

## Appendix A: Self-assessment form

Visitors to the website for Shepton Mallet United Charities are able to read the following self-assessment return which was submitted to the office of the Housing Ombudsman in respect of the 2023 calendar year. It should be read in conjunction with:

- The annual report to the Board of Trustees at the quarterly meeting in August 2024.
- The SMUC complaints policy.

Both documents are available on the SMUC website.

### RECORD OF A DECISION MADE OUTSIDE OF A SCHEDULED MEETING

Decision: Whether to approve the self-assessment form prepared by the Clerk for the Housing Ombudsman.
Outcome: It was accepted that this is SMUC's first self-assessment of this type and all Trustees who were available were in support of its content. See below.
Date notified to Trustees: 23.01.25
Notes: this is an annual task that was not completed with the rest of the return to the Housing Ombudsman in August 2024 due to a misunderstanding on our part during our first attempt at this exercise. Future returns will be completed with a better knowledge of what is required.  The self-assessment was approved via this method (remote, ie email, approval rather than at a face-to-face meeting) because of a range of difficulties making it difficult to be sure of the scheduled meeting on 05.02.25 being quorate.

## Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	<p>A complaint must be defined as:</p> <p><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></p>	Yes	Complaints policy	<p>Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the requirements of the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a></p> <p>Please note that the policy was due for update in 2024 and the Code was found to be very helpful with this task. The contents of the updated policy were written specifically with the Code in mind and this has given us confidence in terms of our compliance. However, this was very much more than a ‘tick-box’ exercise and the common sense approach of the Code was appreciated.</p>
1.3	<p>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</p>	Yes	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above.

	line with the landlord's 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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above.
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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above. The first contact for raising a service request tends to be via the Warden, who visits each resident on every weekday unless the resident has chosen other arrangements. Service requests are then the responsibility of two Trustees in particular and they report back to the full Board at quarterly meetings, minutes of which are available on request (please note that they will need to be redacted as they contain personal details). They are also able to share service requests between meetings and there is a mechanism for approving expenditure by email if necessary.
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a	N/A	Annual visit forms: not published on the website as they contain personal	Formal surveys have not been undertaken to date although there are regular meetings between

	<p>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.</p>		<p>information but redacted copies may be made available on request.</p>	<p>Trustees and each resident where views can be shared. In particular, there is a programme of resident visits in the early part of each year: these have more than one purpose in that they are designed to give residents an opportunity to raise concerns whilst also inspecting the state of each property: they also include an important welfare check on our residents. They are also able to raise any concerns during visits from the Warden: these visits take place every weekday.</p>
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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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above. The updated policy includes a summary of complaints that may not be eligible for processing, such as complaints that are more than a year old, subject to legal action or clearly vexatious.
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"> <li>• The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	Yes	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above and 2.1.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.</li> </ul>			
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.	Yes	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above and 2.1.
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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above and 2.1.  Please note that this has not been required to date.
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Complaints policy	This requirement is very much in line with the ethos of the charity, which is small in scale and historic in structure. The Board of Trustees take pride in their individualised approach to all aspects of the running of the charity.

### 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	Complaints policy.  Further information, including reasonable adjustments, available in Equality and Diversity policy.	Both of these policies were updated during 2024 to reflect the Code and a renewed consideration of the needs of an aging resident group, ie reasonable adjustments. They are published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>  <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Equality-and-Diversity-Nov.24.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Equality-and-Diversity-Nov.24.pdf</a>
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	Contact with residents is outlined in the Handbook, which was updated during 2024.	Residents have daily contact with the Warden on weekdays, unless they choose to opt out of the service. The Warden is able to assist in any way required, including arranging appointments with any Trustee or the Clerk.  Trustees themselves also visit residents regularly, particularly where

				there is any cause for concern. Again, the ethos of our small charity is founded on a genuine concern for the welfare of its residents group.
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	At the meeting of the Trustees in August 2024, this area was discussed and it was confirmed that a complaint can be a positive sign and a learning experience. Whilst this point was not recorded in the minutes, the annual report confirmed that no complaints had been received during the period covered (2023).	<a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-report-2024.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-report-2024.pdf</a>
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.	Yes	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above. With an aging population of residents, it is not an expectation that they will all have internet access and paper copies are available if required, together with any support that might be needed in understanding the policy. The policy itself was written in plain English and designed to be as simple as possible, whilst also including the requirements of the Code. Please see also the equality and diversity policy (link in 3.1) for information on reasonable adjustments.



