



# **Complaints Policy**

**December 2025**

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## **1. Scope**

- 1.1 This policy applies to all SW9 Community Housing (SW9 CH) residents.
- 1.2 Any reference to 'we,' our,' us' refers to SW9 CH. When we use 'you' and 'your' we mean any SW9 CH resident.

## **2. Purpose and objectives**

- 2.1 We want to make sure we are giving our residents the best service possible. But sometimes things do not go to plan. If this happens, we want to put it right for you as quickly as we can and learn from your feedback.
- 2.2 This policy is designed to outline how we will manage complaints to ensure we provide a simple and accessible complaints service.
- 2.3 This policy has been developed in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code, 2024 and our regulatory and legal duties.

## **3. Policy statement**

- 3.1 We hope that a resident never has to let us know that something has not gone well or that they have been let down by us. But if it happens, we need to make it right.
- 3.2 When a resident tells us about an issue, we will try to sort it out straight away. If we cannot resolve problems there and then, we will agree what actions need to be taken, and by when. We will keep residents updated on what we are doing using a communication method that best suits them.
- 3.3 We expect our staff to take every possible step to assist and support our residents, working promptly to resolve any issues they encounter.
- 3.4 We will consider the root cause of an issue so we can stop it happening again.
- 3.5 Complaints relating to safeguarding shall be resolved through the measures set out in our Safeguarding Policy.
- 3.6 We will not close a complaint until we have tried everything that we believe can reasonably be done to resolve it, or until we have an agreed action plan in place. When we know the outcome or have an agreed plan in place, we will communicate to the resident about all the issues that have been raised.
- 3.7 Building and maintaining our residents' trust is at the heart of our approach and we will make sure residents feel we are taking their issues seriously.

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## 4. Definitions

- 4.1 We use the Housing Ombudsman Service's definition of a complaint: '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.'
- 4.2 While residents may not use the word 'complaint,' if it is evident that they are dissatisfied, we will always give them the option to make a complaint.

## 5. Managing and Responding to Complaints

- 5.1 Complaints should be raised within 12 months of the matter arising. Where there is no valid reason for a delay, we may be unable to consider complaints received after this time.
- 5.2 We will use our discretion when considering if a complaint cannot be accepted and will always consider the individual circumstances of the complaint in question.
- 5.3 Where a decision is made not to accept a complaint, we will provide a clear explanation to the resident and provide information on their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 5.4 All complaints will be handled by someone who was not the subject of the complaint, ensuring impartiality and fairness throughout the process.

## 6. Stage 1 complaints

- 6.1 When we first receive a complaint, it is known as a 'Stage 1'. The complaint will be logged and acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.
- 6.2 We aim to issue a full response to the resident within 10 working days of acknowledging a complaint. If this is not possible, such as where a complaint is complex, we may need a further 10 working days, and we will let the resident know why and agree to this with them.

## 7. Stage 2 complaints

- 7.1 A complaint can only be taken to Stage 2 after it has received a Stage 1 response. If a resident is unhappy with a decision received at Stage 1, they have the right to have the decision reviewed. This is known as a 'Stage 2' complaint. We will acknowledge any Stage 2 complaint within 5 working days of receipt.
- 7.2 A Senior Leadership Team (SLT) member will review how the complaint was handled and the decisions made.
- 7.3 If a resident would like their Stage 1 complaint reviewed, they should request this within one calendar year from the date of our Stage 1 response.

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- 7.4 We aim to have a decision on Stage 2 complaints made within 20 working days of acknowledgement. As with Stage 1 complaints, we sometimes need extra time to make the right decision, so we may take up to a further 20 working days. If we need to do this, we will let the resident know why and agree with them.
- 7.5 There may be times where the complexity of a case requires an extension for more than the additional 20 working days mentioned above. If this is the case, we will ensure the resident understands and we will arrange to update them at agreed periods. We will also inform them of the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.

## **8. Using a third party or representative to raise a complaint**

- 8.1 We understand that some residents may want someone else to make their complaint for them and we will support this. We will still handle these complaints in line with our policy.
- 8.2 To make sure we protect our residents' best interests, we will ask for written authority to tell us who can act on their behalf. A Representative Consent Form must be completed. Only once we receive this, will the complaint be handled.

