



# 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 principles

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:

- **Timely resolution:** Swiftly rectifying issues within reasonable timeframes.
- **Transparent communication:** Keeping our customers well-informed throughout the process.
- **Expectation management:** Effectively managing and setting realistic expectations.
- **Adherence to Policy:** Following our established policy and procedures diligently.
- **Comprehensive Documentation:** Accurately recording all complaint details, actions taken, and investigations conducted at every stage.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Use learning outcomes from the complaints to improve our services.
- **Compliance with Standards:** Manage complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service complaint code.



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## 3. Objectives

Our policy aims to achieve the following objectives:

- **Clarification of Complaints:** Defining a complaint clearly, identifying who can raise a complaint, and outlining the procedure to do so.
- **Accessibility and Simplicity:** Ensuring the policy is easily understandable, straightforward, and accessible, facilitating prompt, professional, and fair complaint resolution.
- **Escalation Procedures:** Providing comprehensive details on avenues available to customers if dissatisfied with the resolution or decision, including escalation processes.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Utilising the outcomes and learnings from resolved complaints to enhance and refine our service delivery continually.

These objectives serve as the framework for our commitment to efficiently and fairly addressing complaints while fostering a culture of learning and improvement within our organisation.

## 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.

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## 5. Exclusions

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.

Circumstances when we won't accept a complaint include:

### **Enquiries**

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

### **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.

### **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.

### **Legal proceedings have commenced**

If at any point during a complaint investigation a customer (or a third party on the customer's behalf) bring any legal proceedings against Selwood Housing, we will stop our complaints process. This is defined as a claim, and the particulars of claim having been filed with the Court.

### **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.



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## **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 complaint 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, details of the code can be found on their website: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>

We will provide details of the code and contact details of the Ombudsman service at all stages of our complaints process.

We will publish our complaints policy and self-assessment against the code on our website and review it at least annually. We will carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.

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

The Housing Ombudsman Service contact details are:

- Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- Call on 0300 111 3000
- Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- Write to the Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

## **7. Financial services – regulated complaints**

In the case of complaints related to consumer credit activities, such as debt counselling, they are considered regulated complaints.

Regulated complaints undergo an eight-week resolution process from the initial complaint start date, extending to a stage two investigation if necessary.

If the complainant continues to be dissatisfied following our internal process, we will guide them to seek advice from the Financial Ombudsman for further assistance.



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## **8. Complaints about a member of staff**

If a complaint is regarding a member of staff, then it will be dealt with by their line manager.

## **9. Policy complaints**

If a complaint is regarding a policy, it will be dealt with by the policy owner.

## **10. Making and resolving a complaint**

Selwood Housing is committed to ensuring that all tenants are informed about and have access to our complaint policy. We'll take proactive steps to make this policy easily accessible to all service users.

We encourage complaints to be raised through various channels, accommodating the preferred method of the complainant. This could be via written correspondence, email, telephone, office visits, home visits, or even through our social media channels.

Our telephone number is: 01225 715715

Email address: [complaints@selwoodhousing.com](mailto:complaints@selwoodhousing.com) or [info@selwoodhousing.com](mailto:info@selwoodhousing.com)

Postal address: Selwood Housing Society Ltd, Bryer Ash Business Park, Trowbridge, BA14 8RT

We welcome the submission and management of complaints through a designated representative, if explicit authorisation from the customer has been confirmed, either verbally or in writing.

We will accept complaints when referred to us within 12 months of the issue occurring, or the individual becoming aware of the issue. We will apply our discretion to deal with matters outside of these timescales where there is good reason to do so.

## **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.



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Selwood Housing Group is committed to adhering to the Equality Act 2010. We will make reasonable adjustments to our policies, procedures, and processes to accommodate the individual needs of our customers, ensuring they can make complaints without facing prejudice or barriers.

## **12. Stages of the complaint process**

There are two stages to our complaints process.

### **Stage one**

Upon receiving a complaint, we will:

- acknowledge it within 5 working days of the complaint being received.
- Issue a full response to the complainant **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged. Exceptionally, where this is not possible, we will provide a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) will clearly be explained to the complainant.
- Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, we will provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the customer can challenge our plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of our response.

Where a customer raises additional complaints during the investigation, these will 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 will be logged as a new complaint.

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

### **Stage two**

This is the final stage of our complaints process, we will:

- Ensure it is dealt with by a different person not involved in the Stage one process.
- acknowledge it within 5 working days of the escalation request being received.



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- Issue a final response **within 20 working days** of the complaint being escalated. Exceptionally, where this is not possible, we will provide a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) will clearly be explained to the complainant.
- Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, we will provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the customer can challenge our plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of our response.

## **13. Escalating a complaint**

We will not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint.

A complaint can be escalated if the customer remains unhappy and they tell us they wish to escalate the matter. Although most will give a reason why they wish it to be escalated, it is not a requirement to do so.

We will make reasonable efforts to understand why the customer is unhappy as part of the stage two process.

If we refuse to escalate a complaint, or after the stage two process the customer remains dissatisfied, we will provide details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

## **14. Closure and completion**

A complaint will be closed 28 days following our response or earlier if the complainant has confirmed they are satisfied with the outcome.

In cases where the agreed actions, such as repairs, may require weeks or months to complete, we will provide the complainant with a schedule and timeframe for the entire process

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.

## **15. Learning and service improvements**

Learning outcomes will be recorded for all complaints. We will publish service improvements we make as a result of complaints to our customers annually.

## **16. Vexatious and unacceptable behaviour**



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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 and/or unacceptable.

When a decision is made to treat an individual or complaint as vexatious or due to unacceptable behaviour, 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. Any restrictions imposed will be reviewed annually, as a minimum.

This must be approved by a member of the executive team

## **17. Anonymous complaints**

If a complaint is received anonymously then it will be investigated, as far as it is practical to do so.

## **18. Compensation and gestures of goodwill**

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

## **19. Compliments**

Selwood Housing is always pleased to receive compliments and to hear how our services have contributed to positive changes in someone's life.

Compliments may also be a means of learning what works for people in certain situations and so they can be used to find solutions that aid individuals facing 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.

## **20. Training**

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





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## **21. Monitoring**

A six-monthly performance report will be produced to The Selwood Housing Group Audit and Development committee.

An annual performance report on complaints and compliments will be produced to the Selwood Housing Board and our customers.



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## 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
February 2024	Removal of stage three and reference to informal complaints (EOD). Changes in line with new complaint code.	V 9.0