				Please note that all of our policies have been specifically written in plain English for ease of understanding.
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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above. The policy includes contact details for the Ombudsman as well as an explanation that stages 1 and 2 should be completed first.
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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above. The policy includes section 7 'if you need help'.
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 policy	See 1.2, above and 3.5.

## 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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above. The Clerk to the Trustees has taken on the role of complaints officer: her previous role as Complaints Manager for a nationally-regulated awarding organisation meant that she did not require additional training but this is currently being considered for Trustees in the future.
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	Complaints policy	The Board of Trustees are aware of the importance of complaints handling and are fully supportive. Access to members of the Board is available at all times.
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	Complaints policy and governing body minutes (available on request)	This area was discussed and agreed at the quarterly meeting of the Board of Trustees in August 2024.

## 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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above. The policy includes the statement ' <i>We undertake that you will not be penalised in any way for raising your complaint and your relationship will us will not be affected.</i> '
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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above. Please note that it includes guidance on informal resolution of complaints. This was a specific decision, taking account of the ethos of the charity and the relationships with its residents but is limited to guidance rather than being an essential stage of the process.
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	Complaints policy	Please see 5.2, 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	Yes	No evidence to support this as it has not yet been required.	Agreed in principle.

	stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.			
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	No evidence to support this as it has not yet been required.	Agreed in principle.
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	Complaints policy	Agreed. See 1.2, above.
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	Complaints policy	Agreed. Since the period of this self-assessment a complaint has been received (from a third party, not a resident) and has received a response in line with this point and all associated requirements of the Code.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must:	Yes	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above.

	<p>a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;</p> <p>b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position;</p> <p>c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and</p> <p>d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.</p>			
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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above.
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	Complaints policy Further information, including reasonable adjustments, available in Equality and Diversity policy	Both policies were updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. They is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>  <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Equality-and-Diversity-Nov.24.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Equality-and-Diversity-Nov.24.pdf</a>
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do	Yes	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above.

	so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.			
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 tracking form	A tracking form template was set up in response to the charity's first complaint on record.  Complaints panel meetings are formally minuted by the Clerk.
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	Complaints policy	See 1.2, above.
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	Complaints policy  See also the charity's policy on Anti-social Behaviour and the Handbook for Residents, which was also updated during 2024.	Both policies were updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. They are published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>  <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Anti-Social-Behaviour-Nov.24.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Anti-Social-Behaviour-Nov.24.pdf</a>

				<a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Residents-handbook.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Residents-handbook.pdf</a>
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.		Anti-social Behaviour policy Equality and Diversity policy	<a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Anti-Social-Behaviour-Nov.24.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Anti-Social-Behaviour-Nov.24.pdf</a>  <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Equality-and-Diversity-Nov.24.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Equality-and-Diversity-Nov.24.pdf</a>

## 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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <b><u>within five working days of the complaint being received</u></b> .	Yes	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <b><u>within 10 working days</u></b> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>



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.	Yes	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>  It includes contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.
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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any	Yes	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-</a>

	decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.			<a href="content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Complaints policy	<p>Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a></p> <p>The policy explains that additional material introduced during the life of the complaint will be considered on their merits and may be handled as a new complaint.</p>
6.9	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the complaint stage;</li> <li>b. the complaint definition;</li> <li>c. the decision on the complaint;</li> <li>d. the reasons for any decisions made;</li> <li>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</li> <li>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</li> <li>g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the</li> </ol>	Yes	Complaints policy	<p>Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a></p> <p>All points listed in 6.9 have been covered.</p>

	individual is not satisfied with the response.			
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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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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.	Yes	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>

				Complaints are considered by a panel rather than an individual in the interests of providing a balanced perspective. Any panel convened for stage 2 (appeal) will be made up of individuals with no involvement in stage 1.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <b><u>within 20 working days</u></b> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>  The policy includes contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.

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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Yes	Complaints policy	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>  It makes provision for all the points listed in 6.19.

	Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.			
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	Complaints policy. Please note that this has not yet been necessary but the charity undertakes to abide by this requirement.	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>

## Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apologising;</li> <li>• Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;</li> <li>• Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;</li> <li>• Taking action if there has been delay;</li> <li>• Reconsidering or changing a decision;</li> <li>• Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;</li> <li>• Providing a financial remedy;</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>Complaints policy.</p> <p>Again, this has not yet been necessary but the charity undertakes to abide by this requirement.</p>	<p>Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changing policies, procedures or practices.</li> </ul>			
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Complaints policy. See also 7.1.	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Complaints policy. See also 7.1.	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Complaints policy. See also 7.1.	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>

## Section 8: Putting things right

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:	No	Not yet available: this document will itself represent SMUC's first self-assessment. Please see the commentary box.	SMUC regrets that this self-assessment was omitted from the annual report submitted to the Board of

	<p>a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.</p> <p>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;</p> <p>c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;</p> <p>d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;</p> <p>e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and</p> <p>f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.</p>		<p>The annual report to the Trustees was submitted</p>	<p>Trustees in August 2024.</p> <p>This was due to a misunderstanding of the requirements of our new regulator and future years will, we hope, provide all information required in a timely manner.</p>
8.2	<p>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. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Please note that minutes of meetings are not currently publicly available on the charity's website as they include a number of elements of personal and sensitive information. Adding them to the website in the future is being considered but will require a careful</p>	<p>From the minutes of the Board of Trustees, August 2024:</p> <p>'8.2 Complaints: there is a new focus on complaints as a result of changes to our regulation by the Housing Ombudsman. The new</p>



			<p>programme of redacting which is currently beyond the resources of the charity's staff.</p>	<p>policy, when approved, must be uploaded to the website so that it is publicly available. GB will do a comparison with the AA version and the one in the residents' handbook: also change 'if you're still not happy' to 'if you're still not satisfied', then forward to JPP for review.</p> <p>Action - GB</p> <p>8.3 Annual complaints report: this is another new requirement by the Housing Ombudsman. Fortunately there have been no formal complaints but the report, like the new policy, must be uploaded to the website. The report was approved: GB will forward it to KT to upload when the policy has been signed off.</p> <p>By way of explanation, GB is the Clerk to the Trustees, JPP and KT are Trustees with specific skillsets and 'the AA' is the Almshouse Association.</p>
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8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	N/A	Not currently required or any plans in place.	
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	N/A	Not yet required but agreed in principle.	
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.	Yes	Data protection policy	Please note that data protection is currently under review, including online document storage and safety against, for example cyber attacks. The review has been delayed by illness but is a priority.

### 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	Complaints policy. Please note that this has not yet been called for but the charity abides by the requirement.	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Yes	Minutes of meeting of Board of Trustees, August 2024 (not publicly available)	At the meeting of the Trustees in August 2024, this area was discussed and it was confirmed that a complaint can be a positive sign and a learning experience. Please

	intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.			note that this point was not recorded in the minutes.
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	Minutes of meeting of Board of Trustees, August 2024 (not publicly available but can be provided on request).  In our small charity, there are currently no resident panels but any request for such would be carefully considered.	At the meeting of the Trustees in August 2024, the annual report was presented to the full Board of Trustees and time allowed for discussion.
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	Complaints policy. Please also see point 4.1, which outlines the previous experience in complaints of the Complaints Manager (Clerk to the Trustees).  The current complaint (already mentioned) will be included in next year's self-assessment. It is still in progress but plans are in place to include a debrief session to agree lessons learned.	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to	Yes	Complaints policy. The MRC for Complaints is currently the Chair of Trustees: this may be reconsidered at the	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-</a>

	support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').		time of the next update to the policy to take account of workload amongst the Trustees.	<a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
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	Not yet applicable but the outcome of the current complaint will be recorded in the minutes of quarterly meetings.	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;</li> <li>b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;</li> <li>c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and</li> </ul>	Yes	Relevant updates will be recorded in minutes of quarterly meetings. Please note that in the case of Shepton Mallet United Charities, with only 12 residents, most of them with close and long-standing relationships with the charity, it is unlikely that it will be possible to identify any trends. This section is, however, agreed in principle and the charity undertakes to include item d. in a formal quarterly meeting of all Trustees.	Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a>

	d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.			
9.8	<p>Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</p> <p>a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;</p> <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>	Yes	No evidence currently available but agreed in principle.	<p>Policy updated during 2024 to reflect the Code. It is published on the website <a href="https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf">https://alms1627.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Complaints-policy-approved.pdf</a></p>