

Excel Housing Solutions Ltd



Complaints & Compliments Policy 2024-2025

Excel Housing Solutions (EHS) Complaints Policy

1. Statutory Framework

This policy is owned by the Directorate and is subject to approval by the Board of Excel Housing Solutions Ltd. The Social Housing Act received royal assent on 20 July 2023. The Act gave the Housing Ombudsman the power to issue its Complaint Handling Code on a statutory footing. A new Complaint Handling Code was introduced by the Housing Ombudsman which came into force on 1 April 2024. This Policy has been updated to reflect the changes in the Code.

The Policy will be publicised and accessible via our website and as per the Complaints Handling Code will be made available to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

2. Policy Statement

Excel Housing Solutions strives to deliver excellent services that represent value for money and reflect the changing needs of our diverse customers. We are committed to building and maintaining positive relationships with the people who rely on our services and with each of our stakeholders. We seek to demonstrate our intent around this through the effective handling of complaints and by providing a prompt response to feedback.

We want our complaints process to support us to rebuild trust with our customers where it has been lost and to learn the lessons so that the same issues do not reoccur.

Complaints or dissatisfaction may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in our work or services, this may include customers, residents, representatives of customers or anyone else that is impacted by Excel Housing Solutions and the services we provide. Complaints by a third party working on behalf of Excel Housing Solutions will also be managed under this policy.

Managing and responding to complaints well will enable us to:

- Demonstrate our commitment to our service users and other stakeholders.
- Demonstrate our commitment to providing an excellent standard of service.
- Understand where, why and how an issue has occurred.
- Learn from a situation and prevent it happening again in the future.

This policy is compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code and with the Regulator for the new Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard and the Equality Act 2010.

3. Why do we have a Complaints Policy?

- It helps us to improve services delivered.
- It encourages customers to make a complaint when they are dissatisfied with our services.
- It makes it easy for customers to make a complaint.
- To treat all customers fairly.
- It helps us to identify good practice, recognise areas where improvement may be required and any changes we may need to make.
- If we do something wrong, we want to learn from customer feedback and take action to prevent it from happening again.

Strategic Plan

- Customer Experience-customer feedback and complaints provide an excellent learning opportunity for the wider organisation and an opportunity to put things right when they go wrong.
- Staff Experience-customer feedback and complaints support colleagues to learn and grow and achieve job satisfaction from making improvements that can support us to deliver a better customer experience.

4. Compliments

It is helpful for us to hear about the things that may have gone well. This could be a positive experience you have had or something that you feel we have done well. Hearing your positive feedback helps us to share good practice and ensure that we maintain the highest possible standards of service delivery.

Once received, your compliment and any action arising from it will be acknowledged and responded to within 10 days of receipt.

5. Comments and Service Requests

We seek out and welcome your suggestions or ideas about any of our services. Examples of ideas for improving services would include property maintenance; facilities; resources; activities; fundraising and utilisation of service users' skills.

Once received, your suggestion or idea will be forwarded to the most appropriate person (s) who will consider your suggestion. All suggestions received will be responded to within 10 days of receipt.

A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.

If a resident is dissatisfied with our response to their Service Request, a complaint can be made.

6.Complaints

We are committed to delivering excellent services, but we recognise that at times, for some people things can go wrong. We may make mistakes, or you may not feel entirely happy with an aspect of our service delivery. If this is the case, then we want to hear from you.

Excel Housing Solutions has adopted the Housing Ombudsman Service definition of a complaint:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made and whatever language used, 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.

A complaint or dissatisfaction can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing. Any language that is an expression of dissatisfaction qualifies as a complaint and an individual should be encouraged to submit a complaint.

Service users can if appropriate and they wish to do so, have a third party represent them and attend or accompany them to meetings in relation to the complaint.

Complaints can be made to any member of staff; however the Stage 1 investigation will be led by a Service Manager.

7.Exclusions

This policy does not cover complaints or dissatisfaction from staff, who should use the company Discipline and Grievance policies.

This policy does not cover a complaint that would fall under the Safeguarding from Abuse Policy: Physical Abuse; Sexual Abuse; Financial Abuse; Neglect; Psychological Abuse; Discriminatory Abuse. In these cases, customers may be required to report some matters directly to the Police or Social Services in line with local safeguarding guidance.

Other exclusions may include:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.

- Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.
- Employment Complaints.
- If the complaint relates to a service not provided by Excel Housing Solutions or on behalf of Excel Housing Solutions.
- Insurance Claims.
- Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.

Where we are unable to deal with a complaint through this policy, we will inform the customer in writing and be clear about the reasons why. All rejection letters will include an appeal process and the details of the Housing Ombudsman.

If the Housing Ombudsman subsequently rules that Excel Housing Solutions should accept the complaint, we would then comply with the ruling.

