



POLICY DOCUMENT

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

POLICY TITLE:	Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy
LEAD OFFICER:	Customer Relations Manager
DATE APPROVED:	October 2023
APPROVED BY:	St Leger Homes Board
IMPLEMENTATION DATE:	October 2023
DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW:	September 2024
ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE:	Customer Charter & Service Standards Dignity at Work Grievance Policy Compensation and Goodwill Policy Data Protection Policy Freedom of Information Policy Tenant Voice Strategy
ASSOCIATED CUSTOMER PUBLICATIONS:	Corporate Plan (2019-2024) Customer Access Strategy Equality and Diversity Strategy
TEAMS AFFECTED:	All Staff and Board Members
THIS POLICY REPLACES WITH EFFECT FROM 1st OCTOBER 2022:	Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

For guidance on completing this section please refer to the document version control guidance notes

Revision History

Date of this revision:	September 2023
Date of next review:	September 2024
Responsible Officer:	Customer Relations Manager

Version Number	Version Date	Author/Group commenting	Summary of Changes
4.2	September 2023	Head of Customer Services	Changes in response to the review of the Stage Two process.

Policy Creation and Review Checklist

Action	Responsible Officer	Date Completed
Staff consultation through Trade Unions if applicable	Not applicable – no fundamental changes	
Trade Union consultation if applicable	Not applicable – no fundamental changes	
Stakeholder consultation if applicable	Consultation with Chair of TRIP and Secretary of TRIP and Chair of the Tenant Appeal Panel	September 2023
Equality analysis carried out on the intranet	Not applicable no fundamental changes	

NB. The above table must be completed on all occasions. The policy will not be accepted or approved by EMT without this information completed.

Table of Changes

Date of changes	Changes
September 2023	Updates to the policies and strategies list and changes to ensure compliance with the housing ombudsman's complaints code. Changes to how complaints are dealt with at Stage Two. Stage Two complaints will be investigated by a Head of Service to ensure ownership of complaints within respective service areas and to support performance against the Tenant Satisfaction Management measure on the time taken to respond to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. Tenant challenge will be provided by the Tenant and Resident Improvement Panel.

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Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 St. Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) aims to provide the highest standard of service that is efficient, responsive and customer orientated, however we accept, that on occasions, we may give individuals cause to complain.
- 1.2 We recognise that customers have a right to complain, comment and compliment, about the provision, or non-provision, of services. As such, SLHD aims to provide an accessible, fair and inclusive complaints procedure for tenants, leaseholders and stakeholders; our customers. SLHD takes all complaints seriously as an important part of a commitment to customer care, always putting the customers at the heart of what we do, day in day out.
- 1.3 We view all complaints received as an opportunity to continuously improve its services to meet our customer's needs by learning from and regularly monitoring all complaints. We will publicise how we have learnt from complaints.
- 1.4 We also want to know when we do things right, and therefore we equally value our customer's comments and compliments as well.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of our Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy is to ensure that:
 - any customer who is not happy with the service received (or not received) from SLHD has an accessible and easy to use method for making a complaint, which offers rapid action and response;
 - the customer can be confident that their complaint will be dealt with confidentially, effectively and fairly, even if the outcome is not to their satisfaction;
 - SLHD uses complaints and comments positively, so that by listening to our customers and taking subsequent action to learn from our mistakes, we will continue to improve our services.
 - Board Members, partnering groups and all members of staff understand the need to handle complaints, comments and compliments through the correct operation of this policy;

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- Customers are aware of their right and how ask for their complaint to be reviewed if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
- If customers remain dissatisfied after their complaint has been through all stages of the internal complaints procedure SLHD will advise of their right to complain to their designated person (which is their MP or Councillor) or the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) or Housing Ombudsman (HO) (dependent on the service area the dispute relates to).
- All compliments and comments received by SLHD are recorded and promoted to all staff. Compliments are used to ensure improved and consistent service delivery.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy relates to anyone who receives or requests a service from SLHD.
- 3.2 This policy is relevant to any customer, tenant or resident who wants to make a complaint, comment or compliment about any SLHD service

4. Complaints

4.1 What is a complaint

Our definition of a complaint is:

- 4.2 An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by St Leger Homes, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.
- 4.3 The complainant does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.

Examples (as defined with the help of our tenants) are when we:

- do something wrong or badly;
- do not do something at all, that we should do;
- are impolite or unhelpful (this includes staff and contractors);
- do not provide a service within our specified times;
- fail to communicate as promised;
- fail to meet legal duties;
- providing wrong or misleading advice;
- failure to act within agreed policies, procedures or service standards;

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- delays in undertaking work which cannot be explained within the terms of policy and procedure;
- bias or inequality of treatment;
- rudeness, offensiveness, attitude and actions of any SLHD staff member or representative;
- failure to keep appointments;
- if we have to make further enquiries to resolve a matter where a customer has expressed dissatisfaction or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.

4.4 Examples where individuals may express dissatisfaction that would not be regarded as complaints are:

- the general law, unless wrongly applied;
- requests for new services;
- persons or bodies over which SLHD has no control;
- Where legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and the Particulars of Claim, have been filed at court
- the subject of the complaint occurred more than 6 months ago and/or is already subject to an on-going or resolved complaint;
- matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy

4.5 Where a decision has been made not to accept a complaint, a detailed 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.

5. Responsibilities, Timescales and Reasonable Adjustments

5.1 Complaints, compliments and comments may be received in any format, by letter, telephone, email, web form, social media or face to face and by any member of the organisation, referred to as the Receiving Officer. They can also be received via a Local Authority Councillor, Board Member, MP, Mayor's office or a 3rd party acting on behalf of a customer, with their consent, unless there is a legal basis, under the Data Protection Act 2018, to share personal information with a 3rd party representative without consent.

5.2 All complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days and responded to within 10 working days from the day the complaint is received.

5.3 If the response cannot be completed in full by the 10th working day, the complainant will be notified to inform them of the progress of their complaint and when they will expect a full response. Where it is necessary to extend a response beyond 20 working days and agreement over the extension period cannot be reached, we will provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the complainant can

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challenge our plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of our response.

5.4 Where a complaint is received via social media we will acknowledge the complaint using private messaging so that all details of the complaint and the complainant are confidential. We will then process the complaint and assign a dedicated Customer Relations Officer to deal with the complainant.

5.5 The complaint will be investigated taking into account:

- All the details provided by the complainant in support of their case;
- Whether or not the complainants has been treated fairly;
- Whether the complainant has experienced any unreasonable delays;
- The relevant policies and procedures of SLHD have been applied correctly ensuring that individual needs are taken into account;
- Consistency when dealing with an individual person and when dealing with other tenants and complaints;
- Clarity where responsibility lies for any action to resolve the complaint;
- Respect of confidentiality

All responses to complaints will include:

- a response that is clear to read and free from jargon showing empathy and understanding
- the decision that has been reached;
- the reasons behind that decision, an outline of promises made to rectify the complaint (if applicable)
- who the complainant should contact if they are not happy with that decision and wish to take further action

5.6 Reasonable Adjustments

5.6.1 All St Leger Homes staff are trained in equality and diversity to embed understanding about where they may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs. This is mandatory training, the compliance of which is monitored by our Organisational Development team.

5.6.2 Our Equality and Diversity Statement sets out that "We are committed to understanding more about the needs of our customers. Collecting, storing and using customer information appropriately enables us to tailor our services to meet their needs".

5.6.3 In line with our Equality and Diversity Statement and commitments, we will support the needs of our diverse customers by adapting this policy, and other policies and associated procedures, to accommodate an individual's needs. This includes taking into account the customer's need

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and where appropriate changing work practices, for example, providing correspondence on coloured paper where requested, having an accessibility compliant website, taking into account diversity when delivering our services and ensuring that our complaints procedures are accessible for all.

- 5.6.4 A full copy of Equality and Diversity Statement can be found at [New Fairness and Equality Statement Launched \(stlegerhomes.co.uk\)](http://stlegerhomes.co.uk)

6. Stages of the Complaint

- 6.1 There are two stages to the complaints process:

6.2 Stage 1

This is the first opportunity to resolve the customer's complaint. The majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage by the relevant Service Manager or Team Leader. If the customer is dissatisfied with the response the complaint can be escalated to Stage 2 of our procedures.

6.3 Stage 2

- 6.4 If the customer is not satisfied with the answer they receive, they have the right to ask for a review. Complaints must only escalate complaint to stage two once it has completed at stage one and at the request of the resident. A request for a review must be submitted within 20 working days of the date of the response letter along with any supporting evidence to the Customer Relations Team. Requests will be acknowledged within 48 hours of receipt, excluding weekends, bank holiday or non-working days.

- 6.5 All reviews will be investigated in full by, a Head of Service unless the complaint can be resolved to the full satisfaction of the tenant.

- 6.6 The remit of the Head of Service is to be fair in their approach, independently investigating the complaint to come to a conclusion. The Head of Service will help SLHD to learn from their complaints and to challenge, where and when appropriate.

- 6.7 The Head of Service will be provided with:

- The original complaint, investigation and the Stage 1 response letter
- The details of the review and why the tenant is unhappy with the original decision
- Details of what the tenant would like to happen to resolve the complaint to their satisfaction

- 6.8 Visits, inspections and any interviews the Head of Service may want to conduct will be co-ordinated by the Customer Relations Team.

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Where it is necessary to extend the response time to a review beyond an additional 10 working days and an agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, we will provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge our plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of our response

Where it is deemed not appropriate for a complaint to be progressed to Stage 2 of the process, the complainant will be informed of this in writing.

