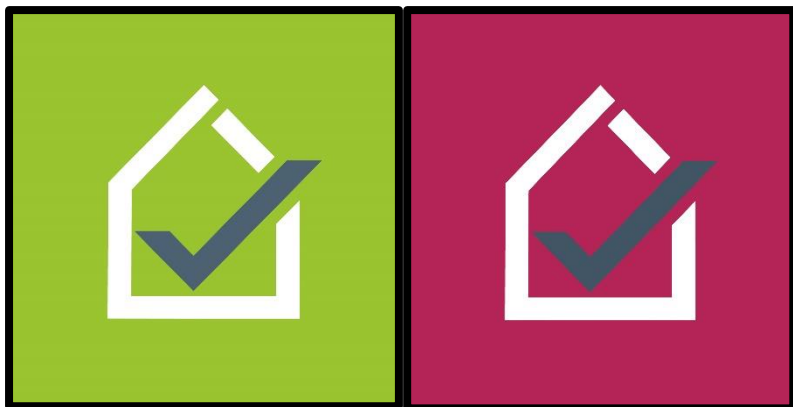




## COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENT PROCEDURE



**MONITORING INFORMATION:**

<b>POLICY/PROCEDURE/STRATEGY:</b>	<b>COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENT PROCEDURE</b>
<b>DATE APPROVED:</b>	<b>JUNE 2024</b>
<b>EXPIRY DATE:</b>	<b>JUNE 2027</b>
<b>OWNER:</b>	<b>HEAD OF CUSTOMER INSIGHT &amp; EXPERIENCE</b>
<b>APPROVAL ROUTE:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM</b>

# Complaint and Compliment Procedure

## Procedure

### What is a complaint?

The Housing Ombudsman defines a complaint as;

“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”.

Not all expressions of dissatisfaction are complaints; many are requests for information, advice, or repairs requests, this is where the customer raises their dissatisfaction giving us the opportunity to Make Things Right for example.

A customer calls in to report a water leak they express their dissatisfaction as water has flooded their floor, this is the first time they have called to report the leak, this call is a request for a repair, though dissatisfied the customer is not making a complaint at this stage.

### The Aim:

The aim of the complaints process is to use clear, high quality, communications from the beginning to the end to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and learn from our mistakes, so they are not repeated.

Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild’s approach to a complaint is to reach a resolution as soon as possible with a focus on Making Things Right

### Receiving complaints:

Complaints may be received by any means:

- letter
- email
- web form
- social media
- over the telephone
- in person whilst a member of staff is on site or visiting

Any member of staff may receive a verbal or written complaint, they will need to process and understand the information being shared with them, decide if it is a service request or a complaint and advise the customer of any of the following where appropriate:

If the complaint is regarding - Noise Nuisance, Dog Fouling, Parking, or any issue with neighbours` Teign Housing do not class them as a complaint. They are identified as tenancy issues and are captured within our Anti-Social Behaviour policy & procedure.

Staff will need to advise and guide the customer to the Anti-Social Behaviour Reporting page, or the staff member can offer to complete the form for them during the call. We should also advise the customer that if they are not satisfied with the way the issue is dealt with by the relevant team then they could look to raise a complaint at that point. This could potentially be a complaint about our handling of the issue, service delivered or lack of action.

Where complaints are received from someone acting on behalf of the customer, we will need to ensure we have the permission of the customer to discuss with the third party. Where permission cannot be gained the complaint may be investigated and information shared with the third party in line with DPA

'Make Things Right' stages 1 and 2 are open to tenants, leaseholders, shared owners, and applicants who receives or requests a service from Teign Housing or Templer HomeBuild including anyone acting on their behalf. Anyone making a complaint that has no connection to Teign Housing or its services will only be taken through to Stage 1 of our procedure.

We will not investigate a complaint if:

- It is a request for service, action, or information.
- It is a report of Antisocial Behaviour, Noise Nuisance, Dog Fouling, Parking, or any issue with neighbours (Unless the issue relates to how we have handled it).
- It is a matter that has previously been investigated and resolved under our complaint's procedure.
- The complaint is about an incident over 12 months old.
- It relates to matters that are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings.
- It is a query about a policy (unless the issue relates to failure to comply with the policy).

