



# Complaints & compliments policy

## 1. Purpose and scope

Selwood Housing welcomes complaints and compliments from anybody who has received either a poor or good service from us. We welcome and value this feedback because, without it, we would not be able to learn from and correct our mistakes; similarly, it is good to know when we have got the service right.

This policy applies to all staff of Selwood Housing, including its Executive team and Board members.

It covers complaints that can be escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service and regulated complaints that can be escalated to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

## 2. Underpinning principals

Our policy sets out to resolve complaints efficiently whilst learning from them to improve our service and prevent complaints arising in the future. Our principles are to provide a quality service by:

- Putting things right within reasonable timescales.
- Keeping our customers informed.
- Manage expectations.
- Following our policy and procedures.
- Fully, and accurately, record details, actions and investigations of the complaint at all stages.
- Use learning outcomes from the complaints to improve our services.
- Manage complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service complaint code.

## 3. Objectives

The objectives of the policy are to:

- define a complaint and make it clear who can make a complaint and how.
- be clear, simple, accessible and to ensure complaints are resolved promptly, professionally and fairly.



# Complaints & compliments policy

- provide details of what customers can do if they are not happy with the resolution or decision, and what they can do to escalate their complaint.
- learn from outcomes to improve our service.

## 4. Definitions

### **Complaint**

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

### **Compliment**

A compliment is feedback that is positive in its nature about Selwood Housing, its staff, or individuals or organisations that deliver services on its behalf. This occurs when action taken, or service provided generates a level of satisfaction that the customer believes is sufficient to warrant recognition or praise being made.

## 5. Exclusions

For clarification, the following topics are not covered by the scope of this policy:

### **Enquiries**

A request for information about us or the services that we offer.

### **Service requests**

A request or demand to access services we provide.

### **Anti – social behaviour**

A complaint about neighbour nuisance and antisocial behaviour, it will be dealt with under our Anti-social behaviour policy. If we do not follow what we say in our policy, this may become a complaint.

### **Repair notification**

Requests from a customer that a defect within the property is addressed.



# Complaints & compliments policy

## **Claims for damages or insurance claims**

A direct claim for money not arising from a complaint following an event or incident for which the claimant believes Selwood Housing, or its agents are responsible.

## **Disrepair claims**

A claim being dealt with by Selwood Housing's legal representative(s).

## **Legal claims**

A claim being pursued on behalf of a customer, leaseholder, member of the public or third-party seeking redress through the courts.

## **Disputed contractual issue**

A contractor is unhappy with the way we are behaving or not delivering against a set of pre-agreed commitments.

## **Staff grievance**

An employee feels they have a complaint to make about any aspect of their employment or how they have been treated whilst at work by anyone connected with Selwood Housing.

## **Accidents**

Accidents and incidents will be dealt with under our accident and incident procedures, however complaints about the way an accident or incident has been dealt with will be covered under this policy.

## **6. Housing Ombudsman**

The Housing Ombudsman complaints handling code has been implemented to raise standards in complaint management across the sector. Selwood Housing are committed to complying with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code and will share its self-assessment at least annually with our customers.

If we determine not to accept a complaint, we will provide a detailed explanation to the complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for our complaints process. In addition, we will provide the details of the Housing Ombudsman Service where the complainant can challenge our decision.



# Complaints & compliments policy

We will cooperate with Housing Ombudsman Service, ensuring responses and evidence is provided within their timescales.

## 7. Financial services – regulated complaints

If a complaint relates to consumer credit activities, including debt counselling then it is a regulated complaint and will commence at Stage one of our formal complaints process.

Regulated complaints will be concluded within eight weeks of the commencement of the initial complaint start date and includes stage two investigation of the process.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, we will signpost to the Financial Ombudsman for advice.

## 8. Complaints about a member of staff

If a complaint is regarding a member of staff, then it will commence at Stage one of the complaints process and be dealt with by their line manager.

## 9. Policy complaints

If a complaint is regarding a policy, it will commence at Stage one of our complaints process and be dealt with by the policy owner.

## 10. Making and resolving a complaint

Selwood Housing will take steps to ensure that all tenants are aware of the policy and take action to ensure the policy is accessible to all service users.

Selwood Housing will ensure that anyone wishing to make a complaint can do so easily. Complaints can be made by whatever method the complainant feels are appropriate for them. This could be in writing, by email, by telephone, by visiting the office, during a home visit or through a social media channel.



# Complaints & compliments policy

We will permit complaints to be raised and dealt with by a representative, once the authority to act has been verified with the customer, either verbally or in writing.

## 11. Help and support to make a complaint

To assist people to make complaints, Selwood Housing can provide interpreters at all stages of the complaint process. However, we require that customers explore all other forms of advocacy support first - family members, organisations or an appropriate internet translation service to assist the complainant through the complaints process, prior to an interpreter being engaged.

Selwood Housing group will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustments to its policy, procedures and processes to accommodate an individual's needs enabling them to make complaints without prejudice.

