

Customer Feedback & Complaints Policy



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Salix Homes actively seeks and welcomes feedback from its customers. Customer feedback and complaints are an opportunity for Salix Homes to gain valuable learning and insight to improve the delivery of our services. Salix Homes attempts to get things right first time. However, where we do not get things right, we will listen to our customers, understand their point of view, correct any mistakes to resolve the issue and implement any learning to improve future service delivery. Customer compliments let us know when we do a good job and give us a chance to share positive feedback with staff and customers alike.
- 1.2. The purpose of this document is to set out Salix Homes' approach to managing and acting on customer feedback and complaints.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. The objectives of this policy are to:
 - Ensure customers feel heard when they have a concern, complaint or wish to share feedback about Salix Homes.
 - Ensure that the process of providing feedback to Salix Homes is fully accessible, transparent, fair and easy for all customers.
 - Resolve matters locally and as quickly as possible by being open, accountable and outcome focussed.
 - Support and empower colleagues at all levels to be involved in early complaint resolution, to understand the value of effectively listening to customers and embracing complaint feedback to drive service improvement.
 - Use customer feedback as a way of learning more about our customers, their needs and expectations to influence decision making.
 - Ensure that learning actions and outcomes following customer feedback drive service improvement across the business beyond the circumstances of an individual complaint.
 - Increase customer satisfaction by delivering a good quality, consistent service and fostering a positive complaint handling culture across the organisation and within third party contractors.
 - Ensure analysis of complaints is undertaken to gain insight, identify themes and trends, and ensure learning outcomes are shared widely with relevant stakeholders.

- Ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code 2024 (the Code) and the Ombudsman's dispute resolution principles of: Being Fair, Putting Things Right and Learning From Outcomes.

3. Definitions

3.1. Service request:

A request from a customer requiring action to provide a service or fix a problem when reported.

3.2. Complaint:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Salix Homes, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.

3.3. Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS):

An independent, impartial, and free service for social housing residents, to investigate complaints and resolve disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords.

3.4. Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC):

The MRC is responsible for ensuring that complaint handling drives service improvement for residents as well as learning and business improvement for the organisation. Their role is to champion a positive complaint handling culture, seeking assurances that complaints are being managed, change is happening, and customers are being heard through the process.

4. Policy Detail

4.1. Service Requests

4.1.1. A service request is defined as:

"A request from a customer requiring action to provide a service or fix a problem when reported."

4.1.2. This includes where an issue is being reported for the first time and gives staff an opportunity to rectify the issue. Early and local resolution of issues is key to effective complaint handling. If a customer expresses dissatisfaction with our response to their service request it would then be recorded as a complaint, even if the handling of the service request is ongoing.

4.1.3. We will always attempt to resolve service requests at the first point of contact, using our normal working practices. Salix Homes will equip all its customer-

facing staff to recognise when a customer is unhappy with our service and give them the tools to resolve any concerns quickly and effectively. This will be done by:

- Dealing with the customer's concerns immediately where possible.
- Taking responsibility for the customer's concerns and being empathetic.
- Listening to fully understand the issue.
- Taking ownership of the issue.
- Letting the customer know what we will do, when they should expect it to be done and the reasons for any delay.

4.1.4. Salix Homes recognises that every customer interaction of this kind represents an opportunity for Salix Homes to obtain crucial feedback on the customer experience and act on it. Salix Homes will record dissatisfaction with service requests using our customer relationship management system and we will run regular reports to identify any emerging patterns to improve services.

4.1.5. If a customer expresses dissatisfaction with our approach to resolving the substantive issue, or the outcome, they will be given the choice of making a complaint at Stage 1. We will continue our efforts to resolve the service request even if a complaint has been made and we will not wait for the outcome of the complaint investigation to progress the service request. The complaint will be responded to as soon as the outcome is known, not when the service request is closed. A customer does not need to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such.

4.1.6. If it is unclear whether an expression of dissatisfaction is intended as a complaint, we will be proactive in clarifying this with the customer.

4.1.7. An expression of dissatisfaction made within a survey will be treated as a service request or comment, however the customer will be made aware of how to pursue a complaint if required.

4.1.8. Where wider feedback is sought from customers, we will also provide details of how customers can make a complaint.

4.2. Complaints

4.2.1. There are times when our attempts to resolve a service request do not address the customer's concerns to their satisfaction and it is necessary to investigate these using our complaints process, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.

