

1 Introduction

1.1 Stockport Homes Group (SHG) welcomes and values all feedback, including complaints as well as striving to deliver quality services. However, it is recognised that on occasion its services may fall below the published standard. All feedback is seen as a vital opportunity to listen, learn, and improve.

1.2 Through complaint investigation, and by responding to customers in a fair and transparent way, Stockport Homes aims to build trust, put things right, learn from feedback, and deliver quality services.

1.3 The Policy is in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Stockport Homes will always make a reasonable and proportionate effort to resolve a complaint and learn from the outcome of complaints.

1.4 Where feedback expresses dissatisfaction with how Stockport Homes has handled personal data or not complied with data protection legislation; this must be dealt with under the Data Protection Complaints Procedure. These can be received in writing via the [website](#) or verbally from customers or others whose personal data is held by Stockport Homes. Any such feedback will be logged with the Assurance Team.

2 Scope

2.1 This Policy outlines Stockport Homes' approach to complaints for customers of Stockport Homes. It is supported by the Customer Feedback Procedure.

2.2 This applies to anyone that is, or has been, in a landlord and tenant relationship with Stockport Homes.

2.3 This includes:

- Tenants that have a secure, assured or assured shorthold tenancy with a member landlord
- Leaseholders - those that lease a property owned or managed by a member landlord
- Shared owners – those that own part of their home and rent the other part from a member landlord (shared ownership)
- Those who have a licence or other arrangement to occupy a residential property directly with a member landlord.

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

- Email, Online via the Stockport Homes website or livechat, Letter, Telephone, In-person.

2.5 Stockport Homes 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.

2.6 The 'Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England' sets out that Registered Providers must ensure their approach to handling complaints is simple, accessible and publicised, including information regarding:

- a) How tenants can make a complaint
- b) The registered provider's complaints policy and complaints handling process
- c) What tenants can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how a complaint was handled, and
- d) The type of complaints received and how they have learnt from complaints to continuously improve services.

2.7 The Policy has been designed to deliver the requirements of the Framework.

2.8 Stockport Homes will publicise its complaints policy, complaints process, information about the Housing Ombudsman Service, and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code on its website. This will include information about how customers can make a complaint or log a compliment, what they can expect at each stage of the process, how to contact the Housing Ombudsman, and how Stockport Homes learns from complaints. This information will be kept accessible and available in alternative formats on request.

3 Policy Statement

3.1 In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman 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.'

The customer does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as one.

3.2 Any complaints relating to fire or structural high-rise safety issues will be processed in line with this Policy, be directed to the Building Safety Team, with the option to log with the Building Safety Regulator where requested or required.

3.3 Stockport Homes delivers certain aspects of Stockport Council's private sector services, including adapted and disabled facilities grant scheme (The Home Improvement Agency (HIA)). Complaints regarding the service received from Stockport Homes or its contractors can be made under this policy. If the

reason for dissatisfaction covers services delivered by Stockport Council, Stockport Homes will advise the customer of this and signpost to the Council, e.g. awarding of grant sums. A similar approach will be applied to other local authority commissioned works.

3.4 Stockport Homes 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 In line with Housing Ombudsman guidance, Stockport Homes recognises the difference between a formal complaint and a service request. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right, for example, a newly reported repair, or breakdown of rent transactions. Service requests are not complaints, however, must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. 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 can still raise 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 Stockport Homes operates a two-stage complaint investigation process that consists of a 'Stage One' investigation and a 'Stage Two' investigation. In line with Housing Ombudsman guidelines, all complaints should be acknowledged within five working days. Stage One complaints should be investigated and responded to within ten working days after date of acknowledgement. Stage Two complaints should be investigated and responded to within 20 working days from date of acknowledgement.

- Stockport Homes may extend complaint response timescales where additional time is required to complete a fair and thorough investigation. In line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, Stage One complaints may be extended by up to 10 working days and Stage Two complaints by up to 20 working days. Where an extension is applied, the customer will be informed of the reason for the extension, the revised response date and provided with details of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- If a complaint cannot be responded to within the maximum extension period permitted by the Housing Ombudsman Code, Stockport Homes will explain the reasons for the delay and agree appropriate intervals for keeping the customer updated until a response is issued.

3.7 Stockport Homes 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:

- Can be or 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. Stockport Homes will, however, consider whether there are good reasons to exercise discretion and investigate complaints raised outside this timeframe based on the individual circumstances of the case.
- Have already received a response through the complaints process.
- Are being pursued in an unreasonable manner, such as being accompanied by unacceptable behaviour in line with the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.
- Services that are not provided by Stockport Homes
- 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 Stockport Homes 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 Safer Neighbourhoods 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 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 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

3.12 At both Stage One and Stage Two 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 One (if responding at Stage Two) or to the Ombudsman if the individual remains dissatisfied.
- 'Stage Two' is the final stage to Stockport Homes complaints process.

3.13 Where a decision is made to refuse an escalation request then it must be set out in line with the exclusions in paragraph 3.7 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.

3.14 If additional complaints/issues are raised during the investigation of a complaint at either stage of the process, Stockport Homes 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, Stockport Homes will include them as part of the existing complaint. Where this is not feasible, Stockport Homes may advise the customer to raise a separate Stage One complaint for the new issues.

4 Complaint Responses

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

4.2 Where something has gone wrong, Stockport Homes 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.

4.3 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 Stockport Homes' 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.

5 Learning from Complaints

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

6 Accessibility

6.1 The Stockport Homes 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.

6.2 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.

7 Get Involved

7.1 Stockport Homes consult customers regularly about policy content, service standards and value for money. Stockport Homes have a Complaints Advisory Panel (CAP), an independent and dedicated group of customers with lived complaints experience. The CAP review closed complaints, considering the customer experience, and make recommendations to changes to process or procedures which benefit customers. If customers would like to get involved, discuss this policy, help make decisions, make a complaint, or leave a compliment, please contact us.

8 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	April 2026	Review of Existing Policy
	2	July 2026	Minor amendments to policy to align with Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment

2	Policy Owner i.e. Executive Director	Director of Customer Services
	Policy Author/s i.e. Head of Service	Head of Customer Voice
	Approved by/date Directorate Management Meeting	Director of Customer Services – 23 rd April 2026 – Decision
	Communication	Team Meeting
	Effective Date - the date of sign-off	23 rd April 2026
	Next Full Review Date i.e. 3 years after effective date, with an annual light touch review	22 nd April 2029

3	<u>Regulatory Standards</u>	Please list the Consumer, Governance, Viability standards and outcomes this policy meets
	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 tenants' views have been considered. <u>1.4 Information about landlord services</u> 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. <u>1.5 Performance information</u> 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.
4	Linked policies/strategies	• Unacceptable Behaviour Policy • Disciplinary Policy, Procedure and Guidance • Compensation Policy
5	Equality, diversity and inclusion	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. 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. The approach encourages early resolution, and the Stage Two stage contains options to tailor the approach to the needs of customers. 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: • 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 • 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	Describe how the customer and/or colleague voice shapes and influences the policy and services
		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. Complaints Advisory Panel (CAP) provide customer views and recommendations for shaping and developing the feedback service.

7	Risk management	This policy helps to mitigate the following risks identified on the Corporate Risk Register
	Corporate Risk 11	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	SHG does not have a range of ways for customers to hear the customer voice and does not utilise customer voice to shape services
	Corporate Risk 8	Stockport Homes does not respond to and learn from complaints effectively and does not listen to the customer voice.

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