

Complaints Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Wrekin Housing Group's (the 'Group') 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 process 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; and
- 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 via:

- 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);
- By Social Media; and/or
- Through the My Wrekin app.

1.3 Our complaints process will aim to be:

- Focussed on listening to our customers;
- 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; and
- Learning from the complaint to identify issues and introduce change 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 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 In some instances, and in agreement with the customer, something may be easy to resolve, such as apologising for a missed appointment. These will be logged as "dissatisfaction" and we will monitor the number and nature of the issues.

2.3 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 explain their options i.e. – resolving at point of contact or logging a complaint.

2.4 We will ensure our handling of complaints is fair and reasonable, complies with equality legislation and will 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, where relevant, consider this within the resolution steps taken.

2.5 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.

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; and
- 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.

3.2 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 6 months ago – apart from 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; and
- A complaint raised that is being treated through the Whistleblowing Policy for Care & Support.

3.3 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.

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

3.5 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 these types of complaints 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.

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

4.0 Definitions

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 Complainants will not be discriminated against, or victimised. In particular, people's care and treatment will not be affected if they make a complaint, or if somebody complains on their behalf.

4.5 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.

5.0 Regulatory Bodies

5.1 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 \(wrekin.com\)](#). The Housing Ombudsman Service can support you in making a complaint or throughout the complaints process. [Housing Ombudsman Sept 2020.pdf \(wrekin.com\)](#)

5.2 Wrekin provide care services, therefore if the complaint relates to the provision of care in adult social care or care home setting complainants may take their complaint to the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman [Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#).

5.3 The Care Quality Commission 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 \(cqc.org.uk\)](#)

5.4 Within our Money Matters service, we provide debt advice, following 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 \(financial-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

6.0 Complaint Process

6.1 The complaint management system, process, support and training will be managed by the Customer Voice & Value team. We will be responsible for ensuring that all complaints are managed within this policy.

6.2 We have a 2-stage process with a discretionary third stage. Stage 3 is available to all customers but can be refused by the Group if the matter meets criteria outlined about why a complaint might be refused. Equally, a customer can request to go to the Housing Ombudsman Service after Stage 2. Stage 3 involves a member of the Executive Team and an involved customer.

6.3 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.

6.4 Complaint stages and timeframes:

- Informal dissatisfaction – Resolved at point of contact
- **Stage 1** – Initial resolution by the Service Manager, we will contact you within 5 working days and aim to resolve and respond to you within 10 working days. If necessary and with the complainant's agreement some complaints may require additional time and for this we will respond within 20 working days.
- **Stage 2** – A Senior Manager will review and respond to you within 20 working days.
- **Discretionary Stage 3** – Complaints Panel; Executive Director, Senior Manager and an involved Customer Committee Member will review and aim to resolve and respond within 20 working days.

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

6.6 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 the complaint;
- The decision and reasons of the complaint;
- Any actions or remedies agreed to put things right;
- Details of any outstanding actions; and
- Details of how to escalate to the next stage including timeframes or to approach the regulatory body.

6.7 Forms of redress to resolve a complaint may include a range of things and sometimes a monetary value, additional agreed work in the home, a gesture of goodwill, vouchers or items being purchased from our Reviive store. Any remedies or redress will be considered in line with our Compensation Policy and will seek to be fair and reasonable based on the information.

7.0 Learning from Complaints

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

7.2 Wider learning and improvements from complaints will be reported to residents, managers and staff. Feedback will be regularly provided to the Customer Committee and through the Executive Management team to the Group Board, alongside scrutiny of the Ombudsman's annual landlord performance report. Performance and outcomes will also be reported within the Annual report.

7.3 An annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code will be carried out and agreed by the Executive Management team, Customer Committee and the Group Board.

7.4 Periodically, the Group's 'Complaint Champions' will scrutinise the complaints process, receive case studies and are welcome to challenge the Group on the performance against the self-assessment. Their actions will assist the Group in improving service delivery.

7.5 The Group encourages all customers following a complaint to complete a satisfaction survey on how the complaint was handled. Performance from the surveys are shared with the Executive Management team and Senior Managers.

The Wrekin <u>Housing Group</u>	Policy control sheet Complaints Policy Policy reference number - 2023/029
Policy Author	Dona Guy Customer Voice Co-Ordinator
Direct Lead	Jan Lycett Executive Director of Business Solutions
Version	V.2.0: September 2023
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 Impact assessment was completed in October 2022 and currently being reviewed.
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 and Customer Committee
Review date	March 2026
Expiry date	September 2026
Review cycle	Three Year Review Cycle (or if a review is required sooner)
Policy category	Customer Care
Associated policies and procedures	Compensation Policy Consumer Standards Tenant Satisfaction Measures Housing Ombudsman Scheme Complaints Handling Code
Policy location	SharePoint Wrekin Housing Group website

Summary of changes table

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