

Complaints Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Group's vision is "making a difference to people's lives". We aim to do this by delivering the following values:

- Inspire positive change – by using complaints as learning opportunities we will continue to improve services
- Everyone matters – by making sure our complaints is accessible and effective for the diverse customer base we work with
- Communicate clearly – throughout our complaints our aim will be to communicate openly and effectively
- Grow together – working in partnership with customers to improve services and resolve issues.

1.2 We will ensure that we will make our complaints service easily accessible. Complaints can be made:

- In writing to the Wrekin Housing Group;
- By email – complaints@wrekin.com;
- In person – to any of our staff on our Care & Support Schemes or in our main office;
- By telephone – 01952 217100 (or to any member of staff you are calling);
- Through Wrekin's Social Media Accounts;
- Through the My Wrekin app.

1.3 Our complaints process will aim to:

- Be focussed on listening to our customers;
- Be open, respectful and responsive;
- Work closely with customers to understand what we can do to resolve and put things right;
- Keep customers regularly informed and updated;
- Be Collaborative across our teams to provide a seamless approach;
- Always be underpinned by our Values and Code of Conduct;
- Learn from the complaint to identify issues and introduce changes to service delivery where required.

2.0 Policy Statement

2.1 While we aim to get everything right first time, we appreciate that on occasions things might go wrong with a service we have provided or decision we have made. We encourage customers to tell us when something has gone wrong or when they are dissatisfied so we can do something about it and learn to improve services.

2.2 A customer does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such. It is our responsibility to ensure that when a customer says they are unhappy that we advise of our complaints process.

2.3 We will ensure our handling of complaints is fair and reasonable, complies with equality legislation (Equality Act 2010) and aim to meet published timescales unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where we know a customer has a diverse need, we will make reasonable adjustments and consider this within the resolution steps taken.

3.0 Policy Scope

3.1 This policy covers all complaints received by:

- Wrekin Housing Group Tenants or prospective tenants, residents, leaseholders, service users or their advocates and stakeholders;
- The general public;
- Former tenants or service users within 12 months of ending their tenancy or service with the Group.

3.2 Anonymous complaints will be dealt with in the same manner as any other complaint, even though we are unable to correspond or provide feedback with the complainant.

3.3 The following will not be covered within this policy:

- A complaint made by an employee about a matter relating to their employment;
- A complaint already under investigation, or already investigated (unless there is new evidence);
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago – apart from in exceptional cases if there are concerns regarding safeguarding or health and safety issues. Where the problem is recurring, we should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint;
- A complaint relating to anti-social behaviour where a case has not been opened and investigated, not about the service that has been received;
- A complaint that is being dealt with through the Leasehold Tribunal in relation to service charges;
- A complaint arising out of the alleged failure to comply with a request for information under the data protection act and the freedom of information act 2000;
- A complaint that does not relate to our services;
- A complaint where a legal claim is made against the Group, including disrepair cases that have been filed at court and insurance claims – these will be dealt with through our legal and insurance processes;
- A complaint raised that is being treated through the Whistleblowing Policy;

3.4 If we do for any reason refuse to consider a matter as a complaint, we will always explain our decision to the customer and inform them of their rights to take our decision to the correct regulatory service for a review.

3.5 We will however look at each case on an individual basis with the aim of always being open and responsive to all complaints.

3.6 Where a complaint relates to high risk safety concerns, for example, there will be a significant impact to the tenant or property, the Customer Voice and Value Team will oversee this, ensuring the appropriate action is taken and that risk to customers is managed and resolved. The relevant Senior Manager and Executive Director will be made aware of any safety issues that may cause a threat to the customer or have a serious impact.

3.7 Where a complaint is made and there is a safeguarding concern this will be overseen by Wrekin's Safeguarding Lead.

4.0 Roles & Responsibilities

4.1 The Group Board and Customer Committee strategically set direction and ensure they have sufficient assurance through performance information. The Chair of the Customer Committee is the Member Responsible for complaints; ensuring performance and insight is given at Board.

