

Housing Customer Feedback Policy

2025



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Housing Customer Feedback Policy sets out how Housing Services deals with customer feedback in the form of complaints, compliments, or comments. South Kesteven District Council Housing Services is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, and complies with the Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code and any findings or recommendations they make.
- 1.2. The term 'customer' includes those living in any of our council housing properties, leaseholders, shared owners, applicants for housing and any person or organisation to who we provide a housing service or have a legal or contractual obligation.

2. Complaints, Compliments and Comments

- 2.1. We term customer feedback as covering complaints (i.e. dissatisfaction with our service), compliments (i.e. satisfaction with our service) and comments (i.e. general feedback on our service).
- 2.2. The word 'complaint' does not need to appear in customer feedback for it to be treated as a complaint. All feedback will be reviewed, and if identified as a complaint, it will be addressed in accordance with this policy.
- 2.3. A complaint may also arise when a person is dissatisfied with the way a service request has been handled

3. Legal framework

- 3.1. This policy meets the Regulator for Social Housing requirement for an approach for dealing with complaints that is accessible, clear, and transparent. In doing so it complies with the key requirements of the:
 - Localism Act 2011
 - Section 2 of the Housing Act 1996
 - The Regulator for Social Housing Regulatory Framework
 - The Housing Ombudsman Service

- Data Protection Act 2018 & GDPR
- Equality Act 2010

4. Equality statement

- 4.1. We are committed to promoting equality and ensuring customers and employees are treated fairly. We will support customers in submitting feedback, where requested, to ensure everyone is able to provide feedback (e.g. due to language or disability issues). We will monitor all feedback to ensure our approach is fair and accessible to all customers.
- 4.2. We will consider any request from a resident to provide this policy in an accessible format that meets their needs. This may include translation into another language or an alternative format.
- 4.3. Where a customer is unable to make the complaint themselves, we will accept complaints from a representative and address the complaint through them, providing we have the customer's permission to do so and in line with the data protection requirements.

5. Confidentiality

- 5.1. All information will be collected and stored and managed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018.
- 5.2. Details of a complaint will only be provided to employees of South Kesteven District Council and appropriate representatives to provide a response to the complainant's feedback.

6. What is a complaint

6.1. The Housing Ombudsman defines a complaint as:

6.2. *“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.”*

6.3. This includes dissatisfaction with:

- The quality of service offered, or work carried out
- The action or lack of action carried out while carrying out a service
- The attitude or behaviour of those providing a service or doing work
- Missed appointments
- Failure to comply with policies, procedures, or service standards
- Failure to provide information when requested that a complainant has a right to
- A decision we have made or delayed in making
- Failure to respond to a previous complaint
- Where it is feedback from a consultation or survey we have sent as part of a consultation or feedback

7. What is not a complaint

7.1. There are several reasons why we may determine feedback does not come under this policy. Where this is the case, we will inform the customer and explain our reasons for this. The most frequent reasons for this are when the complaint is:

- An initial request for a service or work to be carried out (this is a service request and will be dealt with through our service delivery). Examples include reporting a neighbour dispute or asking for a repair to be carried out.

- An appeal of a housing decision made regarding offers of accommodation or priority on the housing register, housing applications (these are classed as reviews).
- A dispute relating to rents or service charges.
- An appeal against decisions or services where there is another appeal process (such as disrepair) or where there are alternative statutory appeal or tribunal processes (such as appeals against statutory notices).
- A complaint from customers who do not use our service or relating to a service we do not provide – these will be decided on an individual basis.
- A complaint about something that has occurred more than 12 months ago and not previously reported to us.
- Where legal proceedings have started and papers filed at court.
- Where an insurance claim has been made against us.
- Where a complaint has been made and closed previously under our complaints process.
- There may be other reasons why we do not treat feedback as a complaint.

7.2 When we notify the complainant that their complaint has been closed or not accepted, we will explain their right to take the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

8. How to complain

- 8.1. Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the issue has occurred. It is important to provide clear details about the reason for the complaint and the outcome the complainant wishes to achieve.
- 8.2. Complaints may be made at any time within 12 months of the issue occurring or within 12 months of the complainant being made aware of the issue.
- 8.3. Complaints made after 12 months of the issue occurring or being aware of it will be considered on an individual basis. The complainant will be informed of the decision on this, with an explanation.

8.4. A complaint can be made using any of the following methods:

- Filling in the online form on the SKDC website at www.southkesteven.gov.uk/feedback under [Complaints, compliments and comments](#)
- Emailing Customer Services, at customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk
- By calling Customer Services on 01476 406080
- In writing or in person to:

**Customer Services,
South Kesteven District Council
The Picture House
St Catherine's Road
Grantham
Lincs
NG31 6TT**

The Customer Service centre is open to the public - Monday to Friday; 9am to 3pm)

Telephone times: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday – 8:45am to 5:15pm,

Wednesday 8:45am to 4pm, Friday 8:45am to 4:45pm

- In person at:
- **South Kesteven Community Point**
3 Abbey Road
Bourne
PE10 9EF

Open to the public: Monday 9am to 5pm, Wednesday 9am to 6pm, Friday 9am to 1pm, Saturday: 9am to 1pm

Telephone times: as for Grantham office above

- Direct to a Council officer (e.g. housing officer, repairs operative, customer services advisor)
- Direct to your local District or Town Councillor
- Via the Council's Facebook page at <https://m.facebook.com/southkdc>
Complaints made via social media will be dealt with in the same way as other complaints. We will make sure we are speaking to the complainant and will discuss the complaint directly with them, rather than through social media. As social media pages are visible to the public, private or personal information, including information relating to others, will not be posted on these sites.