8. Anonymous Complaints.

We will review received anonymous complaints to see if lessons can be learnt or services improved, however we may not investigate under our complaints policy as the ability to conclude successfully is impacted by the anonymity.

We will also provide the details of the Housing Ombudsman Service if they wish to seek advice from the Service or challenge the decision. The Housing Ombudsman Service, if it deems appropriate, can instruct us to take on the complaint. We will comply with any Housing Ombudsman instruction to accept a complaint.

9. Complaints Process

Excel Housing Solutions has a complaints process in place to ensure there is a consistent approach to complaints across all member organisations and to ensure that all complaints are treated seriously and resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

You can use our website contact form to tell us what you think of our services or to describe your experiences during your time with us, alternatively, you can speak to any member of staff. Our website can be found at <https://excelhousingsolutions.org.uk/>

Other ways that you can contact us are:

- By email-
- By telephone-
- By Social Media.
- In writing to our registered Head Office.

Feedback can be given to inform us about whether you have received an excellent service from EHS or have a complaint. It can also be used if you have a suggestion about how we can do something better or if you would like to tell us if we have done something particularly well, or if you think one of our staff members or teams deserve a special 'thank you'.

10.Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure has two stages. We have a Human Resource Team trained to provide support to customers regarding any issues or complaints raised.

Stage 1

A complaint can be raised by using our website contact form, by talking with any member of staff within our services, by contacting a manager, speaking with another trusted professional.

Your complaint will be recorded and acknowledged within **5 working days** of the date of receipt by the relevant Team Manager who will be dealing with your complaint. If it becomes apparent that there is any conflict in relation to the investigator and the complaint or the person making the complaint, the complaint will be reallocated. Supported by the HR Team, they will fully investigate your complaint and will involve the other members of the team where necessary in any decisions regarding the outcome of your complaint.

The investigating officer will:

- Contact the complainant and outline the complaints procedure.
- Discuss our understanding of the complaint to ensure it matches the complaint they wish to make.
- Send a formal acknowledgement of the complaint that includes timescales within which the customer should expect a response.
- Agree communication updates throughout the investigation.
- Conduct a thorough investigation that establishes more information by, reviewing relevant reports, reviewing our systems including CCTV footage, interviewing third parties and visiting premises if required.
- Consider legal obligations of Excel Housing Solutions and the Customer.

Each EHS service will maintain a full log of all complaints received including the outcome, root cause of the complaint and any actions resulting from the complaint. This should include the original complaint and responses to the complainant.

We will provide a full written response from the person dealing with the complaint within **10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged**. If the complaint is going to take longer than this to resolve, the Investigating Officer will write to the complainant to explain the delay and advise them that

there may be a delay up to a maximum of 10 working days. Any delay to the response must be authorised by a member of the Senior Management Team and the HR Directorate.

The outcome of the complaint is that it can be.

- Upheld.
- Partially Upheld.
- Not Upheld.

The outcome will be accompanied by a full explanation based on available evidence and will address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. The complaint is considered resolved once the outcome is shared with the customer. If the complaint has been upheld the correspondence must include how we will put it right and the timescales of when further actions will be completed. We will provide details of future preventative measures and any appropriate compensation if applicable.

If the customer is not satisfied with the response received, or that the complaint has not been resolved, they can request a review and proceed to stage two of the procedure, details of which will be explained within their response letter.

Stage 2

If the customer is unhappy with the response they have received about the complaint, they can request that the complaint is reviewed. They can do this by raising a concern with the Manager appointed to dealing with the complaint, or via the website contact form, providing a summary of the dissatisfaction about the response received.

This must be received within **10 working days** of receipt of the original response sent to you. The HR Directorate will acknowledge the complaint at stage 2 within **5 working days** of receipt, outlining details of the stage 2 process and will assign it to a Senior Manager to investigate. The response will be issued within **20 working days of the acknowledgement**.

The Senior Manager will contact the customer to discuss the case and to discuss next steps. They will look at how the complaint was dealt with and may instigate a further investigation. The senior Manager will engage with all staff members needed to issue a response. They will identify what additional information the customer would like considered, agree communication updates, and provide a full written response outlining the investigation and outcome. The response will include the complaint definition, the decision on the complaint, the reasons for any decisions made, the details of any remedy offered to put things right, details of any outstanding, actions and details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.

How to escalate a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service will be clearly outlined in the stage 2 written response for those customers that remain dissatisfied.

Complaints will only be closed when all agreed actions have been completed. It is the responsibility of the Customer Satisfaction Team to monitor the completion of actions and to formally close each complaint. Each closed complaint is reviewed for training and learning purposes. This process is shared with all staff via Training modules, Team Meetings, Supervisions and Appraisal processes.

