

1 Policy statement

- 1.1 We value and encourage customer feedback and are committed to ensuring that all our customers have a strong voice to influence decisions and challenge us as their landlord. We are also committed to consistently providing an excellent service to all our customers. However, we recognise that there are times when our service fails to meet the high standards we have set.
- 1.2 This Policy sets out Rooftop Housing Group's ('Rooftops') approach, obligations and responsibilities regarding customer complaints.
- 1.3 This Policy extends to all our services including those of our contractors and agents. It applies to all our customers and their designated advocates including non-resident service users, key workers, those in shared ownership properties and leaseholders. Application of this Policy to other parties will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 1.4 Rooftop encourages a culture of continuous improvement, both as individuals and as an organisation. Learning from our customer feedback, including customer complaints, is an integral part of that process and this policy sets out our expectations on how we evidence, monitor and deliver any learning points that arise from the complaints we receive.

2 Statutory and Regulatory context

- 2.1 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (2017) of the regulatory framework for social housing in England, requires Registered Providers (RPs) to:

"Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly."
- 2.1.1 Specific expectations are for RPs to provide customers with accessible, relevant and timely information about:
 - The standards of housing services their customers can expect.
 - How they are performing against those standards.
 - How customers can communicate with them and provide feedback.
- 2.1.2 In addition, RPs shall:
 - offer a range of ways for customers to express a complaint and set out clear service standards for responding to complaints, including complaints about performance against the standards, and details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint.
 - inform customers how they use complaints to improve their services.
 - publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints.
- 2.2 This Policy is also compliant with the following legislation:
- 2.2.1 The Housing Ombudsman's (HO) Complaint Handling Code (Revised April 2022) ('the Code'). The Code supports the regulatory approach to complaints ensuring

that a landlord's approach to complaints is clear, simple and accessible and ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

2.2.2 The Secure Tenants of Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994 and the entitlement of secure tenants to receive compensation from their landlord if qualifying repairs are not carried out within a prescribed period.

2.2.3 The rights enshrined in the General Data Protection Regulations (2018).

3 Introduction

3.1 We are committed to providing effective and efficient services to meet customer need; however, we recognise that sometimes things do go wrong, and customers may wish to raise a complaint.

3.2 Our approach is based on the HO's resolution principles – "Be Fair, Put it Right and Learn from Outcomes":

3.2.1 We will deal with complaints made by our customers in a consistent, transparent, and timely manner seeking early resolution wherever possible.

3.2.2 We will regularly share our complaints performance with our customers and stakeholders.

3.2.3 We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and to improve our services and will put in place processes and structures to enable this.

3.2.4 In line with the Code, the Group Board has appointed one of its members to have lead responsibility for complaints.

4 Definitions

4.1 A **Contact** is the day-to-day correspondence we have with our customers. This might include reporting ASB, requesting a repair or providing a customer with an update on a service we are providing.

4.2 A **Dissatisfaction** is where action is required to put things right where the customer has not received the service expected. Examples might include following up a repair which didn't take place when planned or resolving feedback from surveys. If we have previously failed to deal with a dissatisfaction to the customer's satisfaction, subsequent requests about the same matter must be dealt with as a complaint.

4.3 A **Complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of by the organisation, its employees or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group. A customer does not need to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such. Examples would include failure to resolve at a dissatisfaction level, failure to provide a service, poor workmanship, failure to adhere to our own processes and policies, or inappropriate conduct or behaviour by a Rooftop member of staff.

4.4 The differentiation between a Complaint and a Dissatisfaction is largely contextual. Officers need to take into account the nature of the issue, the impact on the customer, the scale and duration of the issue, the communication the customer has previously had with is about the issue and the customers preference in taking the matter forward.

4.5 An **Advocate** is an individual that is representing the customer through this process. This may be a friend, relative or neighbour or someone in a more formal capacity, such as a solicitor. The customer will need to designate an individual or organisation to advocate on their behalf in writing.