## **9. Anonymous complaints and confidentiality**

- 9.1 An anonymous report relating to one of our services, a member of staff or a resident will be reported to a Director/Head of Service depending on the information disclosed for the service area for follow-up and investigation if appropriate.
- 9.2 All members of staff are required to adhere to our code of conduct and maintain confidentiality as appropriate to the circumstances. Our colleagues managing complaints should seek support when handling a complaint of a sensitive nature or if asked not to disclose the identity of the complainant. We need to manage the expectations of our residents, ensuring we can adhere to our complaints process for investigation and resolution and have regard to our duty of care to our residents, employees, and third party contractors.
- 9.3 It may not be possible to fully investigate a complaint without disclosing the identity of the complainant, and if so, we will ask the complainant's permission to do this. Whilst we respect our residents' right to confidentiality, if we do not have this permission, we may not be able to investigate fully.

## **10. How we will try to put things right**

- 10.1 We will always try to put things right and that usually means getting the resident back to where they should have been before they had a problem.
- 10.2 For most problems, a genuine apology and putting things right straight away is where it ends. Sometimes, if it has taken us longer than it should have to get something sorted out or if the problem keeps happening, we may offer compensation.

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10.3 The things we will look at will be:

- The resident's situation, for example, if they need additional help.
- How much the resident has been disrupted.
- How long it's taken to put right.
- If there has been distress and/or inconvenience.

10.4 If a service goes wrong:

- We will make it easy to tell us what has happened.
- We will make sure that we understand what has happened from the resident's viewpoint and look for a solution that works for them.
- We will be clear about what we can and will do, and then do it.
- We will tell the resident who will help them if the issue is complex.
- We will keep in touch until everything is sorted out.
- We will recognise any failings on our part and consider these in line with our Compensation Policy which can be found on our website.

## **11. When we cannot reach an agreement**

11.1 When we have done all we reasonably can to resolve a complaint but a resident is still unhappy, they can refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

11.2 In the instances where we do not consider or escalate a complaint, residents will be informed of their right to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

11.3 Residents have one year from the date of our Stage 2 response to raise the matter with the Housing Ombudsman Service. They can also ask a designated person, such as an MP or councillor to act on their behalf. We will still handle such complaints in line with our policy.

## **12. Housing Ombudsman Service**

12.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service (the Ombudsman) is a free and independent dispute resolution service. Residents can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point during the complaint procedure.

12.2 The Ombudsman cannot formally investigate while complaints are going through our internal process but may be able to give advice and support to help reach a resolution.

12.3 The Ombudsman will contact us to get the facts of the case from our point of view and then make a final decision.

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### **Housing Ombudsman Service**

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

Phone: 0300 111 3000

## **13. Other complaints handling avenues**

- 13.1 If you have purchased a home from SNG and remain unhappy, you will need to contact the Consumer Code for Home Builders rather than the Housing Ombudsman Service.

### **Consumer Code for Home Builders**

Consumer Code for Home Builders Limited, Westgate House, Royland Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 2EH

Email: [enquiries@consumercode.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@consumercode.co.uk)

Phone: 0345 608 9797

- 13.2 For shared owners and long leaseholders who have complaints about service charges and the terms of their leases.

### **First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) London Region**

Residential property: London Region, 10 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7LR Email:

[London.Rap@justice.gov.uk](mailto:London.Rap@justice.gov.uk)

Phone: 0207 446 7700

## **14. Complaints we may not consider or escalate**

- 14.1 While we welcome complaints and we do not normally restrict the number of complaints or level of contact made by our residents, there may be circumstances under which we may not consider or escalate complaints. In any situation where we cannot support a resident, we will contact them to explain why and assist where we can.

**Examples include, but are not limited to:**

### **a. Service requests**

Often a resident's concerns can be resolved at 'first point of contact' and will not need to go through our two stage complaints process. These are known as 'Service

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Requests.'

Unless a resident asks us to, we will not register a service request as a complaint in the first instance. If the resident is unhappy with how we dealt with the matter, we will log this as a complaint. In line with our definition, the resident does not have to use the word 'complaint.'

Where we do log a complaint in relation to a service request, this will not stop our work to resolve the service request.

#### **b. Matters already considered**

If a resident raises an issue that has previously been considered under the Complaints Policy, this will not be considered, and we will explain this to the resident.

#### **c. Service Charges**

Issues related to Service Charges that we will consider under the Complaints Policy are:

- how a fee has been worked out.
- a refund request.
- the level or standard of service provided for a fee.
- the response to a request for information about a charge (not including where a request has been made under the Freedom of Information Act).
- a landlord's handling of your enquiry or complaint about rent or service charges.

Any other enquiries or disputes can be raised via the Service Charge Enquiry and Dispute Procedure. We will explain to the resident which process will be followed and what referral rights may be available to them.

