Complaint and Compliment Policy

		Author:	**Complaints & Contact Centre Manager**
Scope:	**Housing Solutions**	**Approved by:**	**Board**
Legislation:	**Localism Act 2011** **Right to Repair Scheme 1994** **Housing Act 1996** **Right to Compensation for Tenants' Improvements Scheme 2001** **Housing Act 2004** **Housing and Planning Act 2016** **The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016** **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** **Data Protection Act 2018** **Housing Ombudsman Scheme 2020** **Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023** **Housing & Regeneration Act 2018**	**Date of approval:**	**May 2026**
Regulatory/ Governance:	**Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** **Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (April) 2024**	**Date of next review:**	**May 2029**
Related Policies:	**ASB and Allocations Policies** **Data Protection Policy** **Fire Safety Policy** **Repairs and Maintenance Policy** **Service Charge Policy** **Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy** **Whistleblowing Policy** **Vulnerable Customers Policy** **Planned Maintenance Policy** **Compensation Policy**		

1. Policy Statement

1.1 Housing Solutions is committed to providing a high-quality service and we welcome all feedback as an opportunity to improve the quality of our services. This policy aims to deliver an efficient and effective feedback and complaint process which is easily accessible to residents and in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024. Residents can complain to Housing Solutions in a number of different ways and our complaints process takes account of people's individual circumstances. We give guidance to residents on how to make a complaint to us and how to contact the Housing Ombudsman through regular resident newsletters. This policy is published on Housing Solutions' website.

1.2 Housing Solutions recognises that there may be occasions when we get things wrong or residents are unhappy about aspects of our service. This policy sets out Housing Solutions' approach to receiving and handling complaints, ensuring they are dealt with in a fair and

consistent way.

1.3 Housing Solutions welcomes compliments from our residents to celebrate and recognise employees and contractors working on Housing Solutions' behalf for their contributions in providing a great service to our residents.

2. Scope

2.1 The Complaint & Compliment policy applies to all staff members, contractors and sub-contractors employed by or acting on behalf of Housing Solutions, including Board members and involved residents who may be involved in complaint reviews. Concerns about our services can be raised with the assurance they will be investigated in line with this policy and its supporting procedures.

2.2 This policy applies to all residents of Housing Solutions irrespective of tenure.

2.3 Housing Solutions employees will fully consider resident vulnerability when delivering a first response to service requests and arranging flexible services.

3. Roles & Responsibilities

Role / Team	Responsibilities
Board	The Board is responsible for Housing Solutions' overall approach to complaints and residents' satisfaction with this aspect of our services. Members of the Board and involved residents may be asked to support complaint reviews at stage 2 (the final stage) of Housing Solutions' complaints process.
Scrutiny and Improvement Team (SIT)	The Scrutiny and Improvement Team (SIT) is responsible for reviewing complaints and compliments quarterly and reporting on complaints to the Board to assess common themes as necessary. SIT members may be asked to support complaint reviews at stage 2 of the complaints process.
Complaints Scrutiny Panel	The CSP supports SIT in scrutinising complaints performance, outcomes & wider lessons learned. CSP carries out scrutiny reviews of complaint cases to ensure quality of service is provided to our diverse resident groups.
The Executive Team (ET)	The Executive Team (ET) is responsible for reviewing complaints and compliments quarterly and reporting on these to the Board to assess common themes as necessary. The ET is also responsible, through the departmental roles of Directors, for overseeing the implementation of the Complaints and Compliments policy . The Executive Team reviews all complaints and are responsible for ensuring the organisation learns appropriately from complaints and ensures continuous improvement of the complaints service.
Senior Managers	Senior Managers are responsible for reviewing performance against the complaints and compliments received. Senior Managers may carry out complaint reviews at stage 2 of the complaints process. They are also responsible for addressing and learning from all complaints received and reviewing and refusing or terminating complaints under section 4.2 of this policy.
Complaints and Contact Centre Manager	The Complaints and Contact Centre Manager is responsible for the management of all stage 1 complaints and supporting stage 2 complaint handling and outcomes. They are also responsible for complaints reporting and trend analysis to the Leadership Team and for maintaining alignment of this policy with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint-Handing Code, making recommendations to reflect best practice as necessary.