- It relates to concerns about the level of rent/service charge or the amount of the rent/service charge increase (depending on whether a rent/tenancy is secure/affordable/social, customers can appeal to the government about their level of rent or service charge; customers can contact their housing officer in the first instance for information).
- It relates to concerns from leaseholders and shared owners about the reasonableness or increase of service charges (they may be able to appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal see: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/residential-property#leasehold> or for advice is available from the Leasehold Advisory Service at <https://www.lease-advice.org/>).
- Any issues are being pursued in an unreasonable manner.
- They are issues that the Ombudsman has already decided upon.

In all these cases clear communication with the customer, stating the reasons we are declining to raise as a complaint will be sent to them in writing (email or letter).

#### **Procedure:**

If the customer makes a complaint, the staff member must:

- Thank them for taking the time out to raise their concerns and apologise that the tenant has had to make a complaint and/or for how the issue has made the customer feel.
- Complete the online 'Make things right' form.
- Advise the tenant that this has been completed and that they will be contacted within the next 5 working days.
- If the customer requires information to be provided in a particular format, we will accommodate this request. for example, larger print, information in their first language, an interpreter etc.

#### **Make Things Right Stage 1 - Investigation**

Any member of staff at Teign Housing or Templer HomeBuild receiving a request to log a complaint will record the details on the 'Make Things Right' online form and advise the customer that they will be contacted within 5 working days from receipt of the complaint by the investigating member of staff. The customer must be advised of the two-stage formal complaint process, so that they are aware of their right to escalate their complaint if they do not feel it is successfully resolved at any stage.

The Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager will be the main point of contact throughout this stage for Customers and staff. They will assist the investigating officer to:

- Contact the customer within 5 working days of receiving the complaint and agree an action plan to investigate the complaint. They will identify any reasonable adjustments that may be required for the customer to ensure all stages are accessible for them. The process of agreeing an action plan may include a telephone call, email conversation, Video call via Microsoft Teams or a face-to-face meeting. This will be led by the customer and what their preferences are.  
An Acknowledgement and Action plan (*Template: Acknowledgement Action plan stage 1*) will be sent to the Customer
- Ascertain what information and investigation is required and a timeframe for them to work within, this is to ensure that we can respond to the customer within 10 working days.
- It is the responsibility of all staff to complete their investigations and supply information. They must work within the agreed timeframes in order for us to comply with the complaints timeline and deliver the agreed service to our customers. This is to ensure that it complies with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Code. Failure to comply can result in a Complaint Handling Failure Order.
- The requirement of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code is to investigate and complete the action plan within 10 working days. Where there is good reason, this may take longer to complete. It will be the assigned staff member's responsibility to communicate any extension needed with a valid reason to the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager. The customer must be kept informed in writing by the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager and they must be given the Housing Ombudsman contact details.
- The assigned staff member will investigate the complaint and feedback to the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager their findings and proposed resolution in writing within the agreed timeframe. Staff who have not discussed timeframe issues with the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager to agree adjustments required or do not comply, will be reported to their line manager. All staff are accountable within a Complaint Handling Failure Order from the Ombudsman.

- Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild will provide good services in line with our service standards. If we fail to do this, we will carefully consider how best to compensate the customer either in the form of compensation or a good will gesture (without prejudice). Should compensation be offered it will need to be awarded on a case by case within the Compensation Policy and Procedure. Customers should not have to wait unduly for teams to agree cost codes etc. The award will be made and paid (where accepted) within the time frames agreed in the complaints policy and procedure.
- The Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager is responsible for recording and logging all correspondence for each complaint. Lessons learned, actions required, and actions taken will also be recorded. This will provide data for analysis and identifying trends and areas of non-compliance across the business.
- Once the action plan has been completed the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager will contact the customer. They will confirm that the agreed action has taken place with investigation feedback, the lessons learned, and actions taken. (*Template: Response Stage 1*) The tenant has 10 working days to agree they are satisfied or to request to escalate to Make Things Right Stage 2.

A complaint will not usually be escalated if we are still answering queries raised by the customer or if there are issues being resolved (such as ongoing works).

### **Resolving complaints at Making it Right Stage 1**

- If we have not heard from the customer within 10 working days of resolving the complaint, the complaint will be identified as resolved on the system.
- At this point a satisfaction survey will be undertaken by the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager to gain feedback about the complaint process. Email is the preferred method if available. If not, a telephone satisfaction survey will be attempted three times. If that is unsuccessful a written survey will be posted.
- The resident Chatt group and Resident Voice Champion from the Board of Directors will periodically review a sample of the complaint responses to provide constructive feedback and ensure lessons are learned.

