

Complaints Policy

Document ID:	LAN-POL-1006 v.1.1					
Executive Lead (Owner):	Executive Director of Customer Services					
Author (Leadership Team member):	Director of Customer Services					
Which Strategy does this support?	Landlord Resident Strategy					
Review frequency:	Every 3 years	☒	Other (state period)			
Date created:	April 2024					
Previous review date:	April 2024					
Review date:	July 2025					
Next review:	April 2027					
Current status:	Draft	☐	Final	☒		
IMPACT ASSESSMENTS						
Equality Impact Assessment						
STAGE 1 completed?	STAGE 2 required?	No	☐	Yes	☐	
☐		If not required, state reason:	An EIA was completed at the time the policy was last reviewed. This policy has just been moved to the new template			
Customer Impact Assessment						
1) Is this one of the agreed policies requiring resident consultation? Please refer to: Our policies - Settle		Yes	☒	No	☐	
2) If yes, please confirm resident consultation has taken place		☐	Briefly detail changes arising from resident feedback: Resident consultation was completed at the time the policy was last reviewed. This policy has just been moved to the new template.			
APPROVAL						
Approval journey:	Executive Team	Committee				Board
		ARC	DAC	Ops	NRC	
	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Date approved:	25/07/2025					
Which Regulatory Standard does this Policy support?	Economic					
	Governance & Viability	Rent		Value for Money		
	☐	☐		☐		
	Consumer					
	Neighbourhood & Community	Safety & Quality	Tenancy	Transparency, Influence & Accountability		
	☐	☐	☐	☒		
Associated legislation						
Associated procedures	Unreasonable Behaviour Procedure Remedies and Compensation Procedure					

Does this policy contain delegated authority?	
--	--

Complaints Policy

Introduction

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 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. We will accept complaints via third parties or representatives and handle these in line with our complaints policy.

We are members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. The Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code sets out best practice for landlord's complaint handling procedures, to enable a positive complaints culture. The Complaint Handling Code ('the Code') became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that all members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme are obliged by law to follow its requirements. We complete and publish a self-assessment against the requirements of the Code annually.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure we deliver an easily accessible, outcome focussed complaints process meeting the legal and regulatory requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

More information about how to make a complaint, the steps we take when handling complaints, and the Housing Ombudsman Service, can be found at appendix 1 of this Policy.

Our complaints leaflet and our complaints procedure are available on our website and sent to residents when we open a complaint for investigation.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- An individual, or group of individuals who are or have been in a landlord/tenant relationship with Settle, including those with a lease, tenancy, shared ownership, licence to occupy, service agreement or other arrangement to occupy premises owned or managed by Settle.
- A private individual or group of individuals who are or have been impacted by Settle in our role as a social housing association.

We may not handle complaints about matters already subject to court proceedings, or those concerning personal injury, which may be better addressed by a court or through a personal injury claim.

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. This is not a complaint. 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 request remains ongoing, we will not stop our efforts to address their request while we investigate and respond to the complaint.

Section 2 – Policy

2.1 Policy Principles

We:

- Make it easy for residents to raise a complaint when things go wrong and continue to raise awareness of our complaint's procedure
- Take ownership of residents' complaints and work hard to find the best possible resolution for them and for Settle
- Treat residents fairly, considering the individual circumstances when investigating and responding to complaints
- Welcome complaints as an opportunity to put things right, learn from what went wrong and continually improve our services.
- We are committed to doing as much as is practically possible to enable residents to access and understand our services.

2.2 Policy Detail and Outcomes

We:

- Publicise information about resident's 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 for employees and when new colleagues join Settle through our 'housewarming' induction
- 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
- Comply with the collection, storage, access to, provision and disclosure of data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018
- Provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint

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 considerations of compensation and remedies will be dealt with under our Compensation and Remedies Policy

- All colleagues understand the importance of acting in line with the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code and adhere to the timeframes.

Cases We May Exclude:

We do not take a blanket approach and apply discretion depending on the circumstances of the complaint. If we decide not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be provided 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. In some instances, 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.
- 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
- If there is legal action, a claim for damaged items through an insurance claim, a personal injury claim, or a case is being dealt with by the First Tier Tribunal, these will not be dealt with under our Complaints Policy.
- A complaint about the level of rent or service charges is not a complaint about our service. If we do not follow what we say in our policy or if services are not being delivered, this may become a complaint.
- We may withdraw the complaints procedure from a complainant whose behaviour is unreasonable, or we may have to restrict contact. An example of this would be if someone raises the same complaint several times in different ways. We will explain why we have taken this action to the complainant or their advocate (See Unreasonable Behaviour Policy).
- If the complaint is about the way we have handled personal information or about exercising rights within our privacy notice, in the first instance contact should be made to our Data Protection Officer – dpo@settlegroup.org.uk or by post at 'The Data Protection Officer', Settle, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire. SG6 1HA. For independent advice about data protection and privacy concerns in the UK, the Information Commissioner (ICO) can be contacted online at www.ico.org.uk or by phone on 0303 123 1113.