Managers and Team Leaders	Departmental managers and team leaders are responsible for investigating, reviewing and responding to complaints received at Stage 2 of the complaints process with the aim of resolving the complaint within agreed timescales. They are also responsible for overseeing the implementation of actions required, along with thorough and effective recording, reporting and learning from the outcomes in alignment with the Housing Ombudsman Code.
Complaints & Governance Coordinator:	The Complaints & Governance Coordinator is responsible for the administration of and adherence to the Complaints and Compliments policy with particular focus on supporting the resolution of stage 1 complaints.
Employees	A complaint, expression of dissatisfaction or a compliment (an expression of gratitude) may be made to any staff member. All employees have a vital role to play in listening to, reporting and resolving resident dissatisfaction in line with Housing Solutions' policy and procedures.
Other Persons & Parties	Contractors, suppliers, partner organisations and others acting on behalf of Housing Solutions are required to maintain high standards of customer service and professionalism. Contractors & suppliers are required to report any complaint made to them by a Housing Solutions resident or person receiving our services without delay and co-operate with any subsequent review or investigation.

4. Definitions

4.1 A complaint is where a Housing Solutions resident or other person affected by our services raises an expression of dissatisfaction (however made) about the standard of service or about the action/inaction (or that of others acting on our behalf), which affects an individual resident or a group of residents. When an expression of dissatisfaction is made the resident will be given the choice to make a complaint.

4.2 Housing Solutions categorises feedback as follows:

- 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.. The monitoring of service requests will help Housing Solutions understand issues that could escalate if not dealt with at an early stage.
- Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Housing Solutions, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents. A resident does not have to use the word "complaint" for it to be treated as such.
- Stage 1 complaint : a new complaint raised with Housing Solutions of dissatisfaction from a resident or other person receiving services from Housing Solutions where a response is normally provided within 10 working days of our initial acknowledgement in order to resolve the complaint.
- Stage 2 complaint : a complaint which has passed through stage 1 of our complaints process where the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome. The complainant has escalated their complaint to the next (and final) stage of Housing Solutions' complaints process. A response is normally provided within 20 working days of our initial acknowledgement in order to resolve the complaint.

4.3 A compliment: is an expression of gratitude for a service provided on or on behalf of Housing Solutions. The policy encourages all kinds of feedback; anyone who has a relationship with Housing Solutions can compliment an employee, team or the

organisation. Compliments are logged within the housing system and are reported and passed to all employees to celebrate areas of good practice.

4.4 A 'representative' under this policy can be anyone that the resident chooses who will deal with all aspects of the complaint on their behalf or a person supporting them more informally in the complaints process. Residents may have a representative with them at a meeting to discuss their complaint or have the support of a representative in dealing with the complaint. Where a representative is appointed, the resident should provide written consent to us sharing their personal information with the representative in this way. A complaint submitted by a representative of a resident will be handled in line with our complaints policy.

5. Who can complain?

5.1 A complaint may be made by anyone affected by the services provided by Housing Solutions. Residents may make a complaint through a representative acting on their behalf.

Excluded Complaints

5.2 A complaint may be refused or closed in the following exceptional circumstances with the agreement of a Senior Manager:

5.2.1 Where the substance or main points of the complaint have already been considered and has exhausted the complaints process. The **resident may choose** to seek redress from external parties (e.g. Housing Ombudsman, relevant authorities) at the conclusion of the complaints process.

5.2.2 Where legal proceedings have started, in that details of the claim (such as a claim form and particulars of the claim) have been filed.

5.2.3 Where a complaint is persistent or meant to be obstructive (see paragraph 5.3).

5.2.4 Housing Solutions will not meet excessive or unreasonable demands in relation to complaint-handling to ensure we are managing residents' expectations fairly and using our resources efficiently. In such circumstances Housing Solutions might find it reasonable to close the complaint, giving a full explanation (with a record) as to why the complaint has been terminated.

5.2.5 A complaint regarding anti-social behaviour will be dealt with under our ASB & Hate Crime policy (unless the complaint concerns how we have managed the ASB).

5.2.6 The issue giving rise to the dissatisfaction occurred over 12 months ago. Housing Solutions will consider older reports as part of the background to the complaint where this might help to resolve the issue for the resident. This may not apply where concerns relate to safeguarding or health and safety issues.

5.2.7 Matters have already been considered and have exhausted the Complaint & Compliment policy.

5.2.8 A service request (defined at para 4.2) requiring action to put a matter right will be recorded, monitored and reviewed and will not proceed through the complaints process. However, a complaint can be raised if the resident raises dissatisfaction with the response or handling of their service request, if a complaint is raised this will not prevent or delay the actions of the service request in any way.

