Housing Ombudsman Service

THE ABBEYFIELD BASILDON SOCIETY LIMITED

Self-assessment form for 2025/2026

This self-assessment form is published as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report in accordance with the requirements of The Housing Ombudsman Service. The Trustees' response to the report is published alongside this.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
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 landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'*	Y	Complaint policy section 1.2	
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.	Y	Complaint policy section 1.3	
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	Y	Complaint policy sections 1.5 & 1.6	Where a resident makes a service request, this is recorded in the Daily Log for the resident by the member of staff to whom the request is made. The service request is then dealt with by the House Manager and the

	recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.			outcome explained to the resident.
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.	Y	Complaint policy section 1.7	Where a resident is unhappy with the outcome of the service request, the House Manager will discuss with the resident what further steps can be taken and seek to agree an action plan. Again, this will be recorded in the Daily Log. We will also explain to the resident that the ongoing issue needs to be addressed as a formal complaint.
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.	Y	Complaint policy section 1.8	If a survey is carried out, we will explain that an expression of dissatisfaction with services will not be treated as a complaint until we have sought to address the service issue with the resident. We will include a section at the end of the survey explaining that a complaint can be made if the resident is not happy with the outcome and this will refer the resident to the Complaints Policy. To date, we have not conducted any

				surveys. The reason for this is that we have small communities in two Houses and we hold regular residents' meetings to discuss any concerns which residents may have.

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	Y	Complaint policy section 2.1	
2.2	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: • 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.	Y	Complaint policy section 2.2	

	• Matters that have previously been considered under the 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 discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Y	Complaint Policy section 2.3	
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.	Y	Complaint Policy section 2.4	
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Y	Complaint Policy section 2.1	

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.	Y	Complaint policy sections 1.4, 4.1 & 4.2	
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.	Y	Complaint policy sections 1.4 & 5	Residents are encouraged to speak to any member of staff on duty regarding any issues they have on a day-to-day basis. We hold regular residents' meetings to discuss any concerns which residents may have. All members of staff are trained to record any issues in the Daily Log and this will include any service request or complaint. Staff will immediately alert the House Manager where a complaint is made.

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.	Y	Complaint policy section 4.3	
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two-stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Y	Complaint policy section 4.4	The Complaints Policy is published on our website and there is also a section in the Residents Handbook dedicated to complaints. We explain to residents that there is a hard copy of the Complaints Policy in a folder in the lounge area of each House. We also now give each new resident a copy of the Complaints Policy along with their Handbook.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Y	Complaint policy section 4.4	As above
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.	y	Complaint policy section 4.5	

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.	Y	Complaint policy sections 7.2, 8.5, 8.7 & Section 13	

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.	Y	Complaint policy Sections 5 & 6	The House Managers are the Complaints Officers for their respective Houses. They are responsible for investigating and dealing with complaints at the first stage. The House Managers report any complaints to the Trustees in their House Reports which are presented on a monthly basis. We have a Trustee responsible for liaising with the Ombudsman and this is the Appeals Officer named in the Complaints Policy.
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.	Y		The House Managers have the authority to resolve complaints in their respective Houses and they have direct access to all staff.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant	Y	Complaint policy section 5.4	The House Managers have been actively involved in the introduction of the

	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			Complaints Policy with the opportunity to comment on the provisions. They are fully aware of the contents of the Policy and of their roles as Complaints Officers. The House Managers are also in attendance at the residents' meetings where residents are encouraged to voice any concerns they have. The outcomes of any complaints will be discussed at Trustees' meetings at which the House Managers are also in attendance. The open discussion of complaints and outcomes ensures a culture of learning and seeking improvement.

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	Y	One complaint policy	

	not be treated differently if they complain.			
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.	Y	Complaint policy section 7 & 8	Only two complaint stages
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.	Y	As above	As above
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.	Y	The complaint policy section 7.4	There is no third party involvement in our complaints handling process.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Y	As above	
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the	Y	Complaint policy sections 7.1 & 8.3	

	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.			
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.	Y	Complaint policy sections 7.1 & 8.3	
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: 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.	Y	Complaint policy section 6	
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	Y	Complaint policy section 7.2 & 8.5	

	keeping them informed about their complaint.			
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.	Y	Complaint policy sections 4.1 & 4.2	Each resident has a Support Plan and this will include details of any disability and of any reasonable adjustments which have been agreed to assist the resident. We continually review the needs of residents and will discuss with both residents and their relatives any additional adjustments which may be required.
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.	Y	Complaints policy section 2	
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.	Y		Where a complaint is raised, this will be recorded in the Daily Log for the resident. Details of all actions in relation to the complaint will be recorded on the resident's file and all relevant correspondence

				will be on that file, including the outcome.
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.	Y	The House Manager will have an initial discussion with a resident about their complaint and the desired outcome. This ensures that we know what remedy is being sought and whether an early remedy can avoid the need for escalation. We will consider financial compensation as a remedy where a complaint is upheld and it is clear that the resident has been negatively impacted. We would, for example, consider a rent reduction for the period when any service issue had negatively impacted upon a resident's enjoyment of their accommodation. We understand the need to consider a financial remedy even if there is no quantifiable financial loss. A financial remedy would have to be authorised by the Trustees following the House Manager's report on the complaint outcome.	
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords	Y	Complaint Policy section 3	We have introduced an Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. This sets out a procedure for addressing issues of

	must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.			anti-social behaviour and explains that the outcome of an investigation into an allegation of anti-social behaviour may be a need to impose restrictions, such as a contact restriction. Any restrictions imposed will be carefully explained to the resident and reviewed on a regular basis.
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.	Y	As above	