4.2.2. A complaint can occur when:

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- A customer is unhappy about the service they have received from Salix Homes or the attempts that Salix Homes has made to resolve their concerns.
- A customer expressly asks for a complaint to enter the complaints process.
- Salix Homes has triggered the formal complaints process to reach a resolution with an ongoing customer concern.

4.2.3. In line with the Code, a complaint is defined as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Salix Homes, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.”

4.2.4. Salix Homes will make it easy for customers to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. All staff will be made aware of the complaints process and be informed of how and where to pass on details of the complaint. We will consider our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate if we identify that a customer may be vulnerable and find it difficult to articulate their complaint or follow the complaints procedure. Any disclosures of vulnerability will be recorded and treated in line with our Vulnerable Customers and Reasonable Adjustments policy. Salix Homes’ website offers ‘Recite Me’, a tool to support customers to access the complaints policy in different formats and languages. In addition, we will consider all requests to make our complaints policy available in an accessible format.

4.2.5. We will accept complaints from customers raised in a variety of ways such as:

- Via telephone or email
- Via our website or customers’ online account
- Speaking to any Salix Homes employee or contractor acting on our behalf
- Via letter
- Via a representative
- Via social media

4.2.6. Complaints received via whatever means will be logged on our customer relationship management system and follow the same process. If a customer specifies how they wish to be contacted throughout the complaint process, we will respect this wherever possible including via direct message on social media.

- 4.2.7. We will accept complaints from anyone who receives a service or is impacted by a service provided by Salix Homes including non-residents or former residents.
- 4.2.8. Salix Homes will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and its Code on their website. Throughout the whole complaint process Salix Homes will provide customers with information on their right to access and engage with the Ombudsman Service about their complaint. Details of the Ombudsman Service are included in the Stage 1 and Stage 2 acknowledgement, extension and outcome letters.
- 4.2.9. If any aspect of the Stage 1 complaint is unclear, we will continue to be proactive in trying to obtain clarification from the customer, giving due consideration to potential reasonable adjustments that may be required to help the customer articulate their complaint. If the full complaint issue is still unclear, in the letter of acknowledgment we will include a complaint definition to give the customer further opportunity to contact us to clarify. If this does not occur, we will continue with the investigation based on the information we hold.
- 4.2.10. With every complaint we will:
- Listen to the customer and understand the reasons for their complaint, requesting clarification where required
 - Establish the outcomes the customer is seeking
 - Thank the customer for their feedback
 - Note all the facts on our system
 - Be clear on what we can and cannot do for the customer – we will never make false promises to a customer
 - Clearly explain the complaints process
- 4.2.11. At each stage of the complaints process we will:
- Deal with complaints on their merits, act independently and have an open mind
 - Give the customer a fair chance to set out their position
 - Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
 - Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully
- 4.2.12. We will consider any requests for reasonable adjustments or where it has been identified that a reasonable adjustment may be required in accordance with our Vulnerable Customers and Reasonable Adjustments policy. This includes making the complaints policy available in an accessible format.

4.2.13. We will take note of any previously agreed reasonable adjustments or contact preferences and implement these throughout the complaints process.

4.2.14. We will ensure that all appropriate customer-facing staff have complaint handling, customer service and vulnerability awareness training that is refreshed on a regular basis to adequately support the needs and requirements of customers during the complaint process.

4.3. Complaint Exclusions

4.3.1. Salix Homes does not consider the following examples as complaints (unless the customer specifically requests a complaint):

- A service request as described above.
- A comment or series of comments where the customer is suggesting how we may improve or maintain our service. The relevant service manager will consider this outside of the complaint process, unless the customer expressly wishes to raise a complaint.
- A question or series of questions where a customer is requesting information about a service we provide.
- MP enquiries – when local councillors and MPs contact Salix Homes on behalf of our customers requesting assistance or information, these will be recorded and addressed outside of our formal complaints' process unless the representative expressly asks the matter to be treated as a complaint.

