



COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICY

January 2021

Complaint Resolution Policy

Introduction

Everyone at Onward Homes is committed to delivering a good customer experience. However, we recognise that from time to time, things can go wrong and this policy explains what we will do to try and put things right.

Our aims are to continuously improve the quality of the services we provide; improve our relationships with customers and operate within our regulatory and legal requirements.

We recognise the diversity of our communities and so we aim to ensure everyone has equal access to our complaints service.

What is a complaint

A complaint is 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.

Examples of complaints include:

- Not delivering a service in line with our agreed standards
- We've done something we should not have done
- You're concerned about the way something has been handled
- Not complied with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

What is not a complaint

Requests for service are not complaints. For example:

- A customer reports a leak has occurred within their home and a repair is required. This could become a complaint if we failed to fix the leak within a timely manner.
- A customer complains their neighbour is playing loud music into the early hours. This could become a complaint if after the customer raised the issue with us, they were unhappy about the way we handled the case.
- A request for information or an explanation of policy or practice.

How to make a complaint

We want to make it easy for our customers to tell us they are not happy with our services, so there are lots of ways to make a complaint.

- Phone: 0300 555 0600
- Online Chat: via our website
- Online: www.Onward.co.uk/compliments-and-complaints/
- SMS and WhatsApp
- Facebook: @OnwardHomes
- Twitter: @Onward_Housing
- Write: Renaissance Court, 2 Christie Way, Didsbury, Manchester, M21 7QY

The standard of our service, the quality of the homes we provide and the satisfaction of our customers is our priority. We encourage you to let us know as soon as possible if you are unhappy with any part of our service.

Any dissatisfaction raised directly to the Chief Executive or Chair will be referred to our Customer Resolutions Team and will follow our Complaints Resolution Policy.

Complaint Stages

Onward has a two stage approach to its Complaint Resolution Policy.





Response Time: up to 10 working days

We will assign customer complaints to our dedicated Customer Resolutions Team. Upon receipt of a complaint, a Customer Resolutions Specialist will contact the customer within two working days. They will:

- Introduce themselves and acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- Explain the complaints resolution process
- May ask for further information to help their understanding of the complaint
- Agree with the customer, how and when they will provide updates on their progress
- Respond to the customer with what actions we will take to resolve the complaint within **10 working days**
- If we need a little more time, they will keep the customer informed throughout

The outcome of all complaints will be confirmed in writing and will clearly set out our understanding of the complaint, our findings and details of how we intend to put things right.

Closing the case

We only close complaints cases when all agreed actions have been completed.

If you remain dissatisfied

If the customer remains dissatisfied after a response at stage1, the customer can ask for a review of their case. This is stage 2 of the process and a Director from Onward will review the case. The customer will be asked to explain the reason why they are not satisfied and what outcomes they are seeking to resolve the case.



Response Time: up to 10 working days

Upon receipt of a request for a review, our Customer Resolutions Team will acknowledge receipt within two working days and confirm the name of the director who will be reviewing the complaint case. The director investigating the complaint (or a nominated representative) at stage 2 will:

- Introduce themselves and acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- Explain the complaints resolution process at stage 2
- May ask for further information to help their understanding of the complaint
- Agree with the customer, how and when they will provide updates on their progress
- Respond to the customer with what actions we will take to resolve the complaint within **10 working days**
- If we need a little more time, they will keep the customer informed throughout

The outcome of all complaints will be confirmed in writing and will clearly set out our understanding of the complaint, our findings and details of how we intend to put things right.

Closing the case

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If you remain dissatisfied

Stage 2 is the last stage within our internal Complaints Resolution Policy. Once a customer has been through the internal process, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.



Although we will make every effort to resolve complaints, if the customer is still unhappy after following our internal process, they can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to review the complaint.

The Housing Ombudsman

To contact the Housing Ombudsman Service, customers can either:

- Ask a Member of Parliament (MP) or a local Councillor to refer the complaint on their behalf within 8 weeks of the final decision at stage 2.
- Contact the Housing Ombudsman directly after 8 weeks of the final decision at stage 2.

Please note: The Housing Ombudsman Service is currently reviewing the current 8 week rule and if this changes we will date this policy.

Contact Details

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square
London, E14 9GE

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Compensation and/or ex gratia payments

- Compensation and/or goodwill gesture payments may be considered where appropriate as part of a resolution to your complaint.
- Where a request for compensation for loss or damage to goods is made, we reserve the right to request evidence of the proof of purchase and condition of the items in question. We may also use fair depreciation guidance to calculate any compensation offered.
- We reserve the right to deduct any agreed compensation and/or goodwill gesture payment from rent arrears (or other monies owed) to Onward Homes.

Exclusions to this policy

Complaints relating to services we do not provide. We do not accept complaints about other landlords, local authorities, government policies or companies that do not provide services on our behalf.

Complaints relating to personal property. We cannot accept complaints about damage to personal property unless it has been caused by something we have done. We advise you take out Home Contents Insurance to protect against any unforeseen incidents.

Legal and/or insurance proceedings. Where a complainant has started court action or an insurance claim against us in respect of the specific issue(s) covered by their complaint, the complaint may be excluded from our complaints process.

Mediation. If a referral for mediation is in progress or has been made, a complaint will be put on hold until the outcome of mediation is known. Subject to the outcome of mediation, the case owner of the complaint will assess whether it is appropriate to resume the complaints process.

Repeat complainants. If the same issue has already been through our internal process, we reserve the right to stop the complaint investigation and close the complaint.

Unacceptable behaviour. Whilst we accept that complaints may be a cause of frustration, we reserve the right to stop engagement with anyone who exhibits behaviour which is abusive or threatening.

Responsibility and Monitoring

The Customer Experience Director is responsible for ensuring this policy is complied with and is reviewed annually to ensure we are meeting our regulatory requirements and that we adopt best practice.

Compliance is reported to and monitored by our Board, Committees and our Operational Management Teams.

Linked documents:	
Date implemented:	
Policy lead:	Lee Worsman, Head of Customer Service Delivery
Approved by:	
Approved on:	
Next review date:	June 2022
Reference number:	COMP01
Version:	2.1
Document replaces:	Onward Homes Comments, Compliments, Complaints Policy V2.1