For any complaints that reach stage three of the procedure, we will meet reasonable expenses such as taxi or childcare costs for complainants attending the panel hearing.

Selwood Housing group shall provide early advice to service users and their advocates regarding their right to access the Housing ombudsman service, not only at the point they have exhausted our complaint process but also during the life of the complaint.

## 12. Stages of the complaint process

There are three formal stages to our complaints process.

### Stage one

This is the first stage of our complaints process, the complaint will be acknowledged within five working days, a decision and outcome will be received within ten working days (from the date the complaint was received).

If this is not possible, an explanation and a date by when the Stage one response will be received will be sent to the complainant. This will not exceed a further ten working days without good reason.



# Complaints & compliments policy

## Stage two

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response received at Stage one, the matter can be escalated to Stage two of the formal complaints process.

This will be dealt with by a different person not involved in the Stage one process.

A Stage two complaint will be acknowledged within five working days, a decision and response will be received within twenty working days (from the date the complaint was requested to be escalated).

If this is not possible, an explanation and a date by when the Stage two response will be received will be sent to the complainant. This will not exceed a further ten working days without good reason.

## Stage three

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage two response then the matter can be escalated to Stage three of the complaints process, unless the following applies:

- The complainant is challenging a decision, where they do not agree with the outcome and cannot supply further supporting information that has not been previously considered.
- A person or group who is not eligible to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. This would be anyone who has no relationship with us as a landlord, such as private homeowner (who may or may not receive services from us).
- Regulated complaints – consumer credit activities & debt counselling

This is the final stage of our formal complaints process; the complainant will be invited to a panel meeting consisting of three Board Directors. The complainant may bring a relative or advocate with them for support, also present will be the staff that have investigated the complaint.

An acknowledgement stating that the complaint has been escalated will be sent within five working days (from the date the complaint was requested to be escalated).



# Complaints & compliments policy

The hearing and outcome will aim to be completed within twenty working days (from the date the complaint was requested to be escalated).

Any additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel, an explanation and a date when the stage three response will be achieved should be provided to the customer.

**Expression of dissatisfaction [EOD]** – this does not form part of the formal complaints process; however, it is recognised that some customers may not wish to pursue their issue through a formal route. This option will be used with the complainant's consent and will not obstruct access to the formal complaint's procedure.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their expression of dissatisfaction, then the matter will be escalated to Stage one of the formal complaints process.

## 13. Closure and completion

A complaint will be closed twenty-eight days following our response or earlier if the complainant has confirmed they are satisfied with the outcome.

Where the agreed actions may take weeks or months to complete (e.g. repairs), the complainant will be given a schedule and time frame when all works or actions will be completed. The complaint will be closed but the complainant will have the opportunity to re-open and escalate should the agreed actions not be completed in line with the original proposal.

## 14. Learning and service improvements

Learning outcomes will be recorded for all complaints, this includes those at the informal stage. We will publish service improvements we make as a result of complaints to our customers annually.

## 15. Vexatious and serial complainants

If a complainant persists unreasonably with their complaint or becomes a serial complainant about different matters, then we may treat the individual or incident as vexatious.



# Complaints & compliments policy

The decision to treat a complaint or individual as vexatious must be approved by a member of the Selwood Housing Executive team.

When a decision is made to treat an individual or complaint as vexatious, the customer will be advised in writing outlining the reason(s) why, what the restricted contact arrangements are and the length of time that these restrictions will remain in place.

## 16. Anonymous complaints

If a complaint is received anonymously then it will be investigated, as far as it is practical to do so. The process in this policy will not apply to anonymous complaints

## 17. Compensation and gestures of goodwill

Compensation and goodwill payments will be made in line with the our Regulatory and discretionary payment policy.

## 18. Compliments

Selwood Housing is always pleased to receive compliments and also to hear about how success may have assisted someone to make a positive change in their life. Compliments may also be a means of learning what works for people in certain situations and so they can be used to help to find solutions to people's difficulties.

For staff, learning that they have done something well can contribute to a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Positive feedback is therefore welcomed and encouraged.

We will feedback compliments to the teams and individuals concerned.

## 19. Training

All Selwood Housing staff will be trained in this policy, its associated processes and the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman complaint code.





# Complaints & compliments policy

## 20. Monitoring

An annual performance report on compliments and complaints will be produced to the Board of directors.



# Complaints & compliments policy

## Decision-making record

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting / Minute Reference</b>	<b>Version / Amendment</b>
March 2012	Board of Directors B/27/12	V 1.0
July 2013	Reviewed by Head of Customer Services	V 2.0
October 2015	Reviewed by head of organisational development	V 3.0
May 2017	Reviewed by group people director and customer support manager	V 4.0
December 2017	Updated to include Audit recommendations	V 5.0
October 2018	Updated to include changes	V 6.0
June 2019	Updated to include actions for accidents	V 6.1
December 2019	Updated to include vexatious complainant info	V 6.2
October 2021	Amended to include Housing Ombudsman complaint code requirements	V 7.0
January 2022	Updated as part of brand refresh	V 8.0