## **Make Things Right Stage 2 - Review**

Stage 2 should be used to review the complaint if the customer is not satisfied with the initial Make Things Right stage 1 response.

The complaint will be escalated on the housing management system by the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager.

This investigation will be undertaken by a manager who may be from a different business area than the complaint focus. The complainant is asked in the stage 1 response letter: If requesting escalation to stage 2, do they give permission to share information of the complaint with an involved customer. The customer will be assigned (if appropriate) to work alongside the manager to review the stage 1 outcome and review it from a customer's perspective. This allows the review to consider the impact that the complaint and resolution may have had on the complainant. The information shared will be anonymised no names or addresses will be shared.

- The assigned manager will contact the customer within 5 working days to inform them of their intention to investigate (*Template: Acknowledgement Action plan stage 2*)
- The Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager will provide the manager with a detailed history of the complaint within the 5 working days of the complaint being escalated to stage 2. Data Protection regulations will be adhered to when sharing information with other involved customers.
- The customer will be invited to discuss with the Manager virtually, face to face, email or over the phone depending on the customer's preference.
- The Senior Manager will look at all the evidence previously presented and hear from the staff who investigated the complaint at Making it Right Stage 1, a Technical Expert if required (who may be a member of staff or an independent person) as well as the customer.
- They will assess if there have been any administrative errors or misjudgements. They can only change the outcome of the complaint within the policies and procedures of the organisation.
- They will discuss the complaint with the involved customer and consider their perspective / expectation as a tenant regarding the initial investigation and response to the complaint. This feedback will help the final decision of the manager, involved customer input will be logged but not shared with the complainant.

- The manager will make their decision and write to the complainant to notify them of the outcome including any further lessons learned and required actions, within 20 working days of the acknowledgement of escalation (*Template: Response Stage 2*). The response will include the Housing Ombudsman contact details.
- The Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager is responsible for recording and logging lessons learned, actions required, and actions taken. This will provide data for analysis and identifying trends and areas of non-compliance across the business.

### **Resolving complaints Making it Right Stage 2**

- If we have not heard from the customer within 20 working days of resolving the complaint, the complaint will be logged as resolved
- At this point a satisfaction survey will be undertaken by the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager to gain feedback from the complaint process. Email is the preferred method if available. If not, a telephone satisfaction survey will be attempted three times and if that is unsuccessful a written survey will be posted.
- The investigating officer will be sent a Lessons Learnt for to complete which includes a section for the agreed action plan with timescales.
- The resident CHATT (Complaints Handling At Teign and Templer) group and Resident Voice Champion from the Board of Directors will periodically review a sample of the complaint responses to provide constructive feedback and ensure lessons are learned.

### **Challenge Housing at Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild (CHATT) Group**

- Quarterly a Group of involved customers will meet with the Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager (RM) to discuss each complaint. This will be anonymised but will allow the group to monitor the trends and lessons learned. They will be able to challenge the RM as appropriate if they feel the customer's voice has not been heard or we have not acted as we should. Their role is to add a customer's perspective to all communications, decisions and responses during the complaints road map which will enable learning and potentially shape any changes to the process for discussion during future self-assessments.

### **What to do if still unhappy with resolution offered after both stages of the complaint have been completed:**

Customers should be advised to contact The Housing Ombudsman Service and responses will include contact details for the Housing Ombudsman. The Ombudsman must decide what



is “fair in all the circumstances”. The Ombudsman aims to work with tenants and landlords by making suggestions to resolve complaints. The Ombudsman only investigates complaints where they decide an investigation is proportionate to the circumstances and evidence, for example complex complaints involving many issues. [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

### **Suspending the complaints process**

The Customer Insight & Resolutions Manager may decide to suspend the complaints process. This may be because:

- An appeal body, tribunal or insurance company is dealing with the issue
- Matters in the complaint are subject to legal proceedings
- There is no value in investigating it
- There is a more effective way of resolving the complaint such as mediation
- The Contact Management policy is used
- The complainant is demanding outcomes outside the remit of the complaints process
- The complainant is submitting repeat complaints, either the same or with variations or additions
- The complainant raises an old complaint within a valid new complaint
- The customer will not communicate in person or by telephone on a complex complaint

The decision to do so must be taken by a member of the Leadership Team and the customer must be informed in writing of why the process has been suspended, how we will work with them to resolve their issues and any future contact arrangements.

