



Document Title	POLICY - Complaints, Compliments and Comments
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1.0 Introduction and Purpose:

- 1.1 This policy demonstrates our strong commitment and outlines our response to dealing with Compliments, Complaints and Comments in our role as a Registered Provider of Social Housing.
- 1.2 We believe that everyone has the right to expect high levels of service, satisfaction and professionalism from us and we expect other organisations and agents acting on our behalf to deliver the same.
- 1.3 We recognise that occasionally these standards may not always met and we have in place, robust systems to make feeding back to us easy and we aim to quickly respond and where necessary, resolve issues at pace.
- 1.4 Complaints, compliments and comments provide vital intelligence on the health, performance and reputation of Solo and they will be used in a transparent way to promote learning and service improvement.
- 1.5 We have adopted the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and will promote the code with all relevant stakeholders and residents, including how the Ombudsman can advise a resident in making a complaint.
- 1.6 At all times our Business Operations Strategic Lead will be the Strategic Lead for Complaints, Compliments and Comments.
- 1.7 We will produce this policy in an accessible format in line with the Equality Act 2010 and will operate along with a Reasonable Adjustment Policy.
- 1.8 We will also publicise it on our website, along with clearly outlining how people can feedback to us through employees, newsletters and regular correspondence with our residents.

Complaints

2.0 Definition:

- 2.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own employees or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident, group of residents or person using or involved with our services.
- 2.2 The word complaint does not have to be used for it to be treated as such.
- 2.3 Complaints may be communicated verbally, electronically, or in writing, including via social media channels, such as Facebook and LinkedIn.



- 2.4 Complaints may be made by residents (or someone acting on their behalf), other users of our services, landlords, neighbours, stakeholders and members of the general public.
- 2.5 We will respond to all complaints regardless of the communication channel with confidentiality as per our Confidentiality Agreement and the GDPR and Data Protection Policy.
- 2.6 We will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. For example:
- a. Matters that have already been considered under the Complaints Policy
 - b. A service request that can be resolved/responded to straight away
 - c. The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago
 - d. Legal proceedings have started
 - e. Where the complainant is refusing to cooperate with the process e.g. failing to provide information, or failing to advise of their preferred outcome
 - f. A complaint about anti-social behaviour from a Solo resident or between Solo residents would not be regarded as a complaint unless the complaint is about our handling of the anti-social behaviour service
- 2.7 When we decides that a matter is not considered to be a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided to the complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.
- 2.8 A resident has the right to challenge a decision not to accept a matter by bringing the matter to the Housing Ombudsman, who where appropriate, may instruct us to take on the complaint.
- 2.9 Employees who wish to make a complaint should use the Grievance Policy or the Whistleblowing Policy to address their concerns.
- 3.0 Aim of the Policy**
- 3.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that the complaints process is flexible and responsive to the needs of individual complainants. In addition, it emphasises the need to communicate effectively with complainants and involve them in the decisions concerning the handling of their complaint.
- 3.2 As part of this Policy and the accompanying Complaints Procedure:



- a. Complainants are listened to, understood and treated sensitively and fairly
- b. Complainants are given an opportunity to explain the outcome they are seeking before a decision is reached
- c. Complainants are not disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint
- d. Complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly and openly
- e. Complainants are given the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented and / or accompanied at any meeting with us where reasonable
- f. Complainants are kept informed of the progress and outcome of the investigation
- g. Apologies are given where appropriate
- h. Action to rectify the cause of the complaint is identified, implemented and evaluated
- i. Learning from complaints informs service development and improvement
- j. The complaints handling complies with confidentiality and data protection policies and is transparent
- k. Persons responsible for complaint handling are given support and training to effectively deal with the complaint
- l. The person dealing with the complaint (The Complaint Officer) will have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. They should be competent, empathic and efficient

4.0 Complaint Management

- 4.1 Our Leadership Team are responsible for managing complaints in line with the Complaints Process. This is referred to as the 'Complaint Officer'.
- 4.2 The Complaint Officer has access to employees at all levels to facilitate prompt resolution and has authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.
- 4.3 A complaint should be resolved at the earliest opportunity and action must continue to address an existing or related service request whilst the investigation is completed.