4.3.2. The following may not be accepted as a complaint - even when the customer has requested a complaint - although each situation will be considered on its own merits:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago, or within 12 months of the individual becoming aware of the issue – although discretion may be exercised in certain circumstances such as;
 - Individual personal circumstances such as bereavement or illness
 - Vulnerabilities
 - Where the customer has not been aware of the issue and could not reasonably be expected to have brought the complaint forward sooner
- Where the same issue has previously exhausted the internal complaints process
- Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. Also, any matter that has already been subject to legal action and an order made in a court of law or tribunal
- Where there is criminal or fraudulent investigation involved
- Where the complaint is anonymous

- Where the complaint relates to a service that Salix Homes does not provide
- Where the complaint is malicious or vexatious – see misuse of the complaints process below
- If the customer specifically requests that a complaint is not logged (this decision and reason(s) will be recorded to ensure a clear audit trail)

4.3.3. Where we decide that there is a valid reason not to accept a complaint, we will provide a written response to the customer referring to the specific exclusion that applies and advising of their right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman. Where relevant, we may signpost to other organisations or service providers that could help.

4.3.4. Where we decide to exclude part of the complaint this will be clearly communicated in the acknowledgement and response letters. We will provide a clear explanation of why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process, referring to the specific exclusion that applies. We will advise of the next steps for the aspects of the complaint that are being carried forward and advise the customer of their right to approach the Housing Ombudsman regarding the excluded matters.

4.3.5. We will keep a record of complaints that have been refused and will include a summary of the volumes and types of complaints that have been refused in our annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement reports.

4.4. Time limit for making complaints

4.4.1. A complaint will not normally be considered if it is made more than twelve months after the issue became known to the customer. This is because complaints that happened more than twelve months ago are often difficult or impossible to investigate in a full and fair manner. However, Salix Homes will consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.

4.5. Making complaints on behalf of another

4.5.1. Customers may direct complaints through advocates, relatives or other representatives which will be recorded on our systems and verified with the customer, giving them the option to refute it. Once Salix Homes has established that the person presenting the complaint is acting with the authority of the customer, Salix Homes will treat these complaints as though they are directly from the customer, including being represented or accompanied at any meeting.

4.6. Investigating Complaints (Stage 1)

4.6.1. We have two stages in our complaints process: Stage 1 investigation and Stage 2 review. At Stage 1, the investigator will work with staff in the relevant service area(s) to obtain all information regarding the issue, in order to carry out a fair and thorough investigation. At Stage 2, a senior manager, usually a director from the key service area (but always a different person to the Stage 1 investigator), will review the complaint investigation.

Complaint Acknowledgement

4.6.2. On receiving a complaint, we will:

- Acknowledge, define and log the complaint within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, with the next working day being 'day one'. For complaints received outside of normal office hours, the received date is the next working day. The acknowledgement will be sent in writing, and be available on the customer's online account if they have one set up.
- The acknowledgment will include a summary of the complaint including any outcomes the customer may be seeking, and will inform the customer of who will be conducting the investigation. We will be clear which aspects of the complaint we are and are not responsible for, and clarify any areas where this is not clear.

Complaint Investigation

4.6.3. The complaint investigator will fully investigate the complaint by obtaining all the facts relating to the complaint. They may carry out one or more of the following actions to investigate the complaint:

- Approach the customer for further details about their complaint that may assist with the process
- Identify any customer vulnerabilities or risk factors that may need to be considered
- Speak to relevant members of staff or contractors
- Search our internal systems for records relating to the customer complaint
- Visit the customer's home, communal areas or our estates as appropriate

4.6.4. Where a customer raises additional complaints during the investigation, these will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if it has not already been issued and if the issues are related to the complaint. If the Stage 1 response has

already been issued, the issues are unrelated, or it would unreasonably delay the response, a new Stage 1 complaint will be raised.

- 4.6.5. Where more investigation time is required, we may extend the timescale at Stage 1 but by no more than 10 working days without good reason. Any extension will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and explained to the customer along with the reasons for this and the date they can expect to receive a response. The customer may be contacted during this extension period if appropriate, to keep them updated on the progress of the complaint. The customer may also contact the complaint investigator during this period for the same reason. The contact details of the Housing Ombudsman will also be provided in the extension letter, and customers are advised of their right to approach the Ombudsman if extension timescales exceed those stated by the Code.

