

Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy

Note: This SHA policy will change in April 2024 to reflect the latest UK Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

Introduction

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for our residents. We welcome feedback to our services, whether positive, neutral or negative. It gives us the opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. We believe that failure to listen to or acknowledge complaints will lead to an aggravation of problems and dissatisfaction, and so we aim to resolve issues as early as possible.

Purpose

We aim to operate an open and accountable complaints system. This policy sets the steps for dealing with formal complaints so that we can respond consistently and well to service queries and so that residents feel confident that their complaints and worries are listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.

Scope

This policy encompasses all aspects of service delivery to residents and includes services provided by us and our contractors. However, residents should know that some incidents cannot be addressed under complaints for example, anti-social behaviour are not complaints and are subject to a separate policy. Residents are asked to familiarise themselves with SHA's policies that are provided to help direct their concerns and questions they may have.

We aim to get things right the first time and resolve service failures at the first point of contact where possible. We strive to provide the best service, though realise that sometimes the results might not be quite as we planned. We are open to complaints and see them as an opportunity to improve our relationship with residents, to recognise learnings so that our services improve.

We will respond to all recorded complaints from tenants within set timescales and ask

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residents to tell us about their complaint as soon they arise. If we receive more than three complaints at once, it will take longer for us to investigate, respond and remedy the issues - please speak with a member of SHA staff if you are submitting more than three complaints at one time. We accept complaints in person, by letter, over the phone or by email. We do not accept complaints by text message, through phone apps, via social media platforms or surveys.

Complaints are managed through a process which has **three complaint stages**. The procedure which guides this process is set out here.

Definition of a complaint:

Not all contact with SHA staff and customers results in a complaint and it's important to define a complaint. SHA also receives feedback and compliments from residents and members of the community.

We distinguish between a **service request** and a **complaint**. For example, someone who tells us that their drain is blocked or that their communal lift is not working is asking for a service request. A customer who says we have failed to carry out a previously reported repair or that there have been excessive delays in a service request will be treated as a complaint. Any form of dissatisfaction will be treated as a complaint: SHA staff will ask customers to confirm whether they wish to make a complaint.

Definitions of terms:

Compliment: an unsolicited expression of gratitude or praise for a member of staff or service area.

Feedback: information or statement of opinion about a specific service, performance or task as a basis for improvement.

SHA accepts feedback and compliments to improve internal processes. Feedback and compliments can be provided online by email, over the phone or with a staff member.

Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord (SHA), its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents (Source: Complaint Handling Code,

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Housing Ombudsman)

Resolve a complaint informally

Complaints can be resolved informally prior to engagement of a formal complaints procedure. If you would like to take this course of action, we advise you to write or speak to a SHA staff member.

The following are **invalid complaints** subjects:

- A first request for a service, information or an explanation of our policies and procedures.
- Repairs that are either not completed or partially completed but still within published completion timescales.
- Residents chasing non-urgent repairs for the first time (refer to SHAs Service Standards Policy)
- Reports of harassment (refer to SHAs Anti-social Behaviour Policy).
- Reports of anti-social behaviour or neighbour disputes and related concerns of residents (refer to Anti-social Behaviour Policy).
- Requests for accommodation, mutual exchange or transfer applications.
- A dispute against the amount of rent or service charge being charged
- Complaints about staff outside of working hours or when not fulfilling an SHA function (this could be an employment matter and dealt with as a disciplinary matter).
- Issues where a resident has commenced legal action against us (Defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court)
- Appeals against policy decisions.
- Vexatious complaints (ie. excessively argumentative, angry, worrisome, annoying or troublesome behaviour)
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.
- Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints.

Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for implementation of this policy rests with the Senior Management at SHA.

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Following a complaint SHA will learn from our complaints by recording actions and decisions, by sharing information, by reporting on trends and by asking residents for feedback about their experience of our process. We promote a positive culture about complaints to ensure that staff understand the policy and procedure and are appropriately trained and supported.

SHA staff may ask for the complainant's preferred method of contact. Reasonable adjustments can be made for special circumstances. Whilst we want to be open to complaints about our service, we may – in very extreme cases – refuse to deal with complainants where the complaint is made in a vexatious, aggressive or unreasonable manner, or where the matter has already been fully considered at all 3 stages of the process. Any such decision will be made and communicated in writing to the residents. A complaint that arises during the course of the complaints process will need to be submitted as a new complaint.