9. **Who can complain?**

- 9.1. We accept complaints from anyone who is affected by any work or service we provide as a social landlord to our tenants. This includes work carried out on our behalf by contractors.

Complaints made about non housing related issues will be forwarded to the relevant department.

- 9.2. Complaints may be made by tenants or members of their household, neighbours of our tenants or those applying to us for housing or contacting us for housing advice. Complaints may also be made by representatives on behalf of the complainant, but we would need their permission to deal with this on a complainant's behalf.

- 9.3 A complaint submitted by a third party or another representative on behalf of the complainant will be handled in accordance with this policy.
- 9.4 Complaints submitted by Councillors and MPs on behalf of a constituent, or made to the Chief Executive or a Director, will be treated as a new complaint and dealt with through the complaint process. Should this relate to an existing complaint, the two complaints will be dealt as one and the Councillor or MP kept updated. In such cases, we will respond to both the complainant and Councillor or MP.
- 9.5 Where a complaint is made by a representative of the complainant, including a Councillor or MP, and is not linked to an existing complaint made by the complainant, we will respond to the representative only.
- 9.6 Anonymous complaints will be followed up, but we may not be able to respond to these due to insufficient information.

10. How we deal with complaints

- 10.1 We understand some issues can be dealt with quickly and at the 'initial point of contact'. Where possible, we will try to resolve an issue when we are informed of it. If the person remains unsatisfied with this response or they do not wish to have their issue dealt with in this way, it can be dealt with as a complaint.
- 10.2. Complaints are dealt with through a two-stage process as explained below.
- 10.3. All complaints are logged onto our complaints management system, and an acknowledgment will be sent to the complainant within five working days.
- 10.4 The acknowledgement will include a summary of the complaint, and the outcomes being sought if provided. It will also clarify, where necessary, which aspects of the complaint fall within our responsibility. If needed, we will request further clarification from the complainant.
- 10.5 Where a complaint is raised and requires actions to be carried out before it is resolved, such actions will not be delayed or affected by the complaint being open.

11. Closing a Complaint

We will close a complaint:

- when we have completed our investigation and sent a response.
- If there is no further correspondence from the complainant within 20 working days of the response being sent, at either Stage 1 or Stage 2.
- When the complainant has told us they do not wish to take it any further
- When a resolution has been agreed between the complainant and the Council. If we fail to do as we say we would, the complaint can be reopened at the stage at which it was closed and continue as a complaint.
- The matter is part of a legal ruling or in litigation
- We have explained there is nothing more we can do to resolve the matters
- The complainant acts in an unreasonable manner in their demands or refuses to cooperate with us in resolving the matter

11.2 We will inform the complainant that the complaint is being closed and our reasons for this. The complaint may be reopened if there is sufficient reason such as new information relating to the initial complaint.

11.3 When we notify the complainant that their complaint has been closed or not accepted, we will explain their right to take the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

11.4 Where a complaint is closed at Stage 1, the complainant can request to have it escalated to stage 2 even if we have said no further action can be taken.

12. Complaints Process

12.1. The complaint process consists of two stages, after which the complaint is considered to have been dealt with through our complaint process.
Complaints will be acknowledged within five working days.

13. Stage 1 – Initial resolution.

- 13.1. The complaint will be assigned to a 'lead officer' within the housing service who will investigate the complaint and provide a 'Stage 1 response' within **10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged. Where a complaint relates to more than one service area, the lead officer will coordinate the investigation across these areas and provide the final response.
- 13.2. When resolving a complaint requires certain actions, we will inform the complainant about the resolution and the agreed actions and keep them updated as needed.
- 13.3. Where we are unable to respond within 10 working days, the lead officer will contact the complainant and explain why and give a new date by which a response will be given. This must be no more than a further 10 working days from when they contact the complainant, subject to their agreement.
- 13.4. If we are unable to resolve a complaint by the deadline, we will talk to the complainant about extending the deadline and agree on how to keep them updated on the progress.
- 13.5. If new information is provided during a complaint, we will decide whether to include it as part of the original complaint or treat it as a new complaint. The decision will consider whether the new information is related to the original complaint or different enough to be separate, and whether adding it would cause an unreasonable delay in our response. We will explain our decision to the complainant.

14. Escalation of Complaint

- 14.1. If the complainant wants us to review their case at Stage 2, they need to tell us within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 1 complaint response. They do not have to say why, but if they do not give a reason, we will ask them. We will still move the complaint to Stage 2 even if they do not explain
- 14.2. If the request is made after the 20 days period, we will consider it case-by case and let the complainant know our decision with an explanation.