Complaint Response Letter

- 4.6.6. Once the investigation has been concluded, a response will be sent within 10 working days of the acknowledgement date, with the next working day being 'day one'. This will include:

- The complaint stage and overall outcome
- A thank you to the customer for their feedback
- The findings of the investigation against each of the component parts of the complaint and the reasons for the findings
- Whether each part of the complaint has been upheld or not upheld
- Details of any outstanding actions or remedies along with completion deadlines
- If parts of the complaint have been upheld, the response will outline the steps required to correct the issues where possible
- An apology when we have done something wrong
- Steps that the manager may be taking to improve their service as a result of the complaint and what safeguards they will put in place so that those mistakes will not happen again
- A compensation payment or payment as a gesture of good will if appropriate (see compensation policy for more details)
- Steps that the customer can take to escalate the complaint if they remain dissatisfied. Customers may choose to explain why they are unhappy with the Stage 1 investigation and/or outcome, but they are not required to do so in order for the complaint to be progressed.
- Contact details of the Ombudsman should the customer wish to seek further advice regarding their complaint

- 4.6.7. A complaint outcome will be provided to the customer when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. This will include details of a follow-up call within a defined timescale, to ensure any outstanding actions have been completed.

- 4.6.8. Agreement will be made with the complainant on suitable intervals for keeping them informed and updated throughout the complaints process and beyond, where there are outstanding actions identified.

4.7. Reviewing Investigations (Stage 2)

- 4.7.1. Salix Homes hopes that the complaints investigation resolves the customer's concerns but in some cases a customer may be unhappy with all or part of the investigation outcome. If this is the case the customer can request for the handling of their complaint and/or the outcome of the investigation to be reviewed.
- 4.7.2. The review process will be outlined in the complaint response letter and review requests should usually be directed to the Stage 1 investigator. Customers have 10 days from the date of the complaint response letter to request a review. Salix Homes may extend this timescale in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.7.3. We will not refuse to escalate a complaint unless there are valid reasons to do so. In such cases we will clearly set out the reasons in line with the criteria for exclusions set out in the Code and at Section 4.3 of this policy. A customer will be advised of their right to take the decision to the Housing Ombudsman.
- 4.7.4. The purpose of the complaints review is a consideration of the initial investigation and not a new investigation. A customer does not have to provide their reasons for expressing dissatisfaction with their Stage 1 complaint investigation and/or outcome.
- 4.7.5. The review is typically conducted by a senior manager or director of the main service area concerned. This will always be a different person from the Stage 1 complaint investigator.
- 4.7.6. At Stage 2 review we will:
- Acknowledge the request for a review in writing within 5 working days of the complaint escalation being received in normal office hours, with the next working day being 'day one'. For complaints received outside of normal office hours, the received date is the next working day. We may also acknowledge a customer complaint via email, telephone or through their customer account at the customer's request.
 - Where specified by the customer, we will include a summary of the reasons for the escalation request and any outcomes they are seeking in the Stage 2 acknowledgement letter. Customers are not required to provide reasons for requesting a Stage 2 review. We will state which aspects of the escalation we are and are not responsible

for, and clarify any areas where necessary. The acknowledgment will inform the customer of the name of the person who will be conducting the review, typically a senior manager or director (not the same person who investigated at Stage 1).

- 4.7.7. Following the complaint review, a response will be written by the reviewing manager within 20 working days of the acknowledgement letter and will include:
- The findings of their review against each of the component parts of the complaint with the reasons for those findings
 - Whether any of the decisions made at investigation have been overturned.
 - Apologise when we have done something wrong.
 - Thank the customer for their feedback about Salix Homes.
 - If we have made a mistake, any additional steps that we will take to correct the mistake and timescales where possible.
 - Any additional steps that the reviewing manager may be taking to improve the service as a result of the complaint and any safeguards they will put in place so those mistakes will not happen again.
 - A compensation payment or payment as a gesture of goodwill if appropriate or increase in a compensation payment or gesture of goodwill if already awarded at the investigation stage (see compensation policy for more details).
 - Contact details of the Ombudsman should the customer wish to seek further advice regarding their complaint.
- 4.7.8. A review outcome will be provided to the customer when the answer is known, not when any outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the customer to ensure they are effectively completed.
- 4.7.9. Where more review time is required, we may extend the timescale at Stage 2, but by no more than 20 working days without good reason. Any extension will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and explained to the customer along with the reasons for this and the date they can expect to receive a response. The contact details of the Housing Ombudsman will also be provided in this extension letter, and customers advised of their right to approach the Ombudsman if extension timescales exceed those stated by the Code.
- 4.7.10. The customer may be contacted during this extension period if appropriate, to keep them updated with the progress of the review. The customer may also contact the reviewer during this period, for the same reason.