5 Approach

5.1 All complaints are dealt with fairly, honestly, consistently and in a timely manner.

- 5.2 Each complaint is treated on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.3 All complaints are confidential and are recorded and investigated as such. The complaints process and the handling of related information is General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant.
- 5.4 An identified officer, the Customer Experience Manager, will support on a group wide level ensuring a consistent and compliant approach, and championing the Complaints Policy and procedure.
- 5.5 We regularly publicise our approach to complaints to our customers. This Policy is published and promoted on the Rooftop website, through social media platforms and can be made available to customers in multiple formats, including alternative languages and hard copy.
- 5.6 Alongside the Policy we provide a guide for customers to explain the complaints process, timescales and expectations. All customers raising a dissatisfaction or complaint will be signposted to the guidance as part of our initial response.
- 5.7 Our complaints handling performance is measured against our own targets and the standards set out by the Regulator of Social Housing and Housing Ombudsman. We annually publish a self-assessment of our performance against these standards.

6 Process

- 6.1 In the first instance, in line with the definitions above, concerns raised by customers will either be treated as a Dissatisfaction or a Complaint.
- 6.2 **Dissatisfaction** – usually the initial contact from the customer. Customer concerns about the service they receive may be responded to as a dissatisfaction by the relevant customer facing member of staff, for example, the appropriate Neighbourhood Officer.
- 6.3 Our formal complaints process has two stages:
 - Stage 1** – A Complaint. If a Dissatisfaction is not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, or the customer clearly wishes to raise a complaint about the service we have provided, their concerns are investigated by the relevant Manager or their peer (**the Complaints Investigating Officer**).
 - Stage 2** – Complaint appeal. The customer may appeal the findings and/or outcome of the Stage 1 Complaint. The case will be reviewed by the relevant Head of Service in conjunction with a Board Member.

Where appropriate the CIO will be supported by the Customer Liaison Officer (Asset Management), the Property Resolutions Coordinator (Property Services) or the Customer Experience Manager.
- 6.4 We will contact the customer as early as possible at each stage to understand the outcome that they are seeking to enable their involvement and to facilitate a swift resolution.
- 6.5 If a customer is not satisfied with the investigation or outcome of their complaint at any point in the process, they may refer their complaint the Housing Ombudsman Service. Where the complaint is from a leaseholder or freeholder regarding a service charge, they may choose to take the matter to a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.
- 6.6 We will support investigations by and the determination of the Housing Ombudsman or Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

- 6.7 All contact with the Housing Ombudsman will be directed to and through the Governance team. Complaints under review by the HO will be notified to the Head of Performance, Head of Risk and Assurance, relevant Head of Service, Customer Experience Manager and Executive Director by the Governance team as each notification is received from the HO.
- 6.8 Complaints sent directly to a Board Member, the Group Chief Executive or members of the Executive Team will be dealt with in accordance with this policy and managed by a relevant manager. (See Appendix 3 “Guidance for Board Members”).
- 6.9 Every customer will be informed in writing of the outcome of their complaint setting out the reasons why the complaint has or has not been upheld. The outcome of every complaint will be recorded on the housing management system.
- 6.9.1 In some circumstances under the obligations to repair, set out in the Secure Tenants of Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994, we may consider paying compensation as part of a complaint resolution. See Section 11. Our approach to Compensation payments and Goodwill gestures are set out in our Compensation Policy.

7 Exclusions

- 7.1 Complaints will not be investigated in cases where:
 - 7.1.1 It relates to an issue that occurred more than six months previously unless there is clear evidence of a long standing or repetitive issue, or the complaint is related to Health and Safety or Safeguarding.
 - 7.1.2 The complaint is, or has previously been, subject to any legal proceedings or we have been notified that they are about to commence, beyond pre-action protocols.
 - 7.1.3 The substance of the complaint has already been through our complaints process.
 - 7.1.4 The complaint relates to persons or bodies over which we have no control.
 - 7.1.5 The complaint relates to anti-social behaviour (this is covered in the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy) unless the complaint concerns the management of the case.

