



Complaints and Compliments Policy

Document Control							
Valid from	Valid to	Version	Status	Author	Owner	Approval	Description of change
01.12.12	01.12.2015	1.0	Approved	DDH Customer Service Manager	DDH Assistant Director	FHG Board 11.12.12	New Policy
02.12.15	31.12.16	1.1	Approved			Exec Team June 2016	Renewed for 1 year
31.12.16	31.12.19	1.2	Approved	Customer Experience Manager	Customer Services Director	Group Directors Dec 2016	Revised Policy
31.12.19	31.12.21	1.3		Customer Experience Manager	Director of Customer Services		
31.10.20	31.10.23	1.4		Customer Experience Manager	Director of Customer Services		Revised to incorporate the new Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
07.05.21	07.05.24	1.5		Customer Experience Manager	Director of Customer Services		Revised to add an Ombudsman recommendation
01.03.23	01.03.26	1.6	Approved	Customer Services Manager	Head of Customer Operations	Co-Exec April 2023	Revised to ensure our policy is in line with the new Complaints code of conduct.

01.04.24	01.04.27	1.7	Approved	Customer Services Manager	Director of Customer Operations and Experience	Co-Exec March 2024	Revised to ensure our policy is in line with the statutory complaints handling code
Distribution: All team members, contractors/service providers, website							
Other relevant documents:			Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure Compensation Policy Equity and Diversity Policy Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints Policy Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code Housing Ombudsman Service Equality Impact Assessment Housing Ombudsman Service Code Compliance Framework Housing Ombudsman Service self-assessment form				
Comments:							
This confirms that the latest review of this policy has taken account of the following:			New legislation, regulation and best practice has been considered				✓
			The impact of any changes on customer, team members and other relevant groups has been considered in terms of:				
			Equity, diversity and inclusion				✓
			Health, safety and welfare				✓
			Data protection				✓
			Risk management				✓
			Sustainability				✓
Value for money				✓			

Introduction

Futures Housing Group (the Group) and its subsidiaries aims to provide services that meet customer needs. To provide effortless services, resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity and learn from our mistakes. Our aim is to make the process of complaining or complimenting as simple and straightforward as possible.

Policy Statement

The Group sets out to provide high quality services and satisfaction to our customers. This policy provides information on how the Group actions and resolves complaints when Futures or a contractor working on behalf of Futures has failed to meet our service standards and customers feel dissatisfied with the service they have received.

We recognise that when things go wrong, we need to respond quickly and instigate actions to put those things right.

Equally should a customer want to compliment the work we do, or compliment an individual, we will take this information to celebrate service or individual success.

This policy is also intended to assure our customers and the Board that we adhere to the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

Aims of the Policy

- To deliver an effortless and high-quality customer experience.
- To be fair, transparent, and consistent in the way we manage complaints.
- To have a collaborative and cooperative approach to resolving complaints, working with colleagues across the organisation.
- To take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified.
- To put things right (where agreed) as quickly as possible.
- To learn from complaints and make appropriate changes to prevent the recurrence of preventable issues.
- To keep customers informed of progress throughout the process.
- To maintain customer confidentiality.
- To ensure complaints are assigned to a dedicated Complaints Officer.
- To enable customers to access impartial support and advice through guidance and signposting.
- To make compliments and complaints easy to raise.
- To adhere to the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

- To instil customer trust and confidence.

1 Definitions

A complaint is defined by the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code as:

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

This definition is adopted by Futures in its approach to complaints. However, a customer or resident does not need to use the word “complaint” for it to be treated as such. Where service failure is identified by a team member, customer, or 3rd party this will be treated as a complaint. Where it is clear that service failure has not occurred, this will be not be treated as a complaint. If it is identified after the complaint has been accepted, that there is no service failure, this will still be treated as a complaint, but the complaint will not be upheld.

Where dissatisfaction is expressed through a survey, this will not be treated as a complaint. However, as good practice, customers who express dissatisfaction in this way will be advised of how to make a complaint if they wish.

A customer is defined for the purpose of this policy as any person who utilises Futures’ services.

