

South Yorkshire Housing Association Complaints Policy

We aim to get it right - first time and every time. However, if things go wrong, we want our customers to tell us if they are unhappy with the service they've received. We'll use this information to put things right, to learn from mistakes, and to improve our services.

We aim to:

- Make it simple for our customers and others to make a complaint
- Deal with complaints quickly, fairly, and consistently
- Put things right quickly in a satisfactory way
- Use the learning from complaints to improve what we do
- Respond to complaints and act in a way that builds trust and creates positive relationships.

Our approach to handling complaints

1. This policy covers complaints that are about dissatisfaction with the standard of our services, our actions, or our lack of actions. These could be actions or lack of actions by our employees, or those acting on our behalf. The actions could affect an individual, or a group of customers.
2. We will handle a customer complaint from anyone who receives, or is directly affected by, our services. We will also handle a complaint from an advocate or representative of a person who receives, or is directly affected by, our services – but only if the person has given their permission for the advocate to act on their behalf.
3. Complaints can be shared with us in a variety of ways, including by email, on our website, by telephone, by writing to us, or by private messaging us on our social media pages.
4. Our complaints policy will be available on our website. We will also provide information about the Housing Ombudsman, Designated Persons, and organisations such as Citizens Advice and Shelter, as they may be able to help to resolve any disputes.
5. A complaint must be made within three months of the issue or event occurring. If we believe that there is a good reason why a person making a complaint couldn't let us know about their complaint in this timescale, we will still consider - on a case-by-case basis - dealing with the complaint.

6. If the issue is straightforward and easily resolved, our Customer Advisors will aim to resolve it by the end of the next working day. We will record these issues as a 'quick resolution customer contact rather than a complaint and use this learning to improve our services.

7. If we are unable to offer a quick resolution, or if the person wants their issue to be dealt with as a complaint, we will give the complaint an owner. The 'complaint owner' will take responsibility for responding to the complaint.

8. When a complaint is given an owner, the person making the complaint will receive confirmation within two working days that we are handling their complaint.

9. We aim to respond to the complaint within 10 working days of the person making the complaint receiving confirmation that we are handling their complaint. If we are unable to meet the timescales for response, we will contact the person making the complaint and let them know when they can expect a response.

10. Our response may involve sharing details of actions that are planned in to happen to resolve the complaint.

11. If the person making a complaint confirms that they are happy with the response, we will close the complaint. A person making a complaint has 10 working days from receiving the response to let us know if they are dissatisfied with the response. If we don't hear from the person making a complaint within this timescale, we will close the complaint.

12. If the person making a complaint is dissatisfied with our response to their complaint, they can request that their complaint is reviewed. The person making a complaint needs to let us know within 10 working days of receiving the response if they would like their complaint to be reviewed. The complaint will be reviewed by a role that is at Lead level or more senior than the complaint owner, and where possible, from a different department. There may be times where this is not possible, such as technical knowledge related to maintenance areas. An employee from our Customer Experience Team and a Director will also be involved in the review and sign it off.

13. We will acknowledge all requests to review complaints responses within two working days. We aim to provide a response to a complaint review within 10 working days of acknowledging the review. If we are not going to be able to meet this timescale, we will contact the person making a complaint to let them know when they can expect a response.

14. The complaint review is the final step of our process and concludes South Yorkshire Housing Association's complaints process.

15. If a person making a complaint has the right to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman or Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, we will share information about how to escalate a complaint to them as part of the complaints review.

16. Within 10 working days of a complaint being closed, or South Yorkshire Housing Association's complaints process being completed, we will contact the person making a complaint to carry out a complaint handling satisfaction survey.

17. We are committed to recognising and valuing diversity, achieving equality, and making sure that no one is disadvantaged when accessing our services. In our annual review of the complaints process, we will review the process from an equality perspective.

18. We will use our discretion to make fair, appropriate, and reasonable adjustments to our approach where:

- individual circumstances justify handling a complaint differently to this policy
- it improves accessibility for the person making a complaint
- it maintains or achieves a positive relationship with the person making a complaint, or it maximises the opportunity for resolution.

19. We won't deal with through our complaints policy:

- General feedback about our services
- A general enquiry or service request
- Anti-social behaviour or issues with other residents. These are dealt with under our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. (We will consider complaints about the handling of an ASB Case)
- An issue where there is a legal process underway (e.g. a claim for damages that should be handled as a public liability insurance claim, or matters undergoing court proceedings)
- Housing applications or banding decisions which are part of a Local Authority Choice Based Lettings system
- Decisions taken by other organisations (e.g. a Local Council or a utility company) which South Yorkshire Housing Association has no control over
- Claims for damages (where these can be dealt with as an insurance claim)

- Instances where the complaint has already gone through our complaints procedure (signposting will be provided to external bodies where appropriate)
- Complaints that are being pursued in an unreasonable manner – see 23.
- Anonymous complaints.

20. Our Customer Experience Team will oversee our approach to handling complaints. We will share learning, and the changes we've made to our services or ways of working, on our website.

21. Compensation will not be an automatic outcome from the complaints procedure, but we consider it where appropriate. This will be done fairly, consistently, and proportionately.

22. We will consider any quantifiable losses, time, trouble, distress, and inconvenience. Any compensation will return the person making a complaint to the position that they would have been, had the issue not occurred.

23. We expect anyone that is making a complaint to act reasonably. If you act unreasonably, we may refuse to deal with your complaint, which the executive director within the department linked to the complaint will decide. When making this decision, we will consider both the nature of the unreasonable behaviour and complaint. Our definition of what is considered unreasonable behaviour is available on our website and will be shared with customers when requested, or needed.

24. We will work with our customers to scrutinise how we are handling complaints and share details about our performance in our Annual Report.

25. We will regularly report our performance on complaint handling to South Yorkshire Housing Association's Board of Management and Executive Team.

26. We are committed to ensuring how we handle complaints reflects the Housing Ombudsman's guidance for good practice. We recognise that person making a complaints may not receive housing services and may wish to explore any dissatisfaction with an alternative Ombudsman. We will share information about the Housing and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman services on our website, and at appropriate points in the complaints process.

27. Complaints relating to care & support services delivered by SYHA and commissioned by the NHS that SYHA's complaint process cannot resolve should be referred to the appropriate Clinical Commissioning Group by the Stage 2 Reviewer.

28. We will keep all records about complaint handling in Cx, our Housing Management system.

29. Any personal data handled when dealing with complaints will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

How a complaint is handled