#### **d. Court proceedings**

Under the pre action protocol, any complaint(s) raised before formal court proceedings will be addressed through our complaints handling code. However, if the complaint concerns matters that are, or were, subject to formal court proceedings e.g. a disrepair case that has been filed and stamped by the court, we may not be able to investigate, and we would explain this to the resident.

#### **e. Matters outside our control**

Where the complaint concerns matters outside SW9 CH's control, such as a Local Authority responsibility, we will not be able to investigate and would explain this to the resident.

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## 15. Unreasonable behaviour

- 15.1 We ask that our residents treat our staff with respect and that they behave in a way that does not stop us from being able to resolve their complaint or the underlying concerns. However, we may occasionally receive complaints from residents whose behaviour and/or frequent contact prevents us resolving the complaint or adversely affects the ability of our teams to help other residents.
- 15.2 In these cases, we will speak with them to understand why they keep contacting us. We will also liaise with external agencies to find out if they need support. In these first stages, we will do all we can reasonably do to engage, provide support or appoint a single point of contact if required.
- 15.3 We will explain clearly what we have done to resolve the complaint and decide what we will do the next time they contact us about the same issue.
- 15.4 This could be to:
- 15.4.1 acknowledge the contact but not offer any additional responses.
  - 15.4.2 ask them to only contact one named employee.
  - 15.4.3 ask them to only contact us using a channel of our choice.
  - 15.4.4 ask them to contact us at mutually agreed times.
- 15.5 For more information, please see the Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.

## 16. Compliance

- 16.1 We will ensure all complaint handling staff are trained and aware of the complaints policy and of our commitment to excellent service delivery standards.
- 16.2 We record all complaints, regularly monitor our progress in handling them, and measure our performance against targets.
- 16.3 Performance on complaints and how complaints have been used to improve services is reported to our Services Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 16.4 We will carry out an annual self-assessment against the code to ensure our handling of complaints remains in line with its requirements.
- 16.5 We will publish an annual complaints report to provide insight and information for our residents about the complaints we receive and what we've looked to improve as a result.

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## 17. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
SW9 CHBoard	Ultimate responsibility for determining and directing SW9 CH's response to service failures and Ombudsman complaints.
SLT	Provides assurance to the Board on the effectiveness of complaint and compensation policies, Ombudsman decisions and strategies to improve services and reduce service failures.
Services Committee	Provide feedback and direction on SW9 CH's approach to complaints.
Head of Customer Services	Responsibility and ownership over the Complaints Policy and related process.
All colleagues and contractors	All colleagues should be aware of this policy.  Colleagues dealing with compensation and/or complaints must read this policy and comply with this policy.

## 18. Equality and diversity

- 18.1 We are transparent about our responsibilities around equality and treat everyone fairly and respectfully, regardless of their: age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, religion, race, nationality, ethnicity, or national origin.
- 18.2 We will make sure our services and workplaces are as inclusive and accessible as possible and take seriously any concerns that we have not acted in a fair way, dealing with them as quickly as we can.
- 18.3 We are committed to helping residents to access information about their homes and services in a way that suits individual needs. We will apply this policy consistently, fairly, and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010. We will also consider any reasonable adjustment requests in line with our Vulnerabilities and Reasonable Adjustments Policy.
- 18.4 Adjustments may include letters or information in another format or language. For example, recordings of complaint letters to listen to instead of reading. Making sure residents are not excluded is important to us.

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## 19. Related documents

19.1 This Policy is supported by the following documents:

- Compensation policy
- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Unreasonable Behaviour Policy
- Representative Consent Form

## 20. Legislation and regulation

20.1 The legislation listed in this policy is not intended to cover all legislation applicable to this policy. To comply with clause 1.1 of the Regulator of Social Housing's Governance and Financial Viability Standard, which requires adherence to all relevant law, SW9 CH will take reasonable measures to ensure compliance with all applicable legislation by reviewing policies and procedures and amending them as appropriate. Any queries relating to the applicable legislation should be directed to the policy owner.

- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Consumer Rights Act 2015
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Laws (GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018)
- Regulatory Framework for Social Housing (Regulator of Social Housing)

## 21. Review

21.1 This document will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if significant changes occur in the relevant legal or operational landscape.

<b>Policy author:</b>	<b>Customer Resolutions Manager</b>
<b>Policy owner:</b>	<b>Head of Customer Services</b>
<b>Adopted from Network Homes: y/n</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Review schedule (1, 2 or 3 years):</b>	<b>3 years</b>

### Change Record

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reviewed by (name and</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>
September, 2025	Customer Resolutions Manager, Policy and Performance Manager and Leasehold Officer	5.0	Updated to bring in line with changes at SNG.

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