- 4.4 All complaints will be logged. The definitions of the complaint will be agreed with the complainant and the outcomes required and achieved will be recorded.
- 4.5 All points within the complaint definition will be addressed and clear reasons for decisions will be provided referencing relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
- 4.6 Any additional related matters raised during the Stage 1 investigation will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response. Any matters raised after the Stage 1 response has been issued, or unrelated or matters that will unreasonably delay the Stage 1 response, will be treated and recorded as a new complaint.
- 4.7 There will be no more than two stages to the Complaints Process.
- 4.8 The person considering the complaint at Stage 1 will not be the same person who considers the complaint at Stage 2.
- 4.9 When a complaint is made to us where we are the Managing Agent for another Landlord (known as the Substantive Landlord), we will ensure that the complainant is promptly advised whether Solo will investigate or refer it to the Substantive Landlord. This will not incur any additional stages or delays to the time scales as per the Housing Ombudsman Code.
- 4.10 At each stage of the process, the complainant will receive acknowledgement in writing setting out clear timeframes and expectations in accordance with the Complaints Procedure.
- 4.11 The complaints log is reviewed annually by the Chief Executive Officer and regular reports will be made to the Solo Board.
- 4.12 Where a complaint has been escalated to one of our regulators, the Chief Executive will make the Solo Board immediately aware and will provide updates.
- 4.13 Communication with the complainant should not generally identify individual employees or contractors, as their actions are undertaken on behalf of Solo.
- 4.14 If a complainant displays threatening or abusive behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that causes employees, residents or other users of the service to feel unsafe, or following investigation, the claimant's demands are found to be unreasonable, we reserve the right to close the Complaints Process. Unreasonable demands can include seeking disproportionate amounts of information, demanding an unrealistic nature or scale of service, or seeking to prolong contact with us by continually raising new issues throughout an investigation.



4.15 Such behaviour will be considered in line with the Unreasonable Behaviour Complaints Policy.

5.0 Timeframes

5.1 We will accept complaints within 12 months of the issue occurring, or the resident becoming aware of the issue unless they are excluded on other grounds. Complainants are encouraged to bring the complaint forward as soon as possible, as a delay can make investigation more difficult and may limit the action that can be taken. We reserve the right to apply discretion to complaints made outside of this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.

5.2 We aim to respond to all complaints in accordance with the timeframes referred to in the Complaints Procedure.

5.3 If we need to extend the response timescale, this will be for good reason and no more than 10 working days at Stage 1 and 20 working days at Stage 2. The reason(s) will be clearly explained to the resident and we will provide contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

5.4 It should be noted that mediation may be offered at all stages of the process if all parties agree.

6.0 Putting Things Right

6.1 Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the action already taken, or the action intended to put things right. Examples of where action to put things right are:

- a. There was an unreasonable delay
- b. Inaccurate or inadequate advice, explanation or information was provided
- c. Solo policy or procedure was not followed without good reason
- d. There was a factual or legal error that impacted on the outcome
- e. There was unprofessional behaviour by an employee

6.2 We will acknowledge and apologise for any failure identified, give an explanation, and where possible, inform the complainant of the changes or actions taken to prevent the issue from happening again.



6.3 We recognise that putting things right is the first step to repairing and rebuilding the relationship with the complainant. It is important to make sure expectations are managed and we will not promise anything that cannot be delivered, or would be unfair to other residents or service users.

