



Futures Housing Group Complaints & 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.
01.11.23	01.11.26	1.6	Approved	Customer Services Manager	Head of Customer Operations	Co-Exec November 2023	Revised to ensure our policy is in line with the new Complaints code of conduct.
Distribution/confidentiality				All team members, contractors/service providers			

Other relevant documents:	Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure Compensation & Gestures of Goodwill Policy Compensation & Gestures of Goodwill Procedure EIA Complaints (Dated 23.11.12) EIA Compensation (Dated 23.11.12) Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints Procedure Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
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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 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 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.
- Ensure complaints are assigned to a dedicated Customer Resolution Officer.
- 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
- Instill customer trust and confidence.

1 Definitions

A complaint is defined by the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 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.

2 Complaints

Complaints from customers will be treated fairly, transparently, and consistently. Where a complaint is registered, the complainant will be encouraged to request what resolution they would like.

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

Futures will not accept a complaint if it is identified under the following criteria:

1. If there are legal proceedings taking place regarding the complaint such as a disrepair case or court proceedings.
2. If the issue raised is over 12 months old. Where there is good reason to do so, discretion can be applied to accept complaints outside this time limit.
3. If the same complaint has already been through our full complaints process.

This is in accordance with the guidelines of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. 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.

2.2 Compliments & Improvement feedback

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 councillors, 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.

Customers do not have to put complaints or compliments in writing. Customers can express their dissatisfaction 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.

5 Our complaints process.

The Group aims to resolve complaints first time. 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 endeavor to understand what outcome the customer is seeking.
- We will review all available evidence through a formal investigation to ensure that the investigation is thorough and fair.
- 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 20 days without good reason.
- 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.

- Additional complaints made whilst a customer is going through the two- stage process can be incorporated into the main complaint, to provide a timely response if it is of a similar matter or has relevance to the original complaint.
- At the end of the complaints process the investigating officer will decide if the complaint was upheld or rejected.

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

6 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.

Please note that 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.

7 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.

8 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 procedure for team members to follow.

9 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.

10 Home Contents Insurance

In the event a customer suffers any loss or damage to belongs due to incidents that Futures Housing Group are 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 damages to the customers belongings then compensation will be considered.

11 Performance monitoring and learnings

The Group recognises that complaints and compliments provide a valuable source of information to help improve and evolve services. The Group will record and analyse complaints and publish the volume of complaints and lessons learnt on our website and in our Annual Report. Data will also be shared with our Insight Committee acting on behalf of the Board.

We will utilise the information to drive service improvement / change.

12 Localism Act 2011 (Designated Persons)

Since 1 April 2013, all registered providers have been required to adhere to guidelines as set out in The Localism Act. Tenants of registered providers can request their complaints be considered by a 'designated person' once they complete their landlord's internal procedure. Such a person can be an MP, a local Councillor, or a recognised Tenant Panel.

The designated person may help resolve the complaint directly, may refer the complaint to the Ombudsman, or may decline doing either. In the latter case the complainant may approach the Ombudsman for consideration of the complaint. The complainant may also approach the Ombudsman directly if more than eight weeks have elapsed since the completion of the internal procedure of the landlord, without the need to approach a designated person first.

13 Team member training

The Group is committed to training and developing its team members and will ensure the appropriate team members have the required training to deliver the service through inductions and regular training programs.

14 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.