

# Complaints policy

<b>Who's this for?</b>	Residents and colleagues
<b>Document status</b>	Live
<b>To be reviewed</b>	April 2026
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Assistant Director of Customer Experience
<b>Other related documents</b>	The complaint handling scheme The complaint handling code Complaints procedure Compensation policy Reasonable adjustments policy Vulnerable customers policy Unreasonable behaviour policy

# 1. Policy statement

Our purpose is to give residents a firm foundation on which to build their lives. We do this by delivering brilliant services, investing in our 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 and learning from our mistakes.

We are members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. The Housing Ombudsman Scheme sets out the role of the Housing Ombudsman Service and what they can and cannot consider within their role.

As a condition of membership, we comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. The Complaint Handling Code (the Code) sets out clear guidelines and best practice for how we manage and respond to complaints at settle. We complete and publish a self-assessment against the requirements of the Code annually.

What is a Complaint?

We consider a **complaint** to be any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action taken by us or those acting on our behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.

A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction we will give them the choice to make complaint. We will accept complaints via third parties or representatives and handle these in line with our complaints policy.

Complaints made about the actions of a neighbour are managed through our neighbourhood management and anti-social behaviour policies. Where a resident expresses dissatisfaction with our handling of these matters, they have the choice to raise a complaint.

What is a service request?

We define a **service request** as a request that settle provides a service or fixes a problem when reported in line with our service standards, policies and procedures. Service requests are recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint must be raised when a resident raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request. If the service requests remains ongoing, we will not stop our efforts to address their request while we investigate and respond to the complaint.

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:

- The complaint is about something that happened over 12 months ago, or it has been longer than 12 months since the resident became aware of the issue

- Legal proceedings have been started. This is defined as details of a claim, such as the Claim Form or Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court
- Matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy.

We do not take a blanket approach and apply discretion to this depending on the circumstances. If we decide not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be provided to the resident in writing setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

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

### **Current position**

- 98% of complaints were responded to within the timeframes set out in the complaint handling code
- Complaints are open on average for 11 weeks until all actions are resolved
- 49% of residents told us they were dissatisfied with our complaint handling through the tenant satisfaction measures.

The feedback we have received from residents tells us we need to:

- Improve awareness and accessibility to our complaints procedure, providing resident with the choice to raise a complaint when they contact us;
- Ensure any inspections or visits are documented, appointments are timely and avoid unnecessary extensions to timeframes;
- Explain the outcome of the complaint and keep tight control of agreed actions ensuring we do what we say we will on time;
- Provide a point of contact and keep in regular contact until all actions are delivered, explaining any next steps so that resident know what to expect from us.

## **2. Key principles**

- We make it as easy for residents to raise a complaint when things go wrong and continue to raise awareness of our complaints procedure
- We take ownership of residents' complaints and work hard to find the best possible resolution for them and for settle
- We treat residents fairly, considering the 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 awareness of how we handle complaints for residents and colleagues
- To improve accessibility, quickly identify where residents might need additional support or a reasonable adjustment
- To reduce the time taken to resolve complaints for residents
- To deliver fair outcomes, put things right and learn from mistakes
- To record and share service improvements that we've made as a result of learning from complaints and wider sector learning.

### 4. Policy actions

- Publicise information about residents rights to raise a complaint and access the Housing Ombudsman Service, through the website, leaflets, posters, newsletters and in relevant correspondence with residents
- Carry out training for all colleagues in complaint handling so that colleagues can raise a complaint on behalf of a resident
- Provide refresher training annually and when new colleagues join settle through our induction training
- Capture the right information when a complaint is raised, including understanding any support or adjustments that may be necessary
- Improve the time taken to respond to complaints and deliver the commitments we make to residents in our complaint responses
- Create a robust feedback loop that captures lessons from complaints at team and individual level, evidencing the improvements we make as a result of complaints
- Ensure residents are provided with a copy of the complaints procedure and complaint reference when they raise a complaint and can view their complaint stage, including any agreed actions on their online account.

### 5. Desired outcomes

- Residents know their rights and understand how we handle complaints, 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
- All colleagues feel confident in supporting residents who need to raise a complaint
- Our customer resolution team independently resolve complaints quickly, fairly and impartially working collaboratively with the residents and the relevant colleagues
- 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 and adhere to the timeframes.

## 6. Performance indicators

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

- 90% of complaints are resolved at stage 1 of our complaints procedure
- 100% of complaints are resolved within the timescales set out in the complaint handling code
- 80% of complaints cases are closed within 8 weeks of being raised
- Less than 20% of residents report dissatisfaction with our complaint handling.

## 7. Key legislation

- Consumer Standards
- The complaint handling scheme
- The complaint handling code 2024
- The social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- The GDPR Act 2018
- The Equality Act 2018
- The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and 1995.

## 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're committed to providing the best service possible but we know 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, we accept complaints by phone, by email, through our website, in person and through any media channel we're on. You can talk to anyone who works for settle about your complaint and they will make sure the details are passed to our customer resolution team.

You can also have a friend, family member or representative contact us on your behalf as long as you have given us permission to speak to them about your complaint.

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to get your complaint resolved. If English isn't your first language, we can arrange for a translator during discussions with us and also arrange translations of documents into another language.

We can provide printed copies of information about your complaint, our policies and other information about our work in large print or Braille. Please let us know if you would like us to arrange this. We will always do our best to provide information in the format that works best for you.

## Different ways to make a complaint:

**Call us:** 0330 343 0016

**Email us:** [customer.service@settlegroup.org.uk](mailto: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](http://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.

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

# Complaints procedure

## Stage one

A member of our customer resolution team will contact you within 5 working days to discuss your complaint and explain what will happen next. We'll let you know who your point of contact will be and provide you with a reference number. We will then investigate your concerns and agree the actions we can take to put things right.

We'll respond in writing within 10 working days from acknowledging your complaint. Where more time is needed, we may contact you to agree to extend this timeframe by up to a further 10 working days, clearly explaining why we need more time to resolve your complaint.

## Stage two

Our aim is to work with you to resolve all complaints at stage 1, however if you are unhappy with our response, you can 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 with our final response. Where more time is needed, we may contact you to agree to extend this timeframe up to a further 20 working days, clearly explaining why we need more time to resolve your complaint.

## Escalation to the Housing Ombudsman Service

If you are unhappy with the final response to 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:

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

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

Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)