6.9 Reasons why a complaint would not be progressed to Stage 2 include:

- the general law, unless wrongly applied;
- requests for new services;
- persons or bodies over which SLHD has no control;
- Where legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and the Particulars of Claim, have been filed at court;
- the subject of the complaint occurred more than 6 months ago and/or is already subject to an on-going or resolved complaint;
- matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy

7. Unacceptable Behaviour and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

7.1 SLHD is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who make them. As part of this service SLHD do not normally limit the contact complainants have with their offices. However, SLHD will not tolerate behaviour by complainants which is unacceptable, for example, which is abusive, offensive or threatening, or if complainants are unreasonably persistent in contacting SLHD concerning the same issues. We will take action to protect staff from that behaviour.

7.2 When a complainant's behaviours has been considered as being unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, we will explain why we find their behaviour to be unacceptable or unreasonable and ask them to change it. We will tell them that, if the unacceptable behaviour or unreasonable persistency continues, we will take action to restrict their contact with our offices.

7.3 The decision to restrict access to our offices will be taken by the Head of Service and/or Executive Management Team (EMT). Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate.

7.4 We will advise the complainant of the action we are taking and that they can appeal the decision we have made to the Chief Executive. We will agree a review period at the outset. If behaviour has not improved, we will provide an explanation as to why the restriction will remain in force for a further period pending the next agreed review date.

7.5 The options SLHD are most likely to consider are:

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- requesting contact in a particular form (i.e. by letters only)
- requiring contact be made with a named officer only
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times
- requesting contact is made through a third party
- asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct
- if the complainant is a tenant, whether it may be treated as a breach of the tenancy agreement

7.6 In all cases we will write to the complainant telling them why we consider his or her behavior to be unacceptable or unreasonable and explaining what actions we are taking and the duration of that action.

Unacceptable Behaviour

8.

8.1 Where a complainant continues to behave in a way that is unacceptable, SLHD may decide to terminate contact with that complainant and discontinue any investigation into their complaint.

8.2 Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of SLHD and the City of Doncaster Council staff members, Councillors or any representatives working on behalf of SLHD/Doncaster Council members of the public and other tenants, and Doncaster Council we will consider other options:

- advise the complainant of their tenancy obligations
- report the matter to the police
- consider taking legal action
- include on SLHD Potentially Violent Persons' register
- if the complainant is a SLHD tenant, whether it may be treated as a breach of the tenancy agreement.

8.3 Depending on the circumstances we may not give the complainant prior warning of what action is taken.

Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

9.

9.1 Where a complainant who persists in communicating with SLHD about the same issues, we may decide to terminate contact with them. In such cases we will read all correspondence from that complainant, but unless there is fresh evidence or it is a new complaint then we will acknowledge it or place it on file with no acknowledgement.

9.2 All new complaints from people who have been unreasonably persistent complainants will be treated on the merits of the complaint and not the person.

10. Compliments and Comments

Compliments

10.1

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A compliment is when someone takes the trouble to tell us that a person, team or service we provide has exceeded their expectations and is worthy of praise and compliments should be unprompted and unsolicited. It is not a compliment if it has been given when completing a satisfaction survey.

10.2

All compliments received will be acknowledged and where a customer has provided a member of staff's name we will pass the compliment on to the member of staff or/and the team concerned, via an email from the relevant Director.

10.3

A selection of compliments will be shared each month in our staff magazine and all compliments uploaded onto SLHD's intranet site for all staff members to view.

Comments

10.4

A comment is when a customer takes the trouble to tell us what changes they think would assist us in improving the delivery of our services.

10.5

Comments are also encouraged from our customers and are taken seriously as they also enable us to view our services from the customers' experience. Comments are acknowledged within 3 working days.

10.6

All comments are sent to the relevant Service Managers for them to record and action if any improvements are identified to the services they deliver and are used as "You Said, We Did" feedback

11. Service Promises

11.1 SLHD is committed to continuous improvement in service delivery.

11.2 Our Service Standards for Compliments, Comments and Complaints are:

- We will make it easy and straightforward for our customers to make a complaint, comment or compliment, publicising our service on our website and other platforms;
- We will acknowledge and respond to your complaint and compliment in line with our Service Standards and published timescales and keep you informed if we cannot meet the timescale, explaining why and when we will respond;
- We will ensure that you will have a full explanation to your complaint in your preferred format;
- We will tell you if changes have been made to services following your complaint as "You said, We Did" reports
- We will publish the quarterly performance figures on the SLHD website on how we are meeting our set timescales;

12. Monitoring and Review

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- 12.1 We record the numbers of and reasons for complaints as well as the information necessary to ensure response times are met.
- 12.2 Regular reports are produced for all levels of the business highlighting any trends, which may suggest possible improvements in areas of service provision or practices. Customer journeys are also created and shared at all levels, highlighting a true journey of the reasons which led to the customer having to complain which then prompts changes to services.

13. Training

- 13.1 An overview is provided to all new starters at induction covering high level information to recognise and try and resolve a complaint.

- 13.2 More detailed training is provided to members of staff who investigates and responds to formal complaints. Training is also provided to tenant representative who have a role in scrutinising how we are dealing with complaints.

14. Partnership working

- 14.1 We work in partnership with the City of Doncaster Council and other partners to resolve any joint complaints.

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