

Complaints policy

Who's this for?	Customers and colleagues
Document status	Final
To be reviewed	October 2024
Policy Owner	Head of Quality Assurance
Other related documents	Complaints procedure Compensation policy Vulnerable customers policy Unacceptable behaviour policy

1. Policy statement

At settle our purpose is to help customers live comfortably in their homes. We do this by delivering brilliant services, investing in neighbourhoods and providing extra support where we can. However, we know that sometimes things go wrong. When this happens, we are committed to listening to residents' concerns, putting things right as quickly as possible, and learning from our mistakes.

We consider a complaint to be any expression of dissatisfaction, however made (by phone, e-mail, letter, in person and any media channel we are on), about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf. We will accept complaints via third parties or representatives and handle these in line with this policy as well.

We should recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. A service request is a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests should be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint should be raised when the resident raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request.

We always look at the individual circumstances of each complaint. However, in some circumstances it may not be appropriate to consider the complaint, such as if the complaint is about something that happened over six months ago; legal proceedings have been started; or matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy. In these cases, the customer will be clearly told why and given the option to state their case or bring it to the Ombudsman.

More information about how to make a complaint and the steps we take when handling complaints can be found in our complaints leaflet at the end of this policy. This leaflet is available on our website and sent to residents when we open a complaint for investigation.

Current position

The feedback we have received from our customers tells us that we need to:

- keep tight control of any agreed actions, not closing the complaint until all actions are complete and a resolution has been agreed
- ensure any inspections or visits are timely and avoid further delays
- keep in regular contact during the complaint investigation, explaining any next steps so that customers know what to expect from us.

2. Key principles

- We act in line with the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code
- We make it as easy as possible for residents to complain and understand our complaints process

- We take ownership of residents' concerns and complaints and work hard to find the best possible resolution for them and for settle
- We treat people fairly, considering each resident's individual circumstances when investigating and responding to complaints
- We welcome complaints as an opportunity to put things right, learn from what went wrong and continually improve our services.

3. Objectives

- To improve our complaint turnaround times
- To improve how we work with residents to resolve their complaint, providing a single point of contact and regular updates in a way that works best for the resident
- To quickly identify where residents might need additional support or adjustments in our complaints process
- To be clear from the outset on the outcome that the resident is looking for and be honest if this is something that we can't deliver ensuring we signpost to relevant agencies where appropriate
- To record and share service improvements that we've made as a result of learning from complaints.

4. Policy actions

- We will always appoint a complaint handler to work with a resident to resolve their complaint, keeping them regularly informed throughout the process until the matter has been fully resolved
- Carry out training for all colleagues in complaint handling
- Improve awareness of our complaints process and the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Ensure that we carry out complaint-related inspections and visits as quickly as possible and in line with our published response times
- Review and improve our management of repeat complaints
- Improve the way we record and monitor post-complaint actions
- Improve our query handling and escalation process to resolve concerns as quickly as possible before they become complaints
- Create a robust feedback loop that captures lessons from complaints at team and individual level
- Provide access to members of the voice of the customer panel to act as advocates and provide support to residents who have raised a complaint
- Ensure residents can view their complaint stage, including any agreed actions on their online account.

5. Desired outcomes

- Residents know about and understand our complaints process, as well as their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Residents have confidence that we can resolve their concerns in the way that works best for them
- Our customer resolution team independently resolve complaints quickly, fairly and impartially
- Regardless of outcome, residents feel their voice has been heard and their complaint handled fairly by settle
- All colleagues understand the importance of acting in line with the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code.

6. Performance indicators

Below are the measures that we aim to achieve for complaint handling

- 90% of formal complaints are resolved at stage 1
- 100% of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints are resolved within Ombudsman timescales
- 75% satisfaction with our approach to handling complaints.

7. Key legislation

- The Equality Act 2010
- The GDPR Act 2018
- Consumer standards
- The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or when relevant legislation or regulation changes or there is a business need.

How to make a complaint to settle.

We are committed to providing brilliant services, but we know that sometimes things go wrong. We want to hear from you when this happens so that we can put things right as quickly as possible.

You can complain to us in whatever way works best for you. You can also have a friend or representative contact us on your behalf as long as you have given us permission to speak to them about your complaint.

However you choose to make a complaint, we'll always follow the same steps, which are explained overleaf.

Different ways to make a complaint:

Call us: 0330 343 0016

Email us: customer.service@settlegroup.org.uk

Write to us:

settle, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 1HA

Fill in a form on our website:

www.settlegroup.org.uk/contact-us/make-a-complaint

The Housing Ombudsman Service

The best way to get your complaint resolved is by talking directly to us. However, you can also contact the Housing Ombudsman for help and advice at any time. Their service is free, independent and impartial. If you've gone through both stages of our complaints process and remain unhappy with the outcome, they will consider investigating it for you. You can contact the Ombudsman directly on:

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Complaint procedure steps:

Resolve Right Now

We'll always do our best to resolve your concern as quickly as possible. If there is a straightforward answer or quick fix, we will work with you to resolve it within 5 working days.

Stage one

If a bit more investigation is needed, a member of our complaints team will look into your complaint and respond in writing within 10 working days. Where more time is needed to resolve your complaint, we will agree this with you.

Stage two

If you are unhappy with our response, you can ask to escalate your complaint to Stage two. It will then be reviewed independently by a member of our Leadership Team who will respond in writing within 20 working days. Where more time is needed to resolve your complaint, we will agree this with you.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

If you are unhappy with the final outcome of your complaint, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service who will consider investigating it for you. Their service is free, independent and impartial. You can contact the Ombudsman directly on:

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk