



## 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 customer or group of customers.

Examples of complaints include:

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

## What is not a complaint

Requests for service are not complaints. For example:

- A customer reports that 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 that 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 convenient and secure ways to make a complaint. (to learn more about how we protect your data and confidentiality, please see our [Privacy policy](#) )

- Phone: 0300 555 0600
- Online Chat: via our website
- Online: [www.Onward.co.uk/compliments-and-complaints/](http://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 internal 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
- Ask (where necessary) 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 the actions we will take to resolve the complaint within **10 working days**
- Advise and keep the customer informed throughout, should we need a longer timescale to respond.

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 a customer remains 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 the 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 at stage 2 will:

- Introduce themselves and acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- Explain the complaints resolution process at stage 2
- Ask (where necessary) 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 the actions we will take to resolve the complaint within **10 working days**
- Advise and keep the customer informed throughout, should we need a longer timescale to respond.

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 cases when all agreed actions have been completed.

## **If you remain dissatisfied**

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



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

### **Designated Person**

A designated person could be an MP, a local councillor or a recognised tenant panel. They can:

- Work with both sides to find a solution
- Say if they think that the solution offered is reasonable
- (Within 8 weeks of the final decision at Stage 2) Refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman service if they think that they are not able to offer a solution or uphold our solution.

More information on designated persons can be found at [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

### **The Housing Ombudsman**

If you don't wish to refer your complaint to a Designated Person, you can wait 8 weeks after the final decision at Stage 2 and contact the Housing Ombudsman directly. You can do this online or in writing. All the information you will need is available through their website:

[Make a complaint - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk).

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

### **Contact Details**

Housing Ombudsman Service  
PO Box 152  
Liverpool  
L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000  
Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)  
Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://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 a customer's 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 do not accept complaints about damage to personal property unless it has been caused by something we have done. We advise you to take out Home Contents Insurance to protect against any unforeseen incidents.

**Legal and/or insurance proceedings.** Where a customer 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 has been made or is in progress 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, updated as required 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:	
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Date implemented:	
Policy lead:	Lee Worsman, Head of Customer Service Delivery
Approved by:	Andrew Kidds, Customer Experience Director
Approved on:	
Next review date:	June 2022

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Document replaces:	Onward Homes Comments, Compliments, Complaints Policy V2.1