Section 3 – Roles and responsibilities

3. Key Roles and Responsibilities

- The Operations Committee, which operates under the jurisdiction of the Board, is responsible for reviewing and monitoring this policy.
- The Chair of the Operations Committee of the Settle Board is the Member Responsible for Complaints.
- Settle's Executive Director of Customer Services has strategic oversight of this policy as the policy owner and is responsible for conducting a review every 3 years, or sooner should there be a material change or if a more frequent review is required.
- The Customer Resolution Manager is the day-to-day contact for the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- The Customer Resolution team is responsible for ensuring that complaints are responded to in line with the Complaint Handling Code, our policy and procedure.

Complaint stages

The complaints process has two stages.

Stage 1

A member of our customer resolution team will make contact within **5 working days** to discuss the complaint and explain what will happen next. We will acknowledge the complaint in writing, confirming our understanding of the complaint and the outcome the resident is seeking to put things right. A reference number will be provided.

We will respond in writing within **10 working days** from acknowledging the complaint. Where more time is needed, we may contact the resident to agree to extend this timeframe by up to a further 10 working days, clearly explaining why we need more time to resolve the complaint. If there is a straightforward answer, we aim to provide a resolution there and then.

Stage 2

Our aim is to work with residents to resolve all complaints at stage 1. However, if a resident is unhappy with all or part of our response, they can escalate their complaint to stage 2 of our complaints procedure for a final response. We will acknowledge the escalation to stage 2 within **5 working days** of it being raised with us. The complaint will then be considered by a different colleague, who will respond in writing within **20 working days** with our final response.

Where more time is needed, we may contact the resident to agree to extend this timeframe up to a further **20 working days**, clearly explaining why we need more time to resolve the complaint.

Housing Ombudsman

The best way to get a complaint resolved is by talking to us. However, residents can also contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for help and advice at any time.

If the resident has exhausted our complaints process and remains unhappy with the outcome, they can refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Their service is free independent and impartial and can be contacted using the methods detailed below.

- Online: Make a complaint - Housing Ombudsman (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- Phone: 0300 111 3000 • Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Post: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO BOX1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET

Section 4 – Compliance and Enforcement

4.1 Compliance

Members of the Settle Board and Committees of the Board regularly assess and review the handling of complaints at Settle, to ensure the organisation complies with all requirements as set out in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, with a focus throughout on putting residents first and delivering the best possible outcomes for them.

We complete and publish an annual Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment, noting our annual complaints performance and service improvement report on our website.

We produce quarterly reports for our Operations Committee detailing performance against KPIs including non-adherence to complaint management and trends for service areas and complaint themes to drive improved complaint handling performance, identify service improvement actions and take accountability for addressing non-adherence to the complaints process.

Quarterly reports provided to operational leads detailing performance against KPIs, trends and service improvement actions to enable them to hold service areas to account, drive improved performance and ensure delivery of service improvements actions.

Section 5 – Related Policies, Procedures and Key Documents

Related Policies

Compensation & Remedies Policy

Reasonable Adjustments and Vulnerable Needs Policy

Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

Related Procedures

Unreasonable Behaviour Procedure

Remedies and Compensation Procedure

Key Documents

RSH Consumer Standard Transparency Influence and Accountability

Housing Ombudsman Scheme

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Housing Ombudsman Self-assessment

[How we handle complaints - Settle](#)

Complaints leaflet (Appendix 1 of this Policy)

Section 6 – Review, Approval, Publication

6.1 Review and Approval

This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner should there be a material change in associated policies, the complaints handling code or a change in legislation.

Section 7 – Document Control

Document Name	Complaints Policy
Approval Date	25/07/2025
Approved By	Executive Director of Central Services
Version Number	V.1.1
Version History	April 2024
	July 2025
	September 2025

IMPACT ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE					
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT ATTACHED		Stage 1		Stage 2	
		☐		☐	N/A ☒
CUSTOMER IMPACT ASSESSMENT Resident feedback		Attached ☐		N/A ☒	
PUBLISHING REQUIREMENTS					
INTERNALLY	☒	WEBSITE	☒	SETTLE CONNECT	☐

OFFICE USE ONLY	
RELEVANT 'APPROVAL LOGO' ADDED TO COVER	☐
Keywords for search function	

Appendix 1

Complaint Leaflet

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, live chat, our social media platforms and through our website and in person.

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

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



settle



Housing
Ombudsman Service

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:

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:

You can contact the Ombudsman directly on:

Complaint form: online complaint form

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Phonelines are open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Lines will be closed for staff training every Thursday from 3.30pm to 5pm

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Write to: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET



Housing
Ombudsman Service