

Quick Guide

Complaints

Version – April 2016

Introduction

We aim to provide all customers with a quality service and to get things right first time. However, we recognise that things do go wrong and we can sometimes fall short of our expected standards.

When this happens we want to resolve your complaint in a timely and efficient manner, keeping you informed throughout. This is all part of our Service Offer.

This guide explains our Complaints Process and applies to Southern Housing Group Limited, Southern Homes Limited and Southern Space Limited.

What is a complaint?

It's when you tell us you're not satisfied with our services and something needs to be done to put it right.

The complaint could be about an action, lack of action or about the standard of service received from us or an organisation working on our behalf.

We will accept a complaint from anyone who receives or requests our services.

Complaints which involve a personal injury claim or third party liability claim are not dealt with under this process. Instead this would be investigated by an appropriate member of staff and if required, they would be passed to our insurers.

Complaints concerning service charges are also not covered by the Complaints process. They are dealt with in line with our Dispute Resolution Procedure.

Sorting it out before it becomes a complaint

In the first instance we will always try to resolve the issue there and then. If this is possible then we would record this as a service failure or service feedback.

If you have contacted us to let us know that you are dissatisfied but the issue requires no further action or it solely relates to your disagreement with a Group policy then this will also be classified as a service feedback.

Both service failures and service feedback are routinely monitored by us and they are used to inform our future service improvements.

Making a complaint

We will accept complaints made in person, in writing, by phone, email and other digital media. We will also accept 'third party' complaints on behalf of a customer but we will require the subject's authorisation to provide a response in line with our obligations set out in the Data Protection Act. Complaints need to be received in a timely manner within 12 months of when the issues occurred; we reserve the right to dismiss any complaint outside of this time period.

Stage 1

Our aim is to respond to your complaint in a timely manner, keeping you informed throughout. We will log it on our case management system and pass it to the Customer Relations Team. One of the Customer Relations Advisors will contact you within 1 working day (if they have not already spoken to you) to introduce themselves and to agree when and how you would like us to keep you informed whilst we are investigating the complaint.

Where actions are required to resolve the complaint we will work proactively with our colleagues, contractors and partners to ensure that these are carried out as quickly as possible.

We will keep you informed and our aim is to provide you with a response to your complaint within 10 working days. If we have not been able to resolve the issue our

response will include the actions we are taking and when you can expect the issue to be resolved.

We will close a complaint once we have provided a solution or a response to the issue. If the issue is going to take some time to resolve, for example the repair work forms part of a planned maintenance programme, we will provide you with a response and an action plan setting out what we are doing and when. We will then close the complaint but monitor progress to ensure that the actions are completed.

If having received our response you believe that we have not responded or resolved the issue, you can contact us to discuss the matter and we will explore with you if there is anything more that could be done to resolve the complaint.

If we believe we've taken all reasonable actions to resolve the complaint or we're not able to deliver the outcome you'd like then you can ask for your complaint to go to Stage 2 – Complaint Review Panel. You will need to explain why you're not satisfied and also the outcome you are seeking. We need this in writing but can provide assistance if needed. In some instances we might feel your issue is not appropriate for the Review Panel. We'll always inform you if this is our decision and if you'd prefer we're happy to put this in writing.

If the reason for dissatisfaction concerns compensation, we will not escalate the case

to Stage 2. Instead we will arrange for a Senior Manager to review the complaint and consider if the decision should be changed.

The outcome of this review will be provided to the complainant in writing. If after this review the complainant remains unhappy then the complaint would be closed as it would have exhausted the Group's procedure.

Stage 2 – Complaint Review Panel

The Complaint Review Panel is the second and final stage of the Group's internal complaint process.

The purpose of the Panel is to review the decisions made at the previous stages of the complaint. It will look to see if we have carried out the agreed actions, checking that we have followed our policies and procedures fairly and appropriately. They will also consider what further action might be taken to resolve the complaint.

The Panel is made up of two residents who are members of the respective Residents Service Panel, relative to where the complainant lives and either the Head of Home Management or Head of Property and Estates. The Customer Relations Manager will also be present to answer any questions the Panel may have.

If the Review is in person then we will aim to make arrangements for the Review at a location and time that is convenient for both you and the Panel members.

In some instances we may propose to conduct a "virtual" complaint review.

Whereby the papers are circulated to the panel and consideration of the case takes place either by phone or by email. Neither the complainant nor the Customer Relations Manager is present. When this is the case we will always explain the reasons why we believe this is appropriate.

We aim to agree a date for the Review within 10 days of escalation being agreed and we'll provide all necessary papers at least 5 working days before the Review is due to take place.

Following the review you will receive the decision of the Panel in writing and we will provide this within 10 working days.

If following the outcome of the Review you remain unhappy then you can elect for your complaint to be considered further by a Designated Person.

A Designated Person is an MP or Local Authority Councillor or a designated Tenant Panel. The Group does not currently have any designated Tenant Panels of its own however your local Council may be able to advise you further concerning their local arrangements.

Alternatively you can decide to wait 8 weeks from the date of the Panel decision and then ask the Housing Ombudsman Service directly to review your complaint. The Housing Ombudsman contact details are below:

Complaints

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN

Phone: 0300 111 3000

Lo-call: 0845 7125 973

Minicom: 020 7404 7092

Fax: 020 7831 1942

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Further information

If you would like any more information on this

For help with translations, or if a large type, Braille or taped summary would be useful, contact the Service Centre.

Arabic	لتلقي المساعدة في الحصول على نسخ مترجمة أو إذا كان من المفيد بالنسبة لكم تلقي نسخ مطبوعة بطباعة مكبرة، أو بطريقة برايل للمكفوفين، أو مسجلة كملخصات على شريط تسجيل صوتي، فيرجى الاتصال بمركز الخدمة .Service Centre
Bengali	অনুবাদে সাহায্য পেতে হলে অথবা বড় অক্ষর, ব্রেইল অথবা টেপে রেকর্ডকৃত সারসংক্ষেপ শুনতে চাইলে সার্ভিস সেন্টারকে 0300 303 1682 নাম্বারে ফোন করুন।
French	Contactez le Centre de services pour obtenir de l'aide sur les traductions, ou si un résumé en gros caractères, en Braille ou enregistré s'avère nécessaire.
Somali	Si lagaaga caawiyo turjumista ama haddii aad jeclaan lahayd farta waaweyn, farta indhoolayaasha (Braille) ama warbixin kooban oo cajilad ku duuban, la xiriir Xarunta Adeegga.
Spanish	Si necesita traducciones o resúmenes en letra grande, Braille o casete, póngase en contacto con el Centro de Servicios.
Turkish	Tercüme konusunda yardım için, veya iri puntolu, Braille körler alfabesi ile yazılmış ya da ses kaydı olarak bir özet isterseniz, 0300 303 1683'ten Hizmet Merkezi'ni arayın.

or any of our policies or services please contact our customer service centre or go to our website www.shgroup.org.uk. Contact details can be found on our web pages, on your Information Card or in Open Door - your residents' newsletter.