8 Unacceptable Behaviour

- 8.1 In line with the Code, we aim to deal fairly, honestly and consistently with all customers. Where a customer’s actions are considered unacceptable, such as aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands, or persistent and / or unsubstantiated complaints, the complaints process may be withdrawn or otherwise restricted. Where appropriate we may refer matters to the police or other agencies.
- 8.2 Actions we may take in such circumstances include (but are not limited to):
 - 8.2.1 Warning the customer about their behaviour and requesting that the customer modifies their behaviour in future contact with us.
 - 8.2.2 Appointing a specific point of contact for the customer.
 - 8.2.3 Communicating only in writing or via an agreed representative.
 - 8.2.4 Deciding not to investigate a complaint on the basis that it has been pursued in a way that is unacceptable.
 - 8.2.5 Stopping all communication with a customer.
 - 8.2.6 Otherwise restricting or limiting contact with us.
 - 8.2.7 In exceptional circumstances, notifying relevant public authorities.
- 8.3 In such cases the complainant will be informed in writing of our decision. We will continue to deal with other issues raised by the complainant, such as unrelated

service requests, on a case-by-case basis. Any such restrictions will be reviewed quarterly by the relevant Head of Service. Complaints regarding Colleagues, Board Members or Representatives.

- 8.4 Complaints regarding the conduct or behaviour of a representative of the organisation will always be recorded and dealt with as a stage 1 formal complaint in the first instance. This may include a colleague (including the Group Chief Executive), Board Member, worker, volunteer, or a contractor.
- 8.5 Where the issue relates to a colleague, worker or Board Member advice must be sought from the Head of Human Resources prior to any investigation. The principles of this Policy and its associated procedure will be followed.
- 8.6 Any sensitive evidence and correspondence will be saved securely with appropriate access restrictions.

9 Timescales

- 9.1 All Dissatisfactions and Complaints will be acknowledged within three working days and thereafter processed as quickly as reasonably possible and within the timescales stated in the Complaints procedure.
- 9.2 If a formal complaint or appeal cannot be resolved within the initial 10-day investigation period, the customer will be contacted to update them on progress, explain what actions remain to be taken and to agree a timeframe for those actions to be completed.
- 9.3 No investigation period should be extended beyond 20 days. Any complaints that are extended beyond 20 days will be reported to the relevant Executive Director.

10 Compensation

- 10.1 We recognise that occasionally we may deliver services that fail to meet our customers' and our own service expectations. In these circumstances, compensation may be appropriate. In awarding compensation, we will consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred and the time, trouble and stress the resident has been put through.
- 10.2 Compensation may be awarded at any stage of the complaint process if a complaint is upheld in line with our Compensation Policy. We will usually only consider the payment of compensation where we have failed to deliver against our standards of service or where we have been clearly negligent.
- 10.3 Any offer of compensation will be made in full and final settlement of the complaint and the customer shall be made aware that acceptance of the offer will be considered confirmation that the complaint has been resolved to their satisfaction.
- 10.4 Any compensation awarded will be offset against any arrears on the customer's rent and related accounts.

11 Learning

- 11.1 We actively seek to identify learning from customer complaints and use them to improve services.
- 11.2 The complaint investigating officer will complete a lessons-learned report, including any opportunities to improve that have been identified.
- 11.3 Rooftop will maintain a rolling Action Plan of all lessons learned and ensure that any actions identified are monitored for completion and effectiveness
- 11.4 The relevant Manager is responsible for implementing and communicating any lessons learnt.

- 11.5 Any service improvements are implemented by the most appropriate Manager or Head of Service.

12 Performance Monitoring

- 12.1 Overall compliance against our Policy will be monitored by the Customer Experience Manager through the Head of Performance. Team compliance will be responsibility of the relevant Head of Service.
- 12.2 We're seeking to develop a culture of 'gain not blame' through harnessing customer feedback to genuinely improve the service we provide and offer opportunities for continuous learning within our service teams.
- 12.3 Complaints performance is reported quarterly to the Leadership Team, the Executive Team and Group Board including information on the number of complaints and service requests received, the demographic and geographic origin of complaints, the types of issues raised (including any commonality of issues raised), the timescales within which action is taken, the number of complaints that were upheld at each stage and key learning outcomes.
- 12.4 Cases that are under notification to or review by the Housing Ombudsman are reported to Leadership Team and Executive Team through the compliance report, including any impact against our existing risk assessment and risk score.
- 12.5 Rooftop consults with customers, on a regular basis to assess the effectiveness of this policy and its performance. The Policy is regularly reviewed by the Customer Scrutiny Panel and the Customer Experience Panel will monitor our performance, including any trends and the delivery of identified learning. Our performance will be shared more widely with our customers quarterly via the website and each year through the annual report to customers.
- 12.6 In line with the Code, each year we will carry out an annual self-assessment of our performance which will be reported to the Group Board and made publicly available via our website.

