

1 Introduction

1.1 At Stockport Homes Group (SHG), we welcome and value all feedback, including complaints. We recognise that we don't always get things right first time, and we see complaints as a vital opportunity to listen, learn, and improve. This Policy provides a clear and accessible way for customers to share their experiences and hold SHG to account for the services we provide. By responding to complaints fairly and constructively, we aim to strengthen trust, improve outcomes, and deliver services that meet the needs of our customers.

2 Strategic Links

2.1 The Policy reflects the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. This means that SHG will always make a reasonable and proportionate effort to resolve a complaint and learn from the outcome of complaints.

2.2 The 'Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England' sets out that Registered Providers¹ shall 'have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly'. The Policy has been designed to deliver the requirements of the Framework.

2.3 Any complaints relating to fire or structural high-rise safety issues will be directed to the Building Safety Team, with escalation to the Building Safety Regulator where requested.

2.4 The Policy provides a route for Home Improvement Agency² complaints to be raised. The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) delivers certain aspects of Stockport Council's private sector housing grants scheme, including disabled facilities grants. When making a complaint, grant applicants will be made aware of their right to use the Council's complaints procedure rather than the SHG complaint process. If a grant applicant chooses to use SHG's complaints process, Stockport Council will be consulted before any scheme delivery complaints progress to the appeal stage, and as part of the normal SHG complaints process the Council will be consulted on the appeal decision. A similar approach will be applied to other local authority commissioned works.

2.5 The Policy operates alongside the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy, which is designed to protect members of staff that are subject to abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands, and unreasonable persistence. These behaviours can sometimes arise during the investigation of complaints.

2.6 The Policy operates alongside the Disciplinary Policy, Procedure and Guidance, which deals with the conduct of staff employed by SHG.

¹ Stockport Homes is a Registered Provider for the properties it owns. The social housing stock managed by Stockport Homes on behalf of Stockport Council is also covered by the framework.

² [Stockport Homes | Home Improvement Agency - Stockport Homes](#)

2.7 The Policy operates alongside the Compensation Policy, which sets out where compensation gestures may be awarded.

2.8 The Policy supports the SHG aim to 'be accountable to customers'.

2.9 The Customer Feedback Policy, information about the Housing Ombudsman and the Complaint Handling Code is published on the SHG website, which includes accessibility tools. This information is available in a physical format upon request.

3 Policy Statement

3.1 In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Scheme's Complaint Handling Code, complaints are defined as:

'An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'

3.2 Stockport Homes welcomes customer feedback from all sources, including but not limited to:

- Email
- Online via the Stockport Homes website
- Letter
- Telephone
- In-person
- Webchat

3.3 The customer does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as one. SHG will accept a complaint which is submitted via a third party or a representative including Elected Members, subject to confirmation of permission to act in this capacity. In instances where some fault has been found the complaint response will set out the actions that will be taken to address the issue. Where customer's sought outcomes are unreasonable or unrealistic or where there is no evident failure on the part of SHG, this will be set out to the customer through the formal complaints process.

3.4 SHG operate a centralised Customer Feedback team who are responsible for recording and monitoring all complaints and ensuring these are progressed in accordance with the Complaint Handling Code, including where these are being submitted by a third-party. Customers can raise concerns directly with the Customer Feedback team, and complaints are also accepted through all other service areas who will pass the details of this to the Customer Feedback team, without need for the customer to contact the Customer Feedback team directly for this to be recorded.

3.5 SHG recognise the difference between a formal complaint and a service request. A Service Request is a request from a customer requiring action, for instance following a missed appointment, where this can be resolved in the

moment by way of making a new appointment. Where this approach is agreed with the customer, the contact will be recorded as a Service Request but will not enter the formal complaints process. The customer retains the option to progress their concerns as a formal complaint irrespective of this being handled as a Service Request. Handling of the Service Request will remain ongoing if the customer seeks to progress as a complaint.

3.6 SHG operates a two-stage complaint investigation process that consists of a 'Stage One' investigation and a 'Stage Two' investigation. It will make every effort to resolve complaints in a timely way, including without the issue entering the two-stage process if an issue is likely to be resolved quickly and easily, and where this approach is agreed with the complainant. Where issues are being dealt with outside of the two-stage process, a resolution will be agreed within five working days of the issue being raised or otherwise an offer will be made for the issue to be handled through the two-stage process, with this being formally recorded and acknowledged no more than five working days from the issue having first been raised.

3.7 SHG will always consider the individual circumstances of each complaint. However, there are instances where complaints may not be accepted for investigation. These are where the issues:

- Are being addressed via another more appropriate route/ombudsman, for instance decisions around homelessness or Allocations assessments being challenged via the Allocations Review process
- Have not been raised within 12 months of the matter arising or the customer becoming aware of them, except those concerning health and safety
- Have already received a response through the complaints process.
- Are being pursued in an unreasonable manner, such as being accompanied by unacceptable behaviour
- Concern matters that do not cause significant adverse impact to the complainant, or
- Are subject to legal processes. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of claim, have been filed at court.
- Are expressions of dissatisfaction raised through surveys. All transactional surveys undertaken by SHG will include an explanation that responses to surveys are not recorded formally, and signposts to how to make a compliment or complaint via webform (hyperlink), phone or email.