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.	Y		The House Manager, who is the Complaints Officer, will initially assess the complaint. If the complaint is straightforward, the House Manager will proceed with a discussion as described in paragraph 5.13. If the complaint involves sensitive or complex matters, then the House Manager will refer the complaint to the Member Responsible for Complaints. The MRC will review the complaint and issue necessary guidance for the investigation and hearing of the complaint, such as witnesses to be interviewed and the conduct of meetings. The MRC will consider whether there are any issues around vulnerability which might necessitate ensuring that a

				resident or witness is accompanied. The MRC will also consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made during the complaint hearing process.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure **within five working days of the complaint being received**.	Y	Complaint policy Section 7.1	
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.	Y	Complaint policy Section 7.2	
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 reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Y	Complaint policy Section 7.2	
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.	Y	Complaint policy Section 7.2	
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the	Y	Complaint policy Section 7.3	

	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.			
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.	Y	Complaint policy Section 7.8	
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.	Y	Complaint policy Section 7.7	
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made;	Y	Complaint policy Section 7.8	

	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.			

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.	Y	Complaint policy Section 8.1	
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Y	Complaint policy Section 8.3	
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.	Y	Complaint policy Section 8.2	
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person	Y	Complaint policy section 8.1	Complaint Officer stage 1 Appeals Officer stage 2

	that considered the complaint at stage 1.			
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 **within 20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.	Y	Complaint policy 8.4	
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.	Y	Complaint policy section 8.5	
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.	Y	Complaint policy section 8.5	
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.	Y	Complaint policy section 8.6	
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.	Y	Complaint policy section 8.7	

6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.	Y	Complaint policy section 8.7	
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Y	Complaint policy section 8.4	

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: • Apologising;	Y	Complaints policy Section 9.1	We will, in accordance with the Complaints Policy, set out in a letter to the resident the decision on the complaint and any remedy to be provided.

	• Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices.			
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Y	Complaint policy section 9.2	We have introduced a 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.	Y	Complaint policy section 9.3	The complaint outcome letter will include an offer of compensation where appropriate and where this has been authorised by the Trustees. Alternatively, the outcome letter may schedule a further meeting with the resident specifically to address the issue of compensation. The further meeting would then be followed with a remedy letter setting out any offer made. All offers will be

				recorded in a letter to the resident in line with the Compensation Policy. The letter will confirm the due date for the payment of any compensation.
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Y	Complaint policy section 9.4	We have reviewed the Ombudsman's remedy guidance to ensure alignment and have sought to reflect this in the 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.	Y	Annual complaints performance and service improvement report providing all the information requested	September 2026

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 section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Y	The response of the Trustees to the annual complaints performance and service improvement report is published on our website in the section on complaints.	
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Y	This is not applicable but we acknowledge that we understand the requirement of this provision.	
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Y	We acknowledge that we understand the requirement of this provision.	
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.	Y	This is not applicable but we acknowledge that we understand the requirement of this provision.	

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.	Y	Annual complaint's performance and service improvement report	The outcomes of any complaints will be discussed at Trustees' meetings at which the House Managers are also in attendance. This will include discussion of learnings to be taken from the complaints process and of any further actions considered necessary.
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.	Y	Annual complaint's performance and service improvement report	As above.
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.	Y	Annual complaint's performance and service improvement report	This would be at the residents' meetings referred to and in briefings to staff by the House Managers.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person	Y	Complaint Policy Section 10.1	Sean Stanton-Dunne, Trustee.

	must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.			
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Y	Complaint Policy section 10.2	Sean Stanton-Dunne, Trustee.
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.	Y		The MRC will liaise with the House Managers to ensure that the Executive Committee is updated at its monthly meetings regarding any complaints received and how they have been resolved. The MRC will also identify issues arising from any complaints which require further discussion and action.
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;	Y		As above.

	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.			
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.	Y		Our residents' meetings are attended by staff. We encourage complete openness and transparency in the expression of any dissatisfaction by residents and in the way in which any issues are addressed. We are confident that these open forums and our culture of openness together ensure that we are working together as a team to resolve any complaints which may arise. We wholeheartedly support the objectives set out in paragraph 1.9 of the Complaints Policy and are confident that the training of staff in understanding and implementing that Policy will

				ensure that we are engaging with complaints to a very high professional standard. The MRC will ensure that the Trustees are taking collective responsibility at their monthly meetings for discussing and actioning wider issues arising from any complaints.