5.3 Persistent or Obstructive complaints

5.3.1 If a resident has made unreasonable complaints in the past, Housing Solutions will not assume that their next complaint is unreasonable. Each case will be considered on its merits. All relevant correspondence will be evaluated to consider the circumstances including.

- Where a resident has made persistent or unreasonable demands.
- Where a complaint is being pursued deliberately obstructively i.e. we consider that the complaint is being made to cause unnecessary aggravation, frustration or inconvenience to the organisation and/or its staff rather than seeking to resolve a genuine issue.
- Whether the resident or their representative has been abusive or threatening to Housing Solutions staff or has produced excessive correspondence.

5.3.2 In the circumstances above, persistent or obstructive complaints will be excluded from consideration under the Complaints & Compliments Policy and the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy will be applied in placing appropriate restrictions on further contact from

6. Making a complaint or compliment

6.1 Complaints and compliments can be made in person, by phone, by email, by webchat, by website or in writing to any member of Housing Solutions staff. Upon receiving the complaint via the resident's chosen method, Housing solutions will log the complaint on the resident's housing file and agree an appropriate method for response. All complaints will be dealt with in line with the timescales under this policy. Social media complaints will progress through our Complaint & Compliment policy to maintain confidentiality and privacy.

6.2 Complaints should be made no later than 12 months after the complainant is aware of the problem or should reasonably become aware of it. In exceptional circumstances Housing Solutions may agree to accept a complaint after the time limit has passed.

6.3 All complaints, , will be recorded and used to help improve our services.

6.4 There are some instances where the issue raised will not be dealt with via the complaints process and will be dealt with under the relevant policy or procedure please refer to (Appendix 1).

6.5 Should Housing Solutions not accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided to the complainant setting out the reason(s) why the matter is not appropriate to be dealt with under the Complaints Policy.

6.6 Should the resolution not satisfy the complainant, they will be entitled to contact the Housing Ombudsman https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/ and advised of this entitlement in writing.

7. Complaints stages

When a complaint is received it will be logged in accordance with this policy. Housing Solutions operates an internal two stage process:-

7.1 <u>Stage one:</u>

When the complaint is received it will be acknowledged and logged to the relevant manager responsible for handling at stage 1 of our process. The Complaints team will contact the complainant within 5 working days to acknowledge the complaint and discuss with the complainant how they will investigate the complaint following which the complainant will receive a written acknowledgement .

The acknowledgement will set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect is unclear we will seek clarification. Where there are recurring issues we may consider older reports as part of the background to find a resolution.

Following investigation and review, the Complaints team will respond to the resident within 10 working days from our initial acknowledgement of the complaint. If the complaint is complex we will contact the resident and agree an extension of time to resolve the complaint of no more than a further 10 working days, this would not be extended without good reason.

If an extension is granted, we will agree with the resident regular intervals to discuss the progress of the investigation The extension and reasons for it will be confirmed in writing and contact details for the Housing Ombudsman given.

If any "related" additional complaint points are raised prior to the complaint being investigated and the response being sent, we will incorporate these issues into the complaint.

If issues that are unrelated or bought to us that may delay a Stage 1 complaint that is already in progress, we may log these issues as a separate stage 1 complaint.

Following closure of the Stage 1 complaint, a response will be provided in writing giving the complainant 21 days to accept the complaint resolution. If an escalation is received outside of the 21 day period, this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The resident may ask the Housing Ombudsman to help resolve their complaint at any stage of the complaints process. They will be given the Ombudsman's contact details at the end of stage one of the complaints process. We will confirm the outcome of a complaint when it is known, not when all outstanding actions have been completed.

If actions are agreed as an outcome of the complaint the resident will be communicated with at regular intervals about the progress of the agreed actions.

7.2 Stage two

Should the complainant not accept the Stage 1 final resolution they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 of our complaints process within 21 days of being advised of the complaint outcome.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. The complainant will be asked to outline which points of the Stage 1 outcome they feel not been resolved and the outcome they are seeking to the complaint but they do not have to do so. The acknowledgement will explain how the resident's concerns meet the complaint definition, so that the resident clearly understands why their issue is being considered under the complaints process.

The stage 2 acknowledgment will have the

The stage 1 response, and any new or relevant information not previously considered, will be reviewed by a Senior Manager who has not been involved at Stage 1 with support from the Complaints team. Complainants will also be given the option to have their complaint reviewed by a senior manager and a resident representative/Board member. If you choose to have a resident representative or board member this will not delay your response.