13 Equality and Diversity

- 13.1 We will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and adapt policies, procedures or processes to accommodate an individual's needs.
- 13.2 Each year we will publish an analysis of complaints against our customer demographics demonstrating whether any groups are over or under represented.

14 Review

- 14.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years unless there are major changes in legislation or good practice.

15 Consultation

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| 15.1 | Leadership Team sub group | November 2022 |
| 15.2 | Executive Team | April 2023 |
| 15.3 | Resident Excellence Panel | November 2022 |

16 Responsibilities

Responsible body

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|------|---|--------------------------------|
| 16.1 | Formulation, amendment and approval of policy | Board of Rooftop Housing Group |
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	Monitoring of policy	Leadership Team
	Operational management of policy/policy author	Head of Customer Experience
16.2	Date of formulation of policy	February 2005
16.3	Dates of policy reviews	May 2023
		November 2022
		December 2020
		July 2019
		August 2015
16.4	Date of next review	May 2026

Associated documents

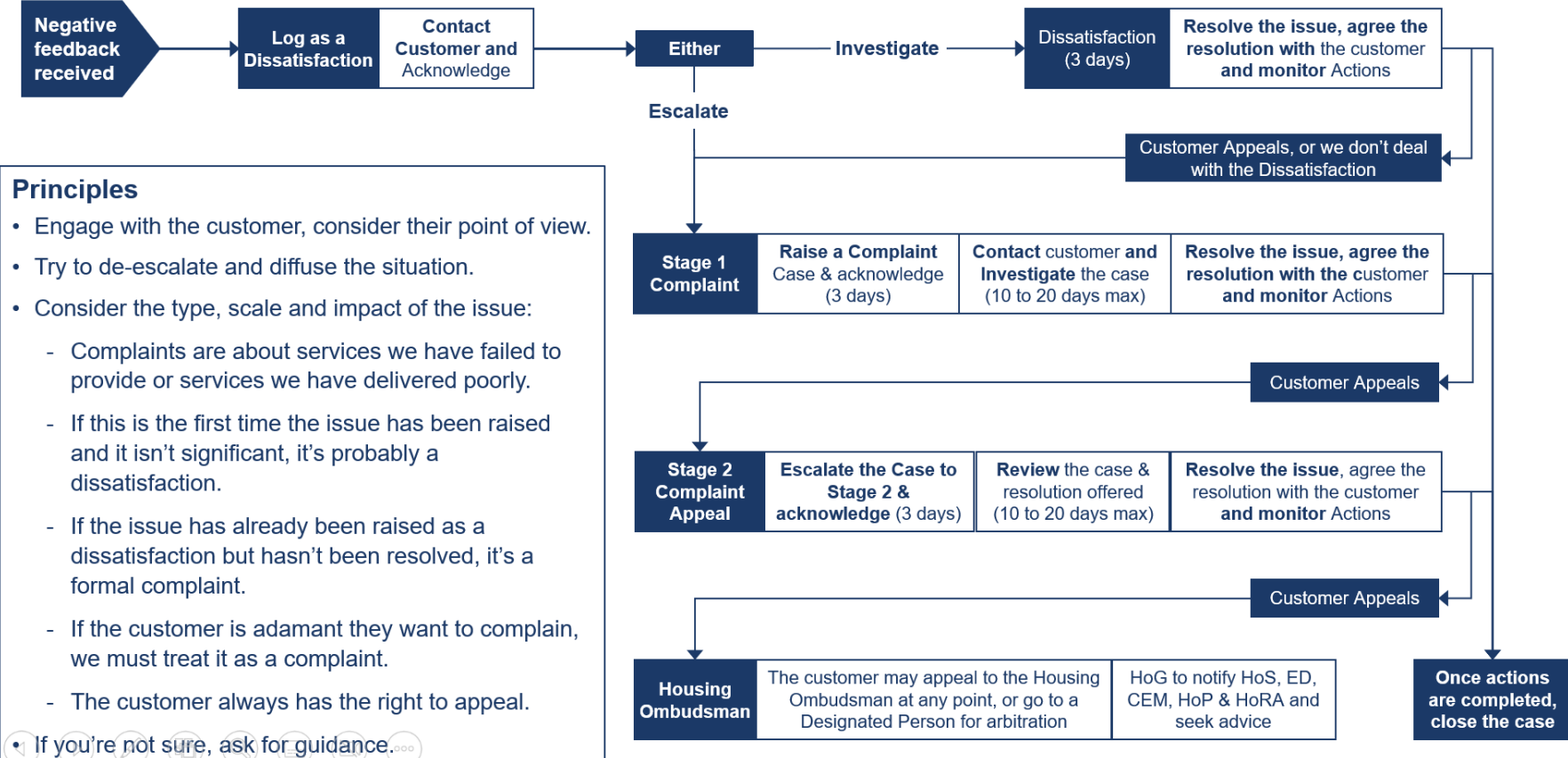
Internal – Rooftop policies and procedures