Residents can compliment a member of staff, a team or the organisation as a whole. Compliments are passed on to staff and their line manager, and are used to identify areas of good practice from which we all can learn.

Monitoring, reviewing and evaluation

There will be key performance indicators to report actions, targets and progress on complaints to the Board. This will be done on a quarterly basis. SHA will publish statistics annually.

All complainants will be required to verify their identity and residence. A third person or representative for a SHA resident will need written agreement from the resident - please speak with SHA staff for advice. Complainants will be requested to provide photo ID and proof of residence within the past three months of the date of the complaint. All anonymous complaints will not be logged nor responded to. Complaints received after 5pm on a working day will be considered on the next day (day 1). All complaints must go through SHAs 3 complaints stages and will be deemed closed at 55 days (around 8 weeks) from initial response. Our 3 stage complaints procedure comprises:

Verification of complaint (5 working days)

This is where the complaint is acknowledged, defined, logged, the identities of complainants checked and the complaint validated. SHA will write to the customer to

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verify the receipt and validity of the complaint.

Stage 1 (10 working days)

Review to resolve - A complaint should be made, by email at admin@spitalfieldsha.co.uk, by phone, in person or in writing to our offices (Spitalfields Housing Association, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5AA). Complainants should explain the complaint clearly, give clear dates and any remedial actions they would like to see and provide any evidence. The complaint will be fully investigated by a member of the team unless exceptional circumstances prevail, a full written response will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can refer their complaint to stage 2.

Stage 2 (20 working days)

Review, investigate and resolve – The complaint will be reviewed and investigated again by another relevant staff member. The complaint should be provided in writing, summarising why the complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction. Complainants should give any remedial actions they would like to see. Alternative arrangements can be made where this is not reasonable - speak to a member of SHA staff. The complaint will under normal circumstances be investigated in up to 20 working days. A full written response will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days.

In some cases e.g. where the issue is complex, there are more than 3 complaints received at one time or when persons required for an interview are not available, this may take longer and even cause delays out of our hands. If so, the complainant will be informed of the delay and the anticipated timescale involved.

Stage 3 (20 working days)

Detailed investigation – The complaint and procedure will be looked into by a board member with advice and an internal investigation by senior staff. The complaint should be provided in writing, summarising why the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily at stages 1 and 2. Complainants should give any remedial actions they would like to see. Alternative arrangements can be made where this is not reasonable - speak to a member of SHA staff. The complaint will under normal circumstances be investigated for an additional 20 working days. A full written response will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days.

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In some cases e.g. where the issue is complex, there are more than 3 complaints received at one time or persons required for interview are not available, this may take longer and if so, the complainant will be informed of the delay and the anticipated timescale involved. This is the final stage of the internal complaints procedure at SHA.

SHA staff will try their best to resolve any issues as soon as they can to the satisfaction of residents within these stages. A stage 3 complaints process gives further time to resolve an issue especially when delays are outside of SHAs control eg. when further specialist assessments are needed or replacement parts are yet to arrive. SHA staff may write to the resident to agree timescales that are reasonable to the resident.

Taking matters further

If the customer is not satisfied with the outcomes of the SHA complaints procedure they can decide to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service. If the customer has any questions about their complaint, they should call SHAs offices to get advice.

After stage 3, if the resident remains dissatisfied with the way SHA have handled their complaint the resident can ask for their complaint to be determined by the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman will not be able to investigate until the 3 stage SHA complaints process has been completed. Ombudsman details are given below:

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ
Website: housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Options available to the Complainant

Early resolution process

This is an alternative process to a formal investigation. The Housing Ombudsman will work with you and your landlord to help resolve the dispute as fairly and quickly as they can. They will look at what has already been agreed between you and your landlord to resolve the complaint and the issues that are still outstanding. The Ombudsman will use their experience of resolving complaints to explore the possible options and make suggestions if they believe there is a way to resolve the complaint. If you and your landlord agree on how to resolve the complaint The Ombudsman will set out the terms in an Ombudsman's determination and ensure that any agreed actions are carried out.

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Can this policy be improved?

SHA exercises a 'continual improvement' approach to their policies and welcomes feedback so that we can improve services for our residents. If you think this policy can be improved, email admin@spitalfieldsha.co.uk with your suggestion.

We refer to the resident, tenant or customer meaning a person residing in an SHA-managed property.

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