7.0 Appropriate Remedy

7.1 We will resolve the complaint in the most appropriate way considering service failures and the level of detriment caused as a result. Remedies shall include:

- a. Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- b. Providing an explanation, assistance or reason
- c. Apologising
- d. Taking action if there has been a delay
- e. Reconsidering or changing a decision
- f. Amending a record
- g. Providing a financial remedy
- h. Changing policies, procedures or practices

7.2 In formulating a remedy, we will consider the following factors noting that this is not an exhaustive list:

- a. Length of time that a situation has been ongoing
- b. Frequency with which something has occurred
- c. Severity of any service failures or omission
- d. Number of different failures
- e. Cumulative impact on the resident
- f. A resident's particular circumstances or vulnerabilities

7.3 Any remedy will always be agreed with the complainant and followed through to completion.



7.4 In awarding compensation, we will consider whether any statutory payments are due if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, as well as any time and trouble the complainant has been put to, as well as any distress and inconvenience caused. This will be awarded in line with the Housing Ombudsman guidelines.

8.0 Duty to cooperate with the Housing Ombudsman

8.1 At the earliest opportunity, we will promote the right for a resident to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service, who can assist throughout the life of the complaint.

8.2 We will provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of our regular correspondence.

8.3 In the final stage of a complaint, we advise residents of their right to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service and how to do this.

8.4 we will cooperate with the Ombudsman's requests for evidence and provide this within 15 working days. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, we will provide an explanation for the delay. If the explanation is reasonable, the Ombudsman may agree a revised date.

8.5 We will produce an annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and publish this on our website along with the Solo Boards response to the report.

8.6 We will also complete an annual self-assessment against the code or will review the self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.

8.7 We also commit to reviewing and updating the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.

8.8 If we are unable to comply with the code due to exceptional circumstances, the Ombudsman and affected residents will be notified and information will be published on the website, including timescales for returning to compliance with the code.

Compliments

9.0 Definition

9.1 A compliment is an expression of praise, commendation, or admiration, not always requiring a response. Compliments may be communicated verbally, electronically, or in writing. Compliments may be made by residents, other users of our services, landlords, neighbours, stakeholders or members of the general public.



10.0 Aim of the Policy

10.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that compliments are acknowledged and recorded and that the employee(s), contractor(s), service user(s) or Board member(s) that the compliment relates to, is made aware and praised for their accomplishment. In addition, it emphasises the need to communicate effectively with the employees, contractors, service users and Board members

10.2 The policy seeks to ensure that:

- a. Compliments are listened to and recorded
- b. Feedback is provided to the person(s) it relates to
- c. Feedback on compliments is shared with employees in a timely manner
- d. Compliments will help us share good practice and improve services

11.0 Compliments Management

11.1 Where a compliment is received for an employee, line managers will also be informed to aid in performance management, supervision and appraisal.

11.2 Where appropriate, compliments may also be used as feedback to funders and used on our website.

Comments

12.0 Definition

12.1 A verbal or written remark expressing an opinion or reaction.

13.0 Comments management

13.1 We welcome people's thoughts on what has been done well and what has been done not so well.

13.2 All comments will be passed on to the relevant line manager to determine if and how improvements can be made.

14.0 Data Protection Statement

14.1 Our policies and procedures are developed in line with our Data Protection policy and associated procedures, in order to comply with legal obligations and treat people fairly whenever we are processing personal data.



14.2 Personal data is any information from which an individual can be identified, either on its own or with the addition of other information, and processing refers to anything that can be done to that data, including collecting, storing, using, analysing, sharing and deleting it.

14.3 A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will usually be carried out before policies and procedures that potentially pose a high risk due to the nature of the data processing are finalised and implemented.

14.4 Everyone whose data is processed by us has rights around their data, including the right to access their data and to object to the way it is processed. More information on how and why we process data and how people can exercise their rights is in our full Privacy Policy on our website.

15.0 Equality And Diversity

15.1 Our policies are developed in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

16.0 Monitoring, Accountability And Review

12.1 Monitoring of live cases will be monthly by the Leadership Team and measured against agreed Key Performance Indicators.

12.2 We will usually carry out a review of this policy every three years or sooner if it is newly created, or there are legal or regulatory changes.