3.8 In cases where SHG has made the decision not to accept a complaint for investigation. This will be confirmed in writing to the customer setting out the reasons why and the customers right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman.

3.9 Reports of anti-social behaviour will be handled in accordance with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Where there is concern about the handling of an existing anti-social behaviour case or a case closed within the last six months, this will be handled through the Customer Feedback process.

3.10 When a complaint is accepted at stage 1 or stage 2 of the formal complaints process, it will be acknowledged by the Customer Feedback Team within five working days of having been received. The acknowledgement will be clear on which aspects of the complaint SHG are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear. Complaints will not be refused escalation through all stages of the formal complaint process unless excluded for reasons set out in paragraph 3.7. Where this is the case, the reason will be clearly set out to the complainant and signposting will be provided in relation to the customer's right to take this decision to the relevant Ombudsman.

3.11 A full record of the complaint will be recorded, including the outcomes at each stage. This will include the original complaint, and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.

3.12 At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers will:

- Deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind
- Give the complainant a fair chance to set out their position
- Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
- Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully

3.13 At both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints process, complainants will receive a written formal response which includes:

- The complaint stage
- The complaint setting out all points raised
- The decision addressing all points raised in the complaint
- The reasons for any decisions made
- The details of any remedy offered to put things right
- Details of any outstanding actions
- Details of how to escalate the matter to Stage 2 (if responding at Stage 1) or to the Ombudsman if the individual remains dissatisfied.

4 Complaint Stages

4.1 'Stage One': This stage of the process encourages investigating officers to actively engage with customers, ideally through direct conversation to resolve complaints. It allows up to ten working days to respond, with an additional ten working days available in exceptional circumstances and when agreed with the complainant. A formal written response is provided which sets out how the complaint was investigated, any failure identified, the outcome of the complaint, any remedies being made and how the complaint can be

pursued further including details of the Housing Ombudsman where the complaint is within their jurisdiction. The complainant should make any request for their complaint to proceed to Stage Two of the Customer Feedback within 20 working days of the Stage 1 response being provided. Where there are reasonable mitigating circumstances which mean the complainant has not been able to pursue their request for escalation in this time, such as due to medical issues, a flexible approach will be taken by the Customer Feedback team in accepting the request. Where a decision is made to refuse an escalation request then it must be set out in line with the exclusions in paragraph 3.5 and an explanation will be provided to the resident. The communication will make clear that the stage one response was its final response to the complaint, and it will provide details of the Housing Ombudsman.

4.2 'Stage Two': This involves a complaint being reviewed by a more senior officer, usually a Head of Service. This will not be the same person that considered the complaint at Stage One. Stage Two allows up to 20 working days to respond, with an additional 20 working days available in exceptional circumstances and when agreed with the complainant. A final, formal written response will be provided as part of the Stage Two complaint investigation which sets out the outcome of the complaint following review, any remedies being made and how the complaint can be pursued further including details of the relevant Ombudsman. Stage Two complaint investigators are encouraged to take a flexible approach to their review, ensuring complainants have had sufficient opportunity to set out their concerns at this stage.

4.3 Where an extension is required due to the complexity of the complaint, the investigating officer will confirm the revised expected response timescale in writing to the complainant. This extension is in addition to the standard response time for Stage One (10 working days) or Stage Two (20 working days), and will not exceed an additional 10 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The extension confirmation will also include contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service.

4.4 In the rare instances that complaints cannot be responded to within the timescales set out above, SHG will agree with the complainant suitable intervals for being updated about the complaint.

4.5 If additional complaints/issues are raised during the investigation of a complaint at either stage of the process, SHG will on a case-by-case basis assess whether these can reasonably be incorporated into the ongoing investigation. If the additional matters are closely related and can be addressed within the original complaint timescale, or with a justified extension, SHG will include them as part of the existing complaint. Where this is not feasible, SHG may advise the customer to raise a separate Stage 1 complaint for the new issues.

5 Complaint Responses

5.1 In some instances, complaint investigations will determine that remedial actions are required as part of the complaint outcome.

5.2 Where something has gone wrong SHG will acknowledge this and set out the actions that have already been taken or will be undertaken to put things right. These can include:

- Apologising
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons
- Taking action
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- Providing a financial remedy
- Changing policies, procedures, or practices.

5.3 In many cases remedies will involve an apology and delivery of service, for instance the undertaking of a repair. Sometimes there may be a need to acknowledge quantifiable loss incurred by a complainant or a need to compensate for time and trouble or inconvenience and distress owing to SHG's failure, in addition to any statutory payments. In all cases, the complaint response will set out what remedies are being provided and reasonable expected timescales for these remedies to be provided or delivered as agreed with the complainant. Where financial compensation is being awarded, this will be made in accordance with the Compensation Policy which sets out in what circumstances compensation will be made and the level of award which should be offered.