2 Complaints

Complaints from customers will:

- Be dealt with on their own merits, independently and with an open mind
- Give the customer a fair chance to set out their position
- Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
- Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully

A complaint will be raised at the point where the customer expresses that they are dissatisfied with the service, or at the point where a team member or 3rd party identifies service failure. If the service request is ongoing, efforts to complete this will continue alongside an investigation into the complaint.

We aim to resolve complaints first time at stage one, however in some circumstances a customer may wish to appeal a complaint decision and will have their complaint escalated to stage two. If the customer is still not satisfied with the resolution provided at stage two, the customer will be encouraged to follow the next steps of the complaints process, which will be to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

2.1 Exclusion Criteria

Each complaint will be assessed on its own merit. However, if a complaint is identified under any of the following criteria, it will not be accepted under the guidelines of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

- If there are legal proceedings taking place regarding the complaint such as a disrepair case or court proceedings.
- If the issue is over 12 months old, unless this has been an ongoing complaint that has been raised or there is good reason to accept the complaint
- If the same complaint has already been through our full complaints process.

If a complaint is rejected, we will explain using one of the three exclusions above and provide the customer with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

Where the Housing Ombudsman advises a complaint should be have been raised, it will be done so at the point of notification.

2.2 Compliments

A compliment is where praise is given for a service, team, or individual.

A summary of the approach when a compliment is received is detailed below.

We will acknowledge compliments at the time they are made.

We will publish the compliment to the individual/team and Group detailing what the compliment is.

We will use compliments to evidence Group, service, team, or individual success.

3 Who Can Make a Complaint or Compliment?

This policy is applicable to anyone who receives or requests a service from us.

We accept complaints and compliments from family members, local councilors, or other advocates, providing the customer has given authorisation to do so.

Freeholders will be able to raise a complaint which will go through our 2-stage process if requested. *The Housing Ombudsman may still offer advice; however, they will not be able to hear the case or conduct any investigations.*

4 How to Make a Complaint or Compliment.

The Group endeavours to make raising a complaint as easy as possible and

encourages customers through our website and social media and where appropriate in all our communication with customers, to make complaints to enable learning and service growth. Complaints or compliments do not have to be raised in writing. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be expressed via:

Telephone
Letter
Email
Our online self-service portal
Social Media
Website
In person

Where complaints are made over a public forum, we will message customers privately to obtain the information required to carry out a full investigation.

Where the customer would like to be represented by a 3rd party, the Group will liaise with the 3rd party where permission is given by the customer in writing or where an existing permission from the customer exists.

Complaints or compliments can be raised with any member of staff who will pass the information to the appropriate person. In the case of complaints, this will be the Complaints Officer.

5 Our Complaints Process.

The Group aims to resolve complaints first time and as quickly and efficiently as possible. We recognise that every complaint is different, and therefore every complaint will be investigated in a different way whilst maintaining our commitment to fairness, transparency, and consistency. We have adopted a customer focused approach to support complaint resolution. A summary of the approach is detailed below.

- We will acknowledge all complaints either over the phone or in writing within 5 working days.
- We will endeavour to understand, confirm to the customer what our understanding is and what outcome the customer is seeking. Where a home visit is required or requested customers will be contacted to arrange a convenient time and allow the customer to be accompanied if they wish.
- We will review all available evidence through a formal investigation to ensure that the investigation is thorough and fair. Investigations will include all necessary team members to ensure a swift conclusion.
- We will discuss the outcome of the investigation with the customer and provide a written record of this.

- We will complete the formal stage one response within 10 working days of the acknowledgement being sent to the customer. If this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date by which the above will be completed. This will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. The response will include what parts of the complaint the Group is and is not responsible for.
- If a customer requests to go to stage two, we will complete the formal response within 20 working days of the stage two acknowledgement being sent. If this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date by which the above will be completed. This will not exceed a further 20 working days without good reason. The response will include what parts of the complaint the Group is and is not responsible for. The person who considers the complaint at stage 2, will be a different person to the person who considered the complaint at stage 1.
- If additional complaints are made during the 2-stage process that are similar or relevant to the original complaint, these will be incorporated into a single response for timeliness and simplicity.