15. Stage Two of the Complaints Process

15.1. Stage 2 – Review stage 1 response.

If the complainant is not happy with the Stage 1 response, they can ask for a review at Stage 2. They do not have to say why they want to escalate but, we may ask for further information during the Stage 2 process.

15.2. Stage 2 reviews are carried out by a senior manager. We will acknowledge the request and inform the complainant that it is being dealt with at Stage 2 within **five working days**. The request will be assigned to a senior manager who will review the response and may contact the complainant for further information. We will respond within **20 working days** from the date of the complaint acknowledgement.

15.3 The acknowledgement letter will include a summary of the complaint and the outcomes being sought if provided. It will also clarify, where necessary, which aspects of the complaint fall within our responsibility. If needed, we will request further clarification from the complainant.

15.4 If resolving a complaint requires certain actions, we will inform the complainant about the resolution, explain the agreed actions and provide updates as required.

15.5. If we cannot respond in time, we will contact the complainant to explain why and set a new response date within 20 working days

15.6. The stage 2 response will explain the outcome of the review and any further actions that may be needed to resolve the complaint. If more actions are needed, the complainant will be kept updated on the progress.

15.7 Stage 2 is the final stage in our complaints process. The response will explain what the complainant can do if they are still not satisfied, including how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

16. Escalation after stage 2

Housing Ombudsman

- 16.1. The Housing Ombudsman Service acts as an independent body to support tenants in making a complaint to their landlord by providing advice. A complainant can contact the Ombudsman at any time during the complaint for advice, but they will not deal with the complaint until the Council's formal complaint procedure has been exhausted. They will inform the Council of the complaint and ask us to address it through this complaints process. The complainant also has the right to contact the Ombudsman if we have not responded to it in the time we gave, and we have not contacted the complainant beforehand regarding any delay.
- 16.2. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Council's final stage 2 response, they have the right to refer the complaint to the Ombudsman any time after they have received their final response.
- 16.3. The Ombudsman will contact the Council for further information on the complaint and review the response and how it was managed. Once they have completed their review, they will write to both the Complainant and the Council with their response. We will comply with their determinations and act in line with any recommendations they make.
- 16.4. The Ombudsman decisions are final and there is no right of appeal.
- 16.5. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 1484

Unit D

Preston

PR2 0ET 0300

111 3000

info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Further information on the Housing Ombudsman can be found at:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>

17. Unreasonable behaviour/complaints

17.1. We acknowledge that submitting a complaint can be a cause of stress and frustration. However, where complainants act in an unreasonable manner, we will consider our approach accordingly. Where we take such action, we will inform the complainant and explain how they can access our services under the restrictions placed on them.

17.2. We will consider action in the following situations:

- **Unreasonable behaviour** – Aggressive or abusive language or actions are not acceptable. This includes threats insulting remarks or making unfounded allegations.
- **Unreasonable demands** – This happens when the complainant makes unreasonable requests about how often or how they are contacted, insists on speaking only to specified officers without good reason, raises unrelated issues, or changes the complaint without explanation.
- **Unreasonable persistence** – This includes refusing to accept the complaint decision when no further action can be taken, rejecting our advice about what to expect, or continuing to complain without new evidence or reasons.

17.3. Action will only be taken regarding the above issues where attempts to address the complaint through the complaints process have been unsuccessful and the behaviour persists after the complainant has been informed of their unreasonableness

17.4 The organisation will have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 when taking any action

17.5 If such action is necessary, the complaint will still be handled according to this complaints policy.

- 17.6 If such action is needed, we will try to resolve the issue by talking to the complainant to find a solution that both Council and complainant agree on.
- 17.7 If no agreement can be reached, a panel of senior management may take formal action and decide on the most appropriate way to manage the situation.
- 17.8 The options that may be considered include those below as laid out in the Housing Ombudsman 'Managing unacceptable behaviour policy':
- providing a single point of contact
 - limiting contact to a single form ie to writing, email or telephone only
 - limiting contact to certain times or to a limited number of times per week or month
 - declining to give any further consideration to an issue unless any additional evidence or information is provided
 - only considering a certain number of issues in a specific period.
- 17.9 The complainant will be informed of the decision made by the above and how long this action will be in force.
- 17.10 Where such action is taken, the complainant may appeal or make a complaint about such measures or refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman following such an appeal.

18. Monitoring and learning from complaints

- 18.1. Complaints are important to us as they help us identify where we may be able to improve and change how we deliver our services. We will record all complaints and monitor them in terms of their subject and how we dealt with them. We will use this information to help us learn from complaints and improve service delivery. We will also ask customers for their feedback on how we handled their complaint and use this to help us improve our complaints process.
- 18.2. We will report on this through the Corporate Management Team and relevant committees, and to our tenants through our website and the tenant's newsletter.

19. Where this policy can be found

19.1. This policy will be made available on our website and copies will be placed in our customer services centres. Copies will also be placed in our sheltered housing schemes. Information on how to complain will be part of the tenant's handbook and will be featured in our tenant's newsletter, Skyline.

Feedback received