6 Learning from Complaints

6.1 SHG will try to identify learning from every complaint that it deals with and utilise such to develop and improve services. On a regular basis SHG will publish the learning that it has implemented from complaints to demonstrate to customers that it is improving services that it provides to customers.

7 Accessibility

7.1 The SHG website includes the 'Recite Me' assistive technology tool that enables customers to customise their experience in a way that best suits their individual needs. This includes larger font, translation into another language, audio etc.

7.2 The Recite Me assistive tool can be accessed by choosing 'Accessibility' from the toolbar at the top of the webpage and then choosing the policy from the list on the website.

8 Get Involved

8.1 SHG consult customers regularly about policy content, service standards and value for money. If customers would like to get involved, discuss this policy, help make decisions, make a complaint, or leave a compliment, please contact us.



Customer Feedback Policy

9 Contact Us

9.1 SHG can be contacted by ringing 0161 217 6016, visiting our website <https://www.stockporthomes.org/do-it-online/tell-us/contact-us/> or at our head office at Cornerstone, 1-3 Edward Street, Stockport, SK1 3NQ.

9.2 SHG can also be found on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [X \(Twitter\)](#).

10 Internal Controls

1	Version control	Version number will change every three years or at major review	
	Version No.	Date	Change/s and reasons for change
	1	25/06/2025	Review of existing policy

2	Policy Owner i.e. Director	Director of Customer Services
	Policy Author/s i.e. Head of Service	Assistant Director Customer Excellence
	Approved by/date	Executive Leadership Team – 5 th August 2025 – Decision Customer Focus Committee – 11 th August 2025 – Decision
	Communication	Stockport Homes Website Colleague Intranet Site TM Slides
	Effective Date - the date of sign-off	11 th August 2025
	Next Full Review Date i.e. 3 years after effective date, with an annual light touch review	10 th August 2028

3	Regulatory Standards	Please list the Consumer, Governance, Viability standards and outcomes this policy meets
	Standard/s	Required outcome
	Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard	Registered providers must communicate with tenants and supply information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account. <u>1.1 Fairness and respect</u> 1.1.1 Registered providers must treat tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect. <u>1.2 Diverse needs</u> 1.2.1 In relation to the housing and landlord services they provide, registered providers must take action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants and, where relevant, prospective tenants. <u>1.3 Engagement with tenants</u> 1.3.1 Registered providers must take tenants' views into account in their decision making about how landlord services are delivered and communicate how

	<p>tenants' views have been considered.</p> <p><u>1.4 Information about landlord services</u></p> <p>1.4.1 Registered providers must communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account.</p> <p><u>1.5 Performance information</u></p> <p>1.5.1 Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in delivering landlord services.</p>
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4	Linked policies/strategies	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unacceptable Behaviour Policy • Disciplinary Policy, Procedure and Guidance • Compensation Policy

5	Equality, diversity and inclusion	<p>Describe how different experiences, characteristics, and approaches were considered during the formulation of the policy, e.g. neurodiversity, age, religion, sex/gender, financial/digital inclusion.</p>
		<p>This policy is designed to be flexible and encourage feedback from customers. It does not limit the ways in which complaints can be raised, instead it creates an open approach to complaints handling. The policy encourages the use of advocates or representatives where customers need support in raising or pursuing the complaint. It provides ways in which customers can be supported to raise their complaint, such as via trained customer advisors providing guidance to complainants at Stage Two.</p> <p>The approach encourages early resolution, and the Stage Two stage contains options to tailor the approach to the needs of customers.</p> <p>In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 SHG will adapt normal processes to meet individual needs in accessing the Customer Feedback process. Reasonable adjustments will be made, which may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhering to a customer's preferred communication method and frequency • Providing written communications in a format which is accessible to the customer, such as large print, on coloured paper, or in braille

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of interpreting services where language may be a barrier • Taking a flexible approach to location of meetings where these are required to ensure accessibility • Allowing the customer to have a representative deal with the complaint on their behalf and to be represented or accompanied to any meeting with SHG.
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6	Customer/Colleague Voice	
		Insights gathered from transactional customer satisfaction surveys and the Customer Complaints Advisor Panel play a key role in shaping this policy and guiding SHG's Customer Feedback services.

7	Risk management	This policy helps to mitigate the following risks identified on the Corporate Risk Register
	Corporate Risk 1	Stockport Homes is not adequately prepared for a proactive inspection of the Consumer Standards by the Regulator of Social Housing
	Corporate Risk 2	Stockport Homes does not maintain a strong, positive reputation where stakeholders have trust and confidence in SHG
	Corporate Risk 6	Stockport Homes does not deliver excellent customer services in the way that customers require them
	Corporate Risk 7	Stockport Homes does not respond to and learn from complaints effectively and does not listen to the customer voice
	Corporate Risk 8	Stockport Homes' performance in relation to Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) is not in line with Stockport Homes' ambitions

8	Performance monitoring	Please list the relevant government TSMs (Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
		TP09 - Satisfied with complaints handling CH01a - Stage one complaints (per 1,000 homes) CH01b - Stage two complaints (per 1,000 homes) CH02a - Stage one complaints response times CH02b - Stage two complaints response times