A complaint will only be prevented from going to stage two if this complaint falls into the exclusion criteria highlighted in Section 2.1.

Where Futures has made a mistake or something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out how we intend to put it right. This may include:

- Making an apology
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons
- Taking action if there has been delay
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Amending a record or adding a correction
- Providing financial compensation
- Changing policies, procedures, or practices

All formal correspondence to the customer will include:

- the complaint stage
- 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
- details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service

Occasionally if a complaint is complex, in order to get the best resolution for the customer, a complaint may fall outside the timescales detailed above. If this is the case, we will agree suitable intervals for keeping the customer informed about their complaint.

6 Complaint Handling Staff

The Group has a designated Complaints Officer who is responsible for complaint handling, liaising with the Housing Ombudsman and ensuring that complaints are reported through the Group's governance structure.

All team members who handle complaints will undergo training from the Housing Ombudsman Service at the earliest opportunity, and when there are any changes to the code.

Operational Managers will be responsible for reviewing and implementing actions where service change or improvement is identified through a complaint or through a theme or trend identified by the Complaints Officer.

The Group is committed to learning from all feedback from customers including complaints and using this feedback to improve services and meet customer's needs.

7 Housing Ombudsman Service

The Group subscribes to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman has the power to consider complaints and decide what is 'fair in all the circumstances of the case'. When things go wrong, they can make orders or recommendations to put things right or to improve services for the future.

Information regarding utilising the Housing Ombudsman Service is available on our website. Customers will be advised throughout the process of their option to access the Housing Ombudsman Service for an independent external review. Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service will be included in all written communication.

The Housing Ombudsman service is unable to hear all complaints as some fall out of their remit, however any FHG customer can contact the Ombudsman for advice and guidance.

In line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, this policy will be publicised on our website.

8 Complaint Closure

If at any stage in our procedure a full response to a complaint has been given and there has not been further contact from the complainant within 14 days, the complaint will be deemed to be satisfactorily closed.

9 Persistent, Unreasonable, Vexatious & Serial Complainers

Regrettably, the Group sometimes receives complaints that are vexatious (aggressive, abusive) serial or unreasonable. If we believe this is the case, we will contact the customer in writing and explain why we have reached this decision. At our discretion, we may give the customer the opportunity to act in a more reasonable manner or we may refuse to progress the complaint. In these instances, we have a separate policy and procedure for team members to follow.

10 Compensation & Goodwill Gestures

Goodwill gestures may be offered on a case-by-case basis dependent upon the nature of the complaint. Goodwill gestures will typically be offered in the form of high street vouchers, chocolates, or flowers.

Where there is a valid claim and evidence for reimbursement of financial loss, a compensation payment may be considered in line with the Compensation Policy.

Where a customer is in arrears with their rent payments, we will decide whether the monetary value of a goodwill gesture will be credited to their rent account.

11 Home Contents Insurance

In the event a customer suffers any loss or damage to belongings due to incidents that Futures Housing Group is not responsible for, such as burst water pipes, leaks, or other issues out of our control, we will advise customers to claim using their own contents insurance if they have this. In the event our actions or delays in responding have resulted in any damage to the customer's belongings then compensation will be considered.

12 Performance Monitoring and Learnings

The Group recognises that complaints provide a valuable source of information to help improve and evolve services. The Group will record and analyse complaints and identify themes and trends to share with the business, stakeholders, and customers. We will use the themes, trends, and learnings from individual

complaints to drive service improvement. This information, along with the number of complaints and adherence to the Complaint Handling Code will be shared with our Insight Committee, published on our website and in our Annual Report. The Chair of Insight Committee will act as the Member Responsible for Complaints and will use the data shared with the Insight Committee to provide assurance to the Board that complaints are being handled effectively.

13 Review

This Policy is due to be reviewed every three years unless there are any substantial changes to legislation or regulation, or circumstances arise which necessitate an earlier review. Any changes to this policy will require a change to the Housing Ombudsman Service Self-Assessment.