4.2 The Executive Management Group set and drive strategic direction and ensure effective assurance and performance is delivered. They are also responsible for setting a culture of learning and transparency. The Executive Director of Business Solutions is the named person for Consumer Standards and the Head of Customer Voice & Value oversees the design and delivery of policies.

4.3 The Customer Voice and Value Team will design the complaints process and advise staff across the business on requirements. They are responsible for contact with the Housing Ombudsman Service.

4.4 Senior Managers and Service Managers will have the responsibility of resolving complaints at Stage 1 and 2 of the complaints process. They also have a central role in learning within their services and for those that may cut across the business.

5.0 Definitions

5.1 We will define a complaint as the following but understand that not all complaints can be described in the same way:

'A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made. It could be about the standard of service provided or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents'.

5.2 We will recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. A service request is a request from a customer to the organisation requiring action

to be taken to put things right. Service requests are not complaints but we will record, monitor and review these regularly. We will raise a complaint if the service request is not responded to in a satisfactory way.

- 5.3 Where a person makes a complaint on behalf of a person who lacks capacity within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 2005, the Group must satisfy that the representative is making the complaint in the best interests of the person they are complaining for.
- 5.4 When a person makes a complaint on behalf of someone, we will need to ensure that our tenant, resident or service user has given permission for us to discuss their case, or any details relating to their case, with their advocate or the person making the complaint. This ensures that we meet the Equality Act 2010 legislation.
- 5.5 Complaints are seen as a learning opportunity. Any customer making a complaint will be treated with the continued level of respect we show to all of our customers. In particular, peoples care and treatment will not be affected if they make a complaint or if somebody complains on their behalf.
- 5.6 The Group will act in accordance with Regulation 20: Duty of Candour (being open and transparent) in respect of complaints about care and treatment that have resulted in a notifiable safety incident.

6.0 Regulatory bodies

- 6.1 As a member of the Housing Ombudsman Service, we adhere to the Complaint Handling Code and annually complete the Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment [Self-Assessment Form \(wrekin.com\)](https://www.wrekin.com/self-assessment-form). The Housing Ombudsman Service can support you in making a complaint or throughout the complaints process. [Housing Ombudsman Sept 2020.pdf \(wrekin.com\)](https://www.wrekin.com/housing-ombudsman-sept-2020.pdf)
- 6.2 The Group provides care services, therefore if the complaint relates to the provision of care in adult social care or a care home setting, complainants may take their complaint to the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman who have adopted the Housing Ombudsman complaint Handling Code [Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](https://www.local.gov.uk/home-local-government-and-social-care-ombudsman).
- 6.3 The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. Whilst it cannot deal with formal complaints it encourages care receivers to provide feedback on the service they receive. [Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk)
- 6.4 Within our Money Matters Service, we provide debt advice. Following making a complaint relating to this service, if you are unhappy with the resolution, you can contact the Financial Ombudsman Service. [Financial Ombudsman Service: our homepage \(financial-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk)
- 6.5 We will routinely promote how to make a complaint, including information on the respective Ombudsman service in a number of ways:
 - Newsletters;

- Social Media;
- The Group's Website;
- Surveys and other documents sent through to customers.

7.0 Complaint Process

7.1 The two-stage complaint process, support and training will be managed by the Customer Voice and Value Team. The team are responsible for ensuring that all complaints are managed within this policy. The Customer Voice and Value Team will be the point of contact for the Housing Ombudsman Service.

7.2 The emphasis will always be on the resolution for the customer. When the complaint is resolved we will investigate how it happened and improve or implement changes to the service if necessary or reasonable to do so. We will report changes made through our website and to our Customer Committee.

7.3 Complaint stages and timeframes:

- **Stage 1** – Initial resolution by the Service Manager. We will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and aim to resolve and respond to you within 10 working days. If necessary, and with the complainants agreement, some complaints may require additional time and for this we will respond within 20 working days.
- **Stage 2** – An independent Service Manager (not from the complaint service area) will acknowledge within 5 working days and will review and respond to you within 20 working days. Complainants will be asked what the key outstanding issues are to support us in resolving their complaint promptly.