Stage 3

If you remain unhappy with the way we have handled your complaint, you may contact the Housing Ombudsman, with whom Excel Housing Solutions are a member of. We will be happy to support you to make this contact if required:

Housing Ombudsman Service

The Housing Ombudsman Service is contactable via:

Complaint form: Fill in the online complaint form <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/>

info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Phone lines are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

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

The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at any point throughout our complaints process for advice and support. When a complaint is escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service it may choose to work with Excel Housing Solutions to resolve the dispute under its early resolution procedure. It may carry out an investigation or refer the complaint to a more appropriate organisation.

Excel Housing Solutions will fully co-operate with the Housing Ombudsman and will provide a summary of all complaints via its Landlord portal.

Failure to provide evidence to the Housing Ombudsman may result in the Service issuing a complaint handling failure order against Excel Housing Solutions Ltd.

11.Compensation/Remedies

When we get things wrong, we will apologise and consider an appropriate remedy. This is important in helping us to rebuild the trust we may have lost.

Examples of remedies include:

- Changing a decision.
- Amending a record.
- Providing a financial remedy/compensation.
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

Any remedy offered will reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the customer as a result. Compensation may be offered where there has been a financial loss. The remedy offer will set out proposals and timelines to completion and must be agreed with the recipient.

12.Confidentiality

Complaints will be received and managed with confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations. If the complaint is about a colleague, group of colleagues or a partner agency, we will not reveal the customers identity if they don't want us to. However, the nature of the complaint may make the customer identifiable.

13.Use of Discretion

On occasion, we may use some discretion in applying this policy based on individual circumstances and the requirement to comply with legislation. Any discretion will be applied fairly in the best interests of resolving the complaint for the customer. If the customer remains dissatisfied with our decision, we will provide the details of the Housing Ombudsman so that they can seek further advice and support.

14.Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Excel Housing Solutions will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the need to make reasonable adjustments. This means that we may flex our services and policies to support customers more appropriately. This could include requests such as support from a third party or providing different communication methods to aid understanding.

We will keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a service user has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.

15.Equality Impact Assessment

An EIA was carried out as part of the policy development process and learnings noted and added to policies and procedures.

16.Roles and Responsibilities

Under this policy, the following people detailed below have the following responsibilities.

Board- Ensure effective implementation of the policy.

HR Director/Director of Services- Ensure effective implementation of the policy.

HR Manager-Ensure effective management of the Process.

Director of Operations -Oversee Stage 2 Investigation process.

Service Managers -Oversee Stage 1 Complaints Investigation.

17.Assurance

The Board have a member who now has specific responsibility for monitoring and auditing the complaints handling process and ensuring Excel Housing Solutions complies with the required legislation.

Complaints regarding performance and the monitoring of this policy is the responsibility of the Director of Operations and the Director of HR and Finance. Quarterly reports will be provided to the Senior Management Team and six-monthly reports will be provided to the Board.

