request for information, a report of ASB or an attempt

			to reopen a complaint that has previously been concluded, or if we consider it under the following policy; Abusive, persistent or vexatious complaints policy - Uttlesford District Council
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	https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/7939/Complaints-compliments-and-feedback-on-housing-repairs
1.9	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.	Yes	We have developed a letter template so if a complaint is not going to be considered, a detailed response is given in a consistent way.

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	When a request for service is received and it is not a complaint, it is forwarded to the correct department for action. Service requests will be logged and who the matter has been passed to.
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.	Partial	TSM's will include reference to escalate to a complaint and any actionable comments will be logged and progressed as a complaint or request for service. UNSL are investigating the possibility of adding the question to their survey to allow escalation to a formal complaint.

			ACTION: Review all transactional surveys
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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	<p>More information on how to make a complaint has been added to Housing News and is also featured on the front page of the UDC website. Complaints are taken and actively encouraged at regular sheltered housing residents' meetings. There is a dedicated email box for complaints.</p> <p>UDC will also capture complaints mad evia social media and will assist those wishing to make a complaint over the phone or in person.</p>
2.3	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the number of stages involved, what will happen at each stage and the timeframes for responding.	Yes	The Complaint Policy is available on-line and has been confirmed by the Housing Ombudsman as being compliant with the code. A leaflet is also provided in sign up packs at the start of a tenancy and is reminded to tenants via many communication methods such as the newsletter.
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	https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/7939/Complaints-compliments-and-feedback-on-housing-repairs

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.		Uttlesford District Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination. We do this by complying with our Equality Policy (PDF) [1MB] which sets out the council's aims and objectives for treating everyone equally.
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	Housing News, website and leaflet in sign up packs
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	Housing News, website and leaflet in sign up packs and when responding to complaints, in terms of escalation and assistance.
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	Included in templates for acknowledgement, stage 1 & stage 2 responses.

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.		Residents are signposted via social media to: https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/7939/Complaints-compliments-and-feedback-on-housing-repairs where they can see the various ways in which a complaint can be submitted. Social media channels are scanned for complaints, which will be responded to via direct messaging to

			gain more understanding of the issue or complaint. They will be logged and acknowledged in the way that the complainant wishes.
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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	Specific officers as part of their role oversee complaints. We are a small authority who cannot justify the need for having a dedicated complaints officer/team, but there are lead complaint handlers in each service and we are identifying an Exec and lead member responsible.
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	Officers who know the complaint or persons being complained about should make known any conflict of interest. Training is given and complaint responses are audited. Action: transactional survey to measure satisfaction with way complaint has been handled.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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3.3	Complaint handlers should: <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	All staff are trained and have carried out the online ombudsman training.
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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	Yes	Complaint log is kept where we identify which stage the complaint is at and whether it has been escalated to stage 2 and the date that the acknowledgement has been sent. A quarterly KPI will measure the percentage of acknowledgements sent within 5 working days.

	complaints procedure within five days of receipt.		
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	We have a template- acknowledgement letter setting out our understanding, who will investigate and when a response can be expected.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.	Yes	We will respond to all complaints in an impartial manner. Where a complaint is about another member of staff or their conduct it will be investigated by a different officer to ensure impartiality. We will train our staff how to respond and will carry out an audit of our responses periodically.
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 • 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 ensure all staff who respond to complaints will complete ombudsman's online training.
4.11	Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication	Yes	In responding to complaints if the complaint cannot be resolved prior to the response we will agree timeframe for actions and any follow up or review.
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:	Yes	This forms part of the investigation and lessons learned.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 		
4.13	A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint	Yes	Included in policy and template response letters.
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	Abusive, persistent or vexatious complaints policy - Uttlesford District Council https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/7939/Complaints-compliments-and-feedback-on-housing-repairs
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	We save all correspondence to the house file.
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	Abusive, persistent or vexatious complaints policy - Uttlesford District Council