A full response to the complaint will be provided within 20 working days of our initial acknowledgement of the complaint. Under exceptional circumstances we may need to agree an extended timeframe with the resident. This should not exceed a further 20 working days. and should not be without good reason. The extension and reasons for it will be confirmed in writing and contact details for the Housing Ombudsman given. We will confirm the outcome of a complaint when it is known, not when all outstanding actions have been completed. If actions are agreed as an outcome of the complaint the resident will communicate with at regular interval's about the progress of the agreed actions.

Following closure of the stage 2 complaint a response will be provided in writing.

This is the end of our complaints process. If a complainant is unhappy with our final response to their complaint they have the right to escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service, an independent body which oversees how landlords handle complaints. Further information about this is provided at section 8 below.

7.3 Escalation

Housing solutions will not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaint process. In exceptional circumstances, the complaint may be reviewed by a

senior member of staff and a decision may be made that it is not appropriate to escalate the complaint. In this instance a full and final explanation will be provided to the complainant with details of how to contact the Housing Ombudsman should they be dissatisfied with our decision.

7.3.1 **Examples where Housing Solutions may not escalate a complaint may include:**

- Where new issues are raised that have not been considered at the earlier stage; these would be regarded as a new Stage 1 complaint to ensure a full and fair investigation.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as an investigation proceeds
- Requesting escalation prior to the stage 1 response being received within Housing Solutions' published timescales
- Requesting escalation after the 21-day period
- Not co-operating with the complaints investigation process

8. Complaint closure:

8.1 Once a resolution to the complaint is arrived at, the complaint final response will be issued advising of any actions to be taken and the complaint closed. The complaint will not remain open for outstanding actions to be completed however they will continue to be tracked, and relevant updates provided to the resident.

8.2 A complaint is considered closed when the matter has been investigated and responded to and the complainant has not notified Housing Solutions that they wish to escalate the complaint to stage 2 within 21 days. If the complainant is a resident of Housing Solutions and is still not satisfied about any aspect of their complaint, they may contact the Housing Ombudsman.

8.3 Following closure of a complaint stage, a complaint handling satisfaction survey on the handling and outcome of the complaint is requested to assist Housing Solutions in continuously improving our service.

9. The Housing Ombudsman

9.1 Housing Solutions is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and complies with and implements best practice and procedures as recommended by the Housing Ombudsman in the operation of this policy.

9.2 If the complainant is a resident or leaseholder living in Housing Solutions accommodation and is not satisfied with an aspect of their complaint, they may contact the Housing Ombudsman.

9.3 In circumstances where the internal complaints procedure has been completed but the complaint (or part of the complaint) remains unresolved, the Housing Ombudsman will consider how best to intervene to resolve the complaint, working with both parties for an acceptable outcome.

9.4 You can contact the Housing Ombudsman directly.

9.5 The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

- Online complaint form: https://www.housingombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/
- Phone: 0300 111 3000
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Postal address:
Housing Ombudsman Service PO Box 1484
Unit D Preston PR2 0ET

9.6 **Leaseholder Valuation Tribunal**

If you are a leaseholder with Housing Solutions and are not satisfied with the outcome of your stage 2 complaint, you can refer your complaint to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber). (formerly Leasehold Valuation Tribunal) to access their dispute resolution service. LEASE (Leasehold Advisory Service) can also provide advice on your complaint https://decisions.lease-advice.org/

10. Complaint Decisions

10.1 Housing Solutions categorises decisions about complaints as:

Complaint upheld

This is where Housing Solutions agree that the complaint was justified and that there has been a failure to provide the service to the expected standard

Complaint not upheld

This is where Housing Solutions does not agree that the complaint was justified. If the complaint has not been upheld Housing Solutions may make the decision not to allow the complaint to be progressed any further through the internal complaint's stages.

Where any part of a complaint is 'Upheld' the complaint as a whole is regarded and recorded as 'Upheld'.

11. Complaint Remedy

11.1 An apology will always be given where we have fallen below our service standards or there has been any other aspect of poor service.

11.2 Further remedies offered to resolve complaints will be in line with our Compensation Policy.

12. Compensation conditions:

12.1 Housing Solutions will not offer compensation where service failure is the result of extreme or unforeseen circumstances, where Housing Solutions has taken all reasonable steps to restore services, or facilities in the relevant circumstances.