7.4 We will investigate a complaint thoroughly at each stage and identify any failings, seeking an agreeable resolution that is appropriate and reasonable to the situation. The focus will always be on being responsive, considering the customers experience and what we can do to put things right and learn.

7.5 Where an extension of a complaint is required we will only do so in exceptional circumstances and with the express agreement of the complainant. The complainant will be kept updated throughout the extension.

7.6 Following the completion of each stage we will write to the customer to confirm:

- The complaint definition (as defined by the customer);
- The investigation of all issues raised in the complaint;
- The decision and reasons of the complaint;
- Any actions or remedies agreed to put things right;
- Details of any outstanding actions;
- Details of how to escalate to the next stage including timeframes or to approach the regulatory body.

7.7 Forms of redress to resolve a complaint may include a range of things, from an apology, sometimes a financial value, additional agreed work in the home, a gesture of goodwill, vouchers or items being purchased from our Revive store. Any

remedies or redress will be considered in line with our Compensation Policy, seeking to be fair and reasonable based on the information.

7.8 On occasion people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress, however the Group will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, nor actions that result in excessive demands on the service in that it prevents staff from carrying out their duties effectively. In these instances, the Unacceptable Behaviour Procedure will be followed.

8.0 Learning from complaints

8.1 Wherever possible we will learn from the cause and outcomes of individual complaints and the trends in complaints in order to improve service delivery to the customer and generate value for money.

8.2 The Group will produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report. This report will include the mandatory self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code including any non-compliance, any service improvements made from the learning from complaints and any annual report about our performance from the regulatory body. The report and response from the Board will be published on our website.

8.3 A member of the Group Board (Chair of the Customer Committee) is appointed to have the lead responsibility for complaints and to support a positive complaint handling culture. The Member will be responsible for ensuring the Board receives regular performance information and insight on complaint handling, including learning.

8.4 The Group encourages all customers following a complaint to complete a satisfaction survey on how the complaint was handled.

The Wrekin Housing Group	Policy Control Sheet Complaints Policy Policy Reference Number - 2024/005
Policy Author	Dona Guy Customer Voice Co-Ordinator
Direct Lead	Jan Lycett Executive Director of Business Solutions
Version	V2.1 – April 2024
Target audience	Customers, Stakeholders and Employees of The Wrekin Housing Group.
Consultation	Complaints Champions Wrekin Voices Employee Forum Executive Management Group Customer Committee
Customer Feedback Summary	The policy has been sent to approx. 300 customers for their feedback consisting of: 196 customers via direct email 6 customers via printed copies 80 customers via Facebook closed group and video.
Date of Equality Impact Assessment	An Equality Impact Assessment was completed in October 2022 and was reviewed in March 2024.
Date of Data Privacy Impact Assessment	No personal data is processed as a result of the adoption of this policy.
Approving Body	Executive Management Group
Date of final approval	September 2023
Implementation date	September 2023
Monitoring arrangements	Customer Voice & Value Team
Reporting	Measures Customer Committee
Review date	March 2026
Expiry date	September 2026
Review cycle	Three Year Review Cycle (or sooner if a review is required)
Policy category	Customer Care
Associated policies and procedures	Compensation Policy Complaints Handling Code Consumer Standards Equal Opportunities Policy Tenant Satisfaction measures Housing Ombudsman Scheme
Policy location	SharePoint The Wrekin Housing Group website

Summary of changes table

Revision history			
Author	Summary of changes	Version	Authorised by & date
Dona Guy	In line with the Policy Review Cycle	V2.0: September 2023	Executive Management Group – August 2023

Dona Guy	Ensuring the Policy is compliant with the Complaint Handling code	V2.1: April 2024	Customer Committee – March 2024
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