- Complaints procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy and procedure
- Compensation Policy, procedure and calculator

External

- Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (2017)
- ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System
- Housing Ombudsman Scheme (2018)
- Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (2022)
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing (2020)
- Equality Act 2010
- Leasehold Valuation Tribunal for service charge disputes
- NHF Code of Governance (2020)

Complaints - Be Fair, Put it Right, Learn from Outcomes



Receiving Dissatisfaction and Complaints directly: Guidance for Board Members

During your time as a member of the Board there will be occasions when you are contacted directly by customers or a member of the general public. This is because you are regarded as the “top of the tree” when it comes to decision making and a short cut to resolving their issue.

It is very important that you do not involve yourself directly or promise you can get the issue resolved quickly. Our Complaints Policy is designed to do this for you to ensure complaints are investigated fairly by applying the same principles to all. Board members may get involved in Complaint Appeals later in the process and involvement in the early stages may jeopardise your impartiality.

Dissatisfaction or Complaint?

A **Dissatisfaction** is where action is required, including putting things right where the customer has not received the service expected. Examples might include following up a repair which didn't take place when planned or resolving feedback from surveys. If we have previously failed to deal with a Dissatisfaction to the customer's satisfaction, subsequent requests about the same matter will be dealt with as a complaint.

Complaints are defined by the Housing Ombudsman as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of by the organisation, its employees or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of residents. A customer does not need to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such. Examples would include failure to resolve at a dissatisfaction level, failure to provide a service, poor workmanship, failure to adhere to our own processes and policies, or inappropriate conduct or behaviour by a Rooftop member of staff. If a customer is unhappy with our findings or the solution we have proposed regarding their initial complaint, they can ask us to review the case as a **Complaint Appeal**.

What should I say?

If the dissatisfaction or complaint comes to you by telephone or in person, listen sympathetically but explain that Rooftop has an agreed Complaints Policy and procedure which can help them and redirect the caller to the website. If they tell you they have made a complaint but have not received a response, please contact the relevant Executive Director.

What should I do?

Whichever way you're contacted, please acknowledge receipt back to the customer and explain that you've handed it to the relevant team to manage. If the dissatisfaction or complaint comes to you by letter or email, please forward it to the relevant Executive Director. If you see something on social media, Alert the Executive Director by tagging them through Facebook or Twitter, or simply with a screenshot.

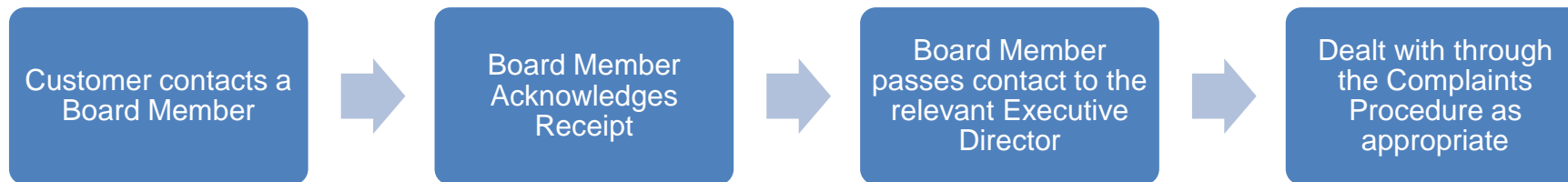
What should I expect?

The Executive Director will acknowledge receipt and ensure that the customers voice is logged and dealt with as per the Complaints Policy.

Flowchart for customer contact to Board Members

(Based on the Complaints Policy as approved May 2023)

Initial Contact



Complaint Appeal