12.2 Compensation will not be offered where Housing Solutions has acted reasonably and complied with legal and contractual obligations and in line with our service standards.

12.3 Non-monetary benefits (other than gift vouchers) will not be offered as a method of compensation, for example a new kitchen or a quicker transfer.

12.4 If you are in rent arrears or have sundry debts against your account compensation will (except in financial loss payments) be paid directly to the rent account to reduce outstanding arrears and/or sundry debts.

12.5 Housing Solutions will not pay compensation for loss of, or damage to, personal items which would otherwise be covered by home contents insurance. We strongly recommend for tenants to purchase home content insurance and provide information on affordable providers at new lettings. Personal injury complaints will be dealt with by the insurance company engaged by Housing Solutions and any compensation payments will be paid on the Insurer's recommendation.

12.6 Any offer of compensation will be made on the basis that it does not constitute admission of legal liability.

12.7 Further information and guidance on compensation to residents is contained within the Compensation Policy.

13. Withholding Rent or Service Charges

13.1 Where a resident is dissatisfied with an aspect of our service and/or makes a complaint about the matter, they should work with us to resolve the dissatisfaction or complaint in accordance with this policy. Residents are not entitled to withhold payment of rent or service charges pending resolution of the issue concerned; this action would have implications for their tenancy.

14. Equality & Diversity

14.1 Housing Solutions recognises the needs of its diverse communities and always acts within the scope of its own Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and supporting Equality and Diversity Policy, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Equalities Act 2010. Housing Solutions works closely with its partners to ensure it has a clear understanding of its resident community with clear regularly updated service user profiles. Housing Solutions will record, analyse and monitor information on ethnicity, vulnerability and disability. Housing Solutions can provide a copy of this policy in a different format if requested.

15. Accessibility

15.1 Housing Solutions provides reasonable adjustments for people under the Equality Act 2010. It is important that everyone has equal access to our information and resources and that people find it easy to communicate with us. We recognise that people have different needs and are committed to being inclusive. If you need this policy in another format or language, or require reasonable adjustments to help you make a complaint, please tell us so we can support you.

15.2 Anyone who handles a complaint under this policy will have appropriate training and guidance to support complainants through the process.

16. Confidentiality

16.1 Under the Data Protection Act 2018, UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as confidential. This includes:

- anything of a personal nature that is not a matter of public record about a resident, client, applicant, staff or Board member
- sensitive organisational information.

16.2 Housing Solutions employees will ensure that they only involve other agencies and share information where there is a legal basis for processing the information.

17. Review

17.1 This policy will be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis or more frequently in response to changes in legislation, regulatory guidance, good practice or changes in other relevant Housing Solutions' policy.

17.2 Our performance in relation to the delivery of the services and activities set out in this policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through our established reporting mechanisms to our Senior Management Team, Executive Team, Board and associated Committees. The Housing Ombudsman self-assessment will be completed annually and will be available to view on our website.

17.3 **Appendices :** Appendix 1 Examples of complaints and non-complaints

Appendix 1 provides a range of examples of complaints Housing Solutions may receive and how these may be handled

A resident dissatisfaction that will not be handled as a complaint:

- A routine first-time request for service
- A request for compensation only
- Issues that are the subject of formal legal proceedings
- An appeal against a decision where there is an established appeal route - these should be heard through the appropriate appeal process
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have given a final decision
- Where a complaint is persistent, intentionally obstructive or unreasonable (see section 4.3.2)
- Reported cases of neighbour disputes, anti-social behaviour, hate crime or domestic abuse will not be dealt with through the complaints process, these will be dealt with under the relevant policies, unless the complaint is about how the case has been handled.
- A claim being dealt with by our insurers
- Where we are not responsible for delivering the service e.g., Local Authority decisions about nominations or Housing Benefit claims. Residents will be directed to the relevant service provider
- Grievances raised by current employees of Housing Solutions
- Dissatisfaction with a policy, in these circumstances feedback will be considered for the next review of the relevant policy.
- Complaints regarding care or support providers not commissioned by Housing Solutions (residents will be redirected to the relevant third-party complaints process).

A resident dissatisfaction that may be handled as a complaint:

- Delays in responding to enquiries and requests
- Failure to provide a service
- Failure to meet our service standard
- Failure by Housing Solutions to comply with our policy
- Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor working on behalf of Housing Solutions
- Failure to follow procedures