4.8. Remedies to put things right

4.8.1. Effective complaint handling is an opportunity to rebuild trust and improve relationships with customers. We will be open and transparent in acknowledging where things have gone wrong, setting out the actions we have already taken or intend to take to put things right. These include but are not limited to:

- apologising
- acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- taking action if there has been a delay
- reconsidering or changing a decision
- amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- providing a financial remedy
- undertaking works or replacing damaged goods
- changing policies, procedures or practices

4.8.2. More detail on the gestures of goodwill available can be found in our Compensation Policy.

4.9. Learning from complaints

4.9.1. Where it has been identified that we have got things wrong, we will identify any lessons to learn and log any actions so they can be proactively monitored. Any changes or improvements to services will be recorded, collated and shared internally and externally.

4.9.2. If a complaint is not upheld, lessons may still be identified and should be recorded and tracked in the same way to ensure improvements to service delivery are implemented.

4.10. Delayed Responses at Stage 1 and Stage 2

4.10.1. Salix Homes aims to respond to all complaints and requests for a review within the Code timescales. Occasionally if the investigation or review is complex at Stage 1 or Stage 2, or key members of staff necessary for a full investigation are not available and the investigation or review cannot be completed without their input, we may extend the response timescale. Where a member of staff is absent for any reason, this would only be justified as a Code compliant reason for an extension where their absence directly impacts the investigation. Otherwise, the information or response should be provided by another colleague. Where it becomes clear that a response at Stage 1 or Stage 2 will fall outside the timescales set out in the Complaint Handling Code, we will agree suitable intervals with the customer for keeping them informed. Customers will be advised of the reasons for the delay and when

they can expect to receive a response. Extensions will only be applied in line with the Code and will not be used routinely.

- 4.10.2. In this case, suitable intervals will be agreed with the customer for keeping them informed about their complaint, and they will be advised of the reasons for the delay and when they will receive a response. The customer will be notified of the delay as soon as it is identified rather than waiting until the last day of the original target date. Workload pressures are not a justifiable reason for a delay in a complaint being investigated or reviewed. The contact details of the Housing Ombudsman will also be provided in any extension letter.

4.11. When a complaint is closed

- 4.11.1. Salix Homes has discretion to close complaints early, for example:
- When the investigation is complete, and a response has been sent before the target date
 - When a resolution is agreed as well as our commitment to deliver the action. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the customer

4.12. Use of discretion

- 4.12.1. Salix Homes reserves the right to use discretion when applying this policy and may deal with a complaint differently where individual circumstances merit it. Any discretion will be applied fairly and appropriately, and complaints will be progressed as far as possible to maximise the opportunity to resolve a dispute.

4.13. Progressing a complaint further

- 4.13.1. Salix Homes aims to resolve as many complaints as possible using our complaints process. However, if the customer remains dissatisfied with the complaint at the end of the complaints process, the customer will be provided details of how they can refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

4.14. Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)

- 4.14.1. The Housing Ombudsman Service is a legal body established to impartially consider complaints and disputes between tenants / leaseholders and their landlords. They will consider all the evidence from both sides of any dispute and can make recommendations to both parties on how to rectify both the matter at hand and to ensure that such a situation does not occur again.

- 4.14.2. A customer has the right to seek advice or support from the Ombudsman at any point in the complaints process. They can also bring a complaint to the HOS for investigation if they have exhausted Salix Homes' internal complaint process and the issues have not been resolved or the customer remains unsatisfied.
- 4.14.3. Making a referral to the Ombudsman is free and further details can be found on their website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- 4.14.4. Salix Homes will publish an annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report including a self-assessment against the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

4.15. Misuse of the complaints process

- 4.15.1. Salix Homes' aim is to build and maintain good relationships with its customers. However, there may be times where restrictions are necessary to facilitate complaint handling from customers displaying unacceptable behaviour.
- 4.15.2. The making of malicious or vexatious complaints can be a form of harassment or anti-social behaviour whereby an innocent resident or member of staff is subjected to unfounded exaggerated or dishonest complaints by someone seeking to cause detriment to the individual(s) concerned.
- 4.15.3. A complaint considered a 'nuisance to landlord' is a complaint made without any merit which has been made solely to harass or intimidate another resident or a member of staff.
- 4.15.4. A malicious complaint is a complaint that is false with the intention to cause harm or damage to another resident or a member of staff.
- 4.15.5. Whilst Salix Homes will investigate all complaints in line with this policy, part of the investigation in certain circumstances may need to include the possibility that the complaint falls into one or both categories outlined above.
- 4.15.6. If as part of the investigation it becomes clear that the complainant is malicious or a nuisance to landlord, the director responsible for the area will consider seeking approval from the Senior Leadership Team to classify the complainant as a 'nuisance to landlord'.
- 4.15.7. After reviewing the evidence provided, if the Senior Leadership Team decides that a customer is making malicious complaints or is a nuisance to landlord, a number of proportionate actions or restrictions will be considered having regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, including:

- Email or letter contact only
- Contact through a representative only
- Reduced contact
- Establishing a single point of contact
- Removing an individual's implied license to attend our offices
- Taking legal action under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (nuisance to landlord ground)

4.15.8. Any restrictions or action taken with regard to unreasonable behaviour will be clearly communicated to the customer.

4.15.9. As part of our commitment to equality and diversity, it may sometimes be necessary to go outside of normal policies, procedures and practices to accommodate an individual's needs.

4.15.10. We will review any restrictions put in place on a regular basis to ensure they are still reasonable, proportionate and relevant.

4.16. Customer Compliments

4.16.1. Salix Homes is happy to hear when we have got things right. When a customer shares a compliment with us about an individual or a team, we will arrange for that compliment to be shared with the individual or team by their manager. We also publicise customer compliments in internal staff communications and externally on our website.

4.17. Using customer feedback

4.17.1. Salix Homes values the customer feedback that we receive and we will use this feedback as follows:

- To spot trends from complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction and use this information on a large scale to inform our approach to our services, train our staff and how we direct our resources.
- Maintain records of lessons learned within complaints and produce/review an action plan.
- Share information on lessons learned across the business to maximise the impact and benefit.
- Publish details of how we have improved our services because of learning from complaints.
- Use customer compliments to identify cases of excellent customer service to inform our approach on how we train our staff and deliver our services.

4.18. Collecting feedback on the complaints process

- 4.18.1. Salix Homes will ask our customers if they are satisfied with our complaints handling and we will use this feedback to improve the service. We will continue to compare our complaints service with other organisations to improve the quality of our service.

5. Monitoring / Performance

- 5.1. Below details how complaints feedback will be monitored in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service requirements:

Service Requests

- Number of service requests resolved by service area and theme.

Complaints

- Number of complaints received per 1,000 properties
- Number of complaints received by service area and complaint theme
- Percentage of complaints successfully resolved following a Stage 1 investigation
- Number and type of complaints refused

Stage 1: Investigating Complaints

- Percentage of acknowledgements sent within 5 working days of receipt of the initial complaint
- Percentage of responses sent within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged
- Percentage of complaint elements upheld or partially upheld

Stage 2: Reviewing Investigations

- Percentage of acknowledgements sent within 5 working days of receipt of the review request
- Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days of the review request being acknowledged
- Percentage of reviews overturning part or all of the Stage 1 investigation outcome

Housing Ombudsman Service

- Annual publication of the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report
- Annual self-assessment against the Code
- Number of HOS findings of non-compliance against the Code
- Percentage of HOS order compliance
- Amount of compensation awarded by the HOS
- Number of learning actions identified, and service improvements made as a result

6. Roles / Responsibility

- 6.1. In addition to the Member Responsible for Complaints, the customer service and engagement manager holds operational responsibility for ensuring implementation of this policy.

7. Legal / Regulatory Links

- 7.1. This policy is developed in line with the following legislation and meets the requirements of the Consumer Standards;

- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Localism Act 2011
- Housing Act 1996 (schedule 2)
- General Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Ombudsman Scheme's Complaint Handling Code 2024

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 8.1. Salix Homes is committed to promoting and embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our workplaces and the communities we serve.

- Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents
- Diversity is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences
- Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all

- 8.2. We are committed to meeting our obligations and duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to promoting equal opportunities both in the provision of services and in our employment practices. We will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity

8.3. We also recognise that Socio-economic background is an area where inequalities exist and commit to addressing this disadvantage and inequality in our communities where able to do so.

8.4. We are also mindful of our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.5. Where reasonable to do so, Salix Homes will make any reasonable adjustment to ensure compliance with the Act.

9. Related Documents

9.1. The following documents relate to this policy:

- Customer feedback and complaints procedure
- Compensation policy
- Equality and diversity policy
- Vulnerable Customers and Reasonable Adjustments policy
- Customer service strategy
- Customer engagement strategy
- Anti-social behaviour hate crime and domestic abuse policy
- Suite of complaint response letter templates