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	Complaints handlers are comfortable feeding back to residents when the request is unreasonable or unrealistic

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	It is the responsibility of the officer dealing with the complaint to assess if it can be resolved quickly or urgent actions are required.
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 will accept a complaint on someone else's behalf however we may not be able to provide a full response if it means divulging sensitive or personal information, unless agreed directly with the resident.
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.		The obligations contained within the tenancy agreement will be referred to as necessary with advice from the legal team, where appropriate. The council will not respond to elements of a complaint where litigation is already in progress and where it may impact the legal process.
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	Only as appropriate.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	Formal request for extension of time agreed where necessary. Action plans and timescales will be agreed where there may be outstanding work or actions once a complaint response has been given. Incomplete actions will not delay a complaint response.
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	Complaints workshops, surveys and online consultation carried out with complainants from previous year and processes adjusted where beneficial suggestions have been received.

			Action: introduce a transactional survey to capture feedback on the process and handling of the complaint.
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	Complaints received and learning outcomes discussed in team meetings and on an individual basis where necessary to promote a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff.
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	Abusive, persistent or vexatious complaints policy - Uttlesford District Council

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.	Yes	As set out in complaints policy and recorded on complaints log.
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	Outstanding actions recorded on complaints log and monitored.
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	This is covered in training and lead officer on complaints will ensure this will happen in practice.
5.8	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language:	Yes	Complaint template letters provide this.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer 		
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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	None refused to date – would follow if necessary.
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	As per policy and template letters.
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	As per policy.
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	As per policy, this will be someone more senior to the officer conducting the original complaint investigation.

5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint <u>within 20 working days</u> 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	As per policy – 10 working days, recorded on complaints log.
5.16	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage three • if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied. 	Yes	<p>See template letters</p> <p>UDC doesn't have a stage 3 process and refers to the Ombudsman after Stage 2.</p>

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.	Yes	Two stage process as per policy
5.20	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage 	N/A	The letter template ensures that these considerations are all applied.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		
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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	An explanation as to why the complaint cannot be responded to will be provided and an agreement as to the timeframe will be the priority.
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	Details of the Ombudsman and how to access its services are provided on template response letters.
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	All case notes and history should be considered and is an identified step of the complaint handling procedure.
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	

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	
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	

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 <u>within 20 working days</u> 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	The policy does not apply a stage 3 stage
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
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	Apologies will be included within the complaint response and whether or not the complaint has been upheld or not and what UDC has done to prevent this happening again or to put things 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	Action: Compensation Policy needs to be drafted to ensure a consistent approach and to set-out when compensation may be appropriate.
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	Detailed timetable or action plan will be provided and logged and monitored to completion. E.g. outstanding repairs.
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	In accordance with Ombudsman determination and see action above as to Compensation Policy.

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	Learning outcomes discussed at team meetings and more broadly, where it touches more than one service, to ensure services are joined up and consistent.

			Lessons learned that result in changes to service delivery should be highlighted in the Annual Report as well as the Housing Newsletter.
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	Discuss each case on merit. i.e. legal disrepair.

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	Learning outcomes put in annual report and key metrics of complaint handling goes to Council members as an annual report.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
7.3	A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.	Partial	Governance Audit Performance Committee – oversee all complaints to the Council including housing Now to come under the Audit and Standards committee. Further consideration will need to be given to a Member Responsible role as the Joint Code progresses.
7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive:	Partial	Under review – to which member committees/working groups this will be reported to.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge. 		
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	Corporate Management Team have oversight and any Ombudsman decisions are reviewed.
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	Corporate complaints policy currently being reviewed to reflect the requirements of the Joint Complaint Handling Code between the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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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	When necessary.
8.3	<p>Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self-assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members • publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents • include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance 	Yes	<p>Published on-line, reported to housing board and included in the annual report to tenants.</p> <p>Tenants and leaseholders annual report 2022-23 - Uttlesford District Council</p>