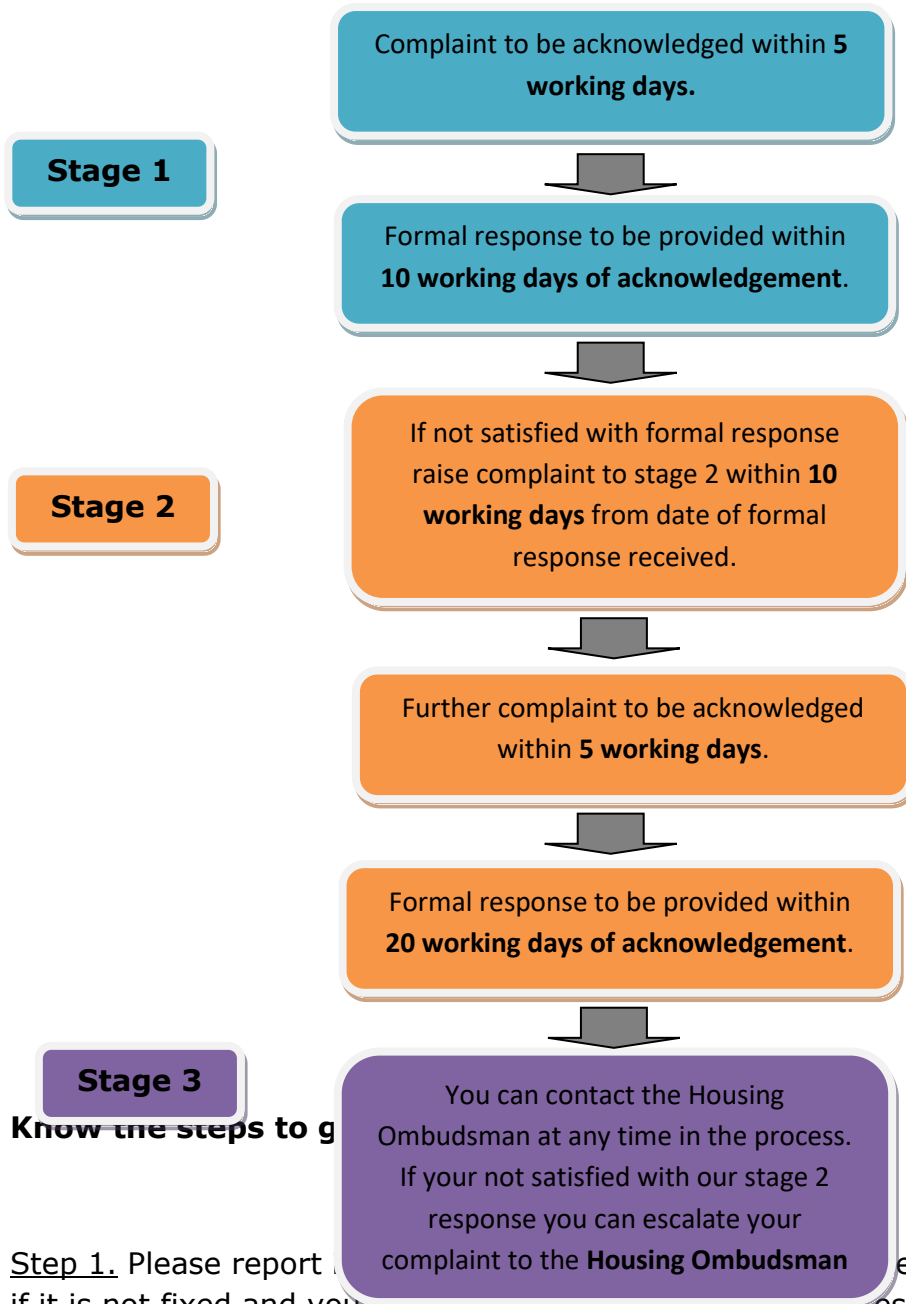
18.Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking.

Excel Housing Solutions has a modern slavery & human trafficking statement that enables us to identify and deal/report with modern slavery and human trafficking.

Supporting policies include:

- Whistleblowing Policy.
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Anti-fraud and Bribery Policy.
- Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Co-operation Agreements.
- Code of Conduct.

Appendix 1-Complaint Process Chart:



Know the steps to go

Step 1. Please report () procedure stage 1. Then, if it is not fixed and you are not happy with our response, escalate to...

Step 2. Inform us that you are not happy with our review, and you wish to have the decision reviewed. If you're unhappy with our stage 2 final response escalate to...

Step 3. Escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, the details are available within the response to the stage 2 complaint.

The Housing Ombudsman is impartial, will investigate fairly and can order your landlord to act.

Satisfaction Surveys

After a complaint has been dealt with, we will send each complainant a satisfaction survey form to feedback how the complaint was dealt with and to specify how to escalate the complaint if needed. They will be provided following completion of each stage of the complaints process and all returned satisfaction surveys should be kept with the original complaint as part of the complaints log and for future learning purposes.

Where appropriate, we may also send forms out by SMS or email for ease of completion.

APPENDIX 2 – SATISFACTION SURVEY

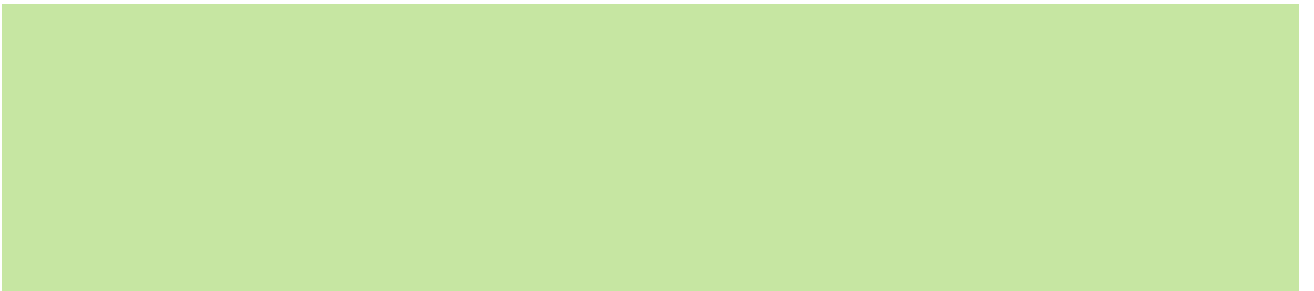
DATE	
PRINT NAME	

Are you satisfied with the outcome?

Are you happy with the way your complaint was dealt with?



Any other comments/Anything we could have done better?



SIGNATURE