### **Supporting Customers**

- The complainant may have a representative with them at any meeting relating to their complaint. The person cannot be a legal representative but could be a family member; someone from the Citizens' Advice Bureau; someone from a residents' group or an Involved Resident; an advocate
- If English is not the customer's first language, or they have any additional hearing, or visual needs then an appropriate service, (for example translation or interpreting service) will be made available (at no cost to the complainant) if required.

**Mediation**

- At any stage in the procedure, we may consider that mediation between the landlord and the complainant might help resolve the complaint.
- We may also recommend mediation between tenants to support the effective resolution of complaints.
- Mediation can be refused

At the resolution of each complaint, a satisfaction survey will be sent to the complainant and a lesson learnt form will be sent to the investigating officer.

Link to Satisfaction Survey <https://forms.office.com/e/X0eDxra006>

Link to Lesson Learnt form <https://forms.office.com/e/B6zxLMs3vY>

**COMPLIMENTS:**

It is helpful to hear from customers when they are pleased with our services or our staff/contractors; it helps us to focus on what our customers want.

Customers can compliment us via:

- Make Things Right online form
- Letter
- Email
- Telephone
- In Person

Compliments are shared with staff and used to continuously improve our service.

They are also reported quarterly to Executive Team and board.

# Templates

## Complaint Interview

<b>Ref:</b>		
<b>Complainant:</b>		
<b>Name of officer:</b>		
Point of Complaint	Issues to be explored	Response

Other comments/details:



## Complaint Investigation Plan

<b>Ref:</b>	
<b>Complaint:</b>	

Point of Complaint:	Issues to be explored	Evidence Available (obtained)	Evidence Required	How Evidence will be gathered (investigative strategy)	Other comments of observations

## Complaint Investigation – Response Templates



Acknowledgement  
%20letter%20.docx



Acknowledgement  
%20email%20.docx



Stage%201%20Not  
%20upheld%20resp%20upheld%20resp



Stage%201%20Not  
eld%20response%2C



Stage%201%20Up  
eld%20response%2C



Stage%201%20Up  
eld%20response%2C



Stage 2 Response  
email - Upheld .doc



Stage 2 Response  
Letter - upheld.doc



Stage 2 Response  
Letter - upheld (1).d



Stage 2 Response  
email , not upheld.d

## COMPLAINTS USEFUL INFORMATION



Ensure you make a note of the deadline date so that the response does not go out of time.



It's good practice to speak with the complainant, preferably in person but if not, then by telephone, to obtain as much information as you can. It can be difficult for some people to articulate their concerns in a particular format so this is an ideal opportunity to clarify the main issues of the complaint.



If the complaint is from a young person, ensure that you contact them quickly and explain what is happening. Use simple clear language and don't over promise.



Ensure that you plan in dates to speak to the relevant people who can help resolve the complaint. There may be a number of issues within the complaint that are not all related to your own work area. It is best practice for one person to lead and for other people to feed into the investigation so that the complainant does not receive multiple responses so you may also need to plan in meetings with other people outside your service area.



When writing the complaint response, be mindful not to use jargon. Feedback from customers tells us that councils over complicate complaint responses and use terminology that can be confusing. Ensure that you use appropriate language for that person's level of understanding, whether that be from a young person, adult or someone with learning disabilities.



Most Stage 2 requests are as a result of poorly worded, rushed letters. It's important that you plan in the time to write the letter after you have completed the investigation. Without breaching confidentiality, ask a colleague to read through it or manager before sending to the Complaints Officer.



When writing the letter ensure that you have addressed each point raised. Reference what you have used to investigate; letter, meeting with complainant, files. The letter should not be adversarial and should include any remedy or learning to evidence what we will do as a result of the complaint. If the complaint is from a young person, arrange to see them so you can talk through the complaint response in person.



Follow through on your actions, if you saying you are going to do something, do it.



Remember – complaints are an opportunity for us to learn and improve our service!



The final piece of work is NOT the complaint response, it is how we use the learning from the complaint to improve our services.



As the investigating manager, your complaint findings is a crucial part of this process.