

Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy

Scope of Policy

This policy sets out how Platform Housing Group (the Group) will deal with complaints, comments and compliments to ensure a fair and consistent approach and that feedback is utilised to deliver continuous improvements in our service delivery.

Applicability

The policy applies to all members of the Group.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 We aim to meet the needs of our existing and future customers by providing a continually improving, excellent service.

By harnessing customer feedback, both negative or positive, and responding accordingly, we will ensure that we continue to deliver services that customers want and at a level with which they are satisfied. However, we acknowledge that occasionally things may go wrong and customers may wish to make a complaint. We will always try to resolve expressions of dissatisfaction at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid the need to escalate to a formal complaint.

2. Context

- 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 staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.
- 2.2 It is important to differentiate between a complaint that requires intervention via the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and those issues not requiring formal investigation. We do not consider the following to be complaints under this policy:
- An initial request for service. This is a request from a customer to us requiring action to be taken to put something right. (Service requests can become complaints if we fail to deal with the initial request appropriately.)
 - An information request.
 - A service that Platform do not provide.
 - Customer survey feedback.
 - Chasing up of defects within the first twelve months for new build properties, complaint investigations would only be undertaken to look at the way the requests had been handled.
 - Request for clarification of a situation and/or policy or procedures.
 - Insurance claims or issues that will be subject to an insurance claim.

- Complaints where the issues have not previously been brought to our attention and are more than twelve months old.
- Previous complaints that have already been investigated and determined.

2.3 This policy will not apply where matters are being dealt with via other more appropriate channels and may include:

- Where an appeal body or tribunal has been arranged to consider the specific service issue e.g., Lettings Appeals Panel.
- Complaints previously considered by a Court or tribunal.
- Complaints from employees or board members relating to their employment – internal procedures are in place for resolving these.

2.4 We subscribe to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) and annually complete our self-assessment against the HOS Complaint Handling Code, details of which can be found on the Complaints section of our website.

Customers can contact the HOS if they remain unhappy with our final response on their complaint. Any customer can consult with the HOS at any time before, or during, the complaints process for advice. The HOS will not usually consider a case where the complaint is brought to the attention of them more than twelve months after going through a landlord's complaints process.

The HOS can be contacted as follows:

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

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 We aim to:

- Provide a clear and accessible procedure which encourages customers to contact us with a comment, compliment or complaint.
- Operate an effective and streamlined process of complaints handling which meets the requirements of legislation, the Regulator, the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling code and best practice examples. See **Appendix 1** for details of our Roles and Responsibilities.
- Where a complaint is upheld, we will apologise and offer any relevant compensation, where appropriate.

- Use the outcomes of investigations to identify trends and opportunities for continuous improvement.
- Publish our performance annually to customers.
- Ensure that our employees are well trained to deal effectively with complaints.
- Publish this policy along with information for customers about how to complain to Platform on our Complaints section of our website. We will also do publications through our Customer Newsletter.

4. Policy Outline

- 4.1
- We will deal with all complaints in line with this policy and supporting procedures.
 - We will act in accordance with all legal and regulatory requirements and in line with our own published performance targets in a courteous, fair and systematic manner.
 - We will make available to customers a comprehensive set of procedures which clearly outline all stages of our complaints process together with how we will deal with unreasonable complaints.
 - We will deal with all complaints confidentially and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and procedures.
 - Where possible we will encourage complaints, comments or compliments to be made via our online Customer Portal. However, complaints, comments or compliments can also be made in writing, by telephone, email or via our website.
 - Complaints can also be made by one or more of our customers, or by a person representing or making a complaint on customers' behalf. Where someone is acting on a customer's behalf we will ask our customer for written authority.
 - We will keep complainants fully informed of progress when dealing with the complaint and provide a formal response which will detail the outcome of any investigation and any learning for us as a result of the issues raised.
 - We will celebrate compliments by ensuring that the relevant person/team is made aware of the achievement, which will also be published through our internal communication framework.
 - We will produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

5. Complaints Procedure

5.1 Formal Complaint

- All formal complaints will be acknowledged by the Customer Experience team within five working days following receipt of the complaint.
- All formal complaints will be investigated by a member of the Customer Experience team that has not been previously involved in the case, the exception to this would be complaints about employee behaviour that would be dealt with by the employee's line manager.

- All complaint investigations will involve us making contact with customer, either by telephone, e-mail, or in person. We aim to have completed our investigations into formal complaints within 10 working days. However, we want to ensure that complaints are investigated thoroughly and understand that some complaints are more complex and may need more time to investigate. If we need more time, we will make sure this is agreed with customers.

5.2 Final Review

- If a customer wants their complaint to be escalated to Final Review, then we ask for them to let us know within 15 working days. Any requests received after this timescale we would look at the reasons for this and exercise discretion.
- Where other matters are introduced, these will be dealt with separately and the current complaint will be deemed as resolved.
- All Final Review Complaints will be acknowledged by the Customer Experience team within five working days following receipt of the escalation request.
- At the Final Review stage the complaint will be reviewed by one of our Final Stage Complaints Team, a Senior Manager or a member of the Customer Experience Management team. They will make personal contact with the customer. They will aim to respond in writing within 20 working days.
- However, we want to ensure that complaints are investigated thoroughly and understand that some complaints are more complex and may need more time to investigate. If we need more time, we will make sure this is agreed with customers.

6. Equality and Diversity

- 6.1 We are committed to fairness and equality for all regardless of colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history, as referred to in our relevant Group policies. Our aim is to ensure that our policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.
- 6.2 Impact assessments have been completed, which identified no negative impact as a direct result of implementation of this policy.
- 6.3 We will ensure that assistance will be offered to anyone who may need help to make a complaint or needs information in an alternative format. We have a Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Reasonable Adjustments Statement to assist colleagues with this.
- 6.4 Professional translation services and/or customer advocate should always be considered on a case-by-case depending on the needs of the customer.

- 6.5 Ensure that all feedback (complaints, comments and compliments) is monitored across all Protected Characteristics.

7. Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 We will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and recommend policy changes to improve service delivery. Details of the number and types of complaints, comments and compliments, and any learning outcomes, will be recorded by protected characteristics and reported to the Board, relevant management structure and customers.

This policy will be reviewed every three years or on the introduction of new legislation, regulation, customer feedback or best practice guidelines, whichever is the sooner.

- 7.2 Approved documents are valid for use after their approval date and remain in force beyond any expiry of their review date until an updated version is available.

8. Associated Documents

- 8.1 List of documents - associated policies, procedures and publications:

- Complaints procedure
- Remedies and Compensation Policy and Guidance
- Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy
- Regulator of Social Housing: Consumer Standards - Transparency, Influence and Accountability

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EIA completed:	Yes

Appendix 1

Complaints, Comments and Compliments Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Customer Experience Team	Responsibility for complaint handling. Responsible for producing data and statistics regarding complaints and customer feedback. This is regarding volumes and outcomes of complaints and identifying themes and trends and learning opportunities.
Customer Experience Business Partners	Responsible for sharing monthly reports with their respective business areas.
Head of Customer Experience	Operational lead for complaints. Responsible for operational reporting.
Chief Operations Officer	Responsible for reporting to the Board.
Chief Executive Officer Chief Operations Officer and Director of Customer Service and Experience	Strategic lead responsibility for complaints.
Board Member Responsible for Complaints	Lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role is responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.