

Complaints policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Groups vision is “making a difference to people’s lives”, we aim to do this by delivering the following values:

- Inspire positive change;
- Everyone matters;
- Communicate clearly;
- Grow together.

1.2 To inspire positive change, we will ensure that we will make our complaints service easily accessible:

- In writing to the Wrekin Housing Group;
- By email – complaints@wrekin.com;
- In person;
- By telephone;
- By social media;
- Through the My Wrekin app.

1.3 We will be fair when dealing with your complaints and if reasonable and possible, we will put right what we got wrong, while always learning from the complaint.

1.4 We will promote a culture of openness and honesty in which staff are encouraged to acknowledge mistakes and learn from them.

2.0 Policy Statement

2.1 While we aim to get everything right first time, we appreciate that on occasions customers will not be satisfied with a service we have provided. We encourage customers to tell us when something has gone wrong or when they are dissatisfied. We can then do something about it and learn from it.

2.2 While we will treat all of our customers with fairness and respect, we acknowledge that we have customers whose behaviour is unacceptable - those who either repetitively complain without substance or those who continually complain about the same issue. We will acknowledge and investigate their complaint but will have a procedure to follow separately.

2.3 Our aim will be to deal with, and resolve, any complaints at the first point of contact by any member of staff. These are to be logged as “dissatisfaction” (an informal complaint) on our Housing Management System.

2.4 Where the complaint cannot be immediately resolved to the customers satisfaction at the first point of contact, or where the customer states at the outset

that they wish to make a formal complaint, the complaint will be logged as a Stage 1 complaint and will be fully investigated by the relevant manager.

2.5 When a complaint within the care setting service is raised out of normal working hours, the on-call manager should be notified. The on-call manager, dependant on the nature and severity of the complaint, will alert the Registered Manager or Nominated Individual. The complainant should be reassured of the action that is going to be taken and written confirmation will follow in accordance with the normal complaints process.

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;
- Anonymous complaints will be dealt with in the same manner as any other complaint even though we are unable to correspond with the complainant.

3.2 The regulatory bodies for Housing Associations are the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Regulatory body for Care services is the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

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 a 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 The following are excluded from the general Groups complaints policy;

- A complaint by an employee about any 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 six months ago. Where the problem is a recurring issue 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 by a responsible / regulatory body;

- 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.

4.3 Where a person makes a complaint on behalf of a person who lacks capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, the Group must be satisfied that the representative is conducting the complaint in the best interests on whose behalf that the complaint has been made.

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.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 **Designated Complaints Officer(s) (DCO)** will be responsible for ensuring that all complaints are managed within this policy and that the organisation meets the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code or the complaint handling requirements of the CQC or Local Authority. The DCO will be the contact point between the organisation and the relevant regulatory body, ensuring that all timescales are met for the provision of information.

5.2 **Service Managers** will be responsible for investigating and resolving complaints within their area, as well as implementing any resolutions resulting from complaints or improvements generated by learning from complaints.

5.3 **Senior Managers** will be responsible for reviewing a complaint if the customer is unhappy with the initial resolution (stage 2) and being part of a Complaints Panel Hearing.

5.4 **Heads of Service** will be responsible for ensuring that a quality complaints service is provided within their area and that complaints are used to learn from, and improve service delivery.

5.5 **The Executive Directors** will be responsible for approving the Group's Complaints Policy, ensuring compliance with the Complaint Handling Code and convening and chairing Complaints Panel hearings, which will also include a tenant representative.

5.6 **The Tenants Panel** is a designated Tenants Panel approved by the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and as such can refer complainants to the Housing Ombudsman under the democratic filter.

5.7 The Group will act in accordance with Regulation 20: Duty of Candour in respect of complaints about care and treatment that have resulted in a notifiable safety incident.

5.8 Consent and confidentiality will not be compromised during this complaints process unless there are professional or statutory obligations that make this necessary, such as safeguarding.

6.0 Housing, Care & Support and other services

6.1 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 it is necessary or reasonable to do so. We will report on any changes to service through our website and to our scrutiny panels.

6.2 If the complaint requires further investigation it should be resolved within 5 working days. If it will take longer to investigate, we will let the customer know why and when it should be resolved.

6.3 The Group will provide an escalation process which ends in the Complaints Panel, made up of a Senior Manager, Director and a Customer Voice Panel member. Throughout the process the emphasis will continue to be on a local resolution for the customer. We will ensure that the customer is aware of the relevant regulatory body for the area of service they are complaining about through the complaints process.

6.4 There are 3 formal stages in the complaints process for the Wrekin Housing Group:

- Stage 1 – Initial resolution by Service Manager with 5 Working days**
- Stage 2 – Senior Manager review resolution, within 10 working days***
- Stage 3 – Complaints Panel: at an agreed date between both parties****

*The complainant has 14 days to request an appeal about their initial resolution if they are unhappy.

**In some instances, we may feel that the Complaints Panel will have no bearing on the complaint and will advise the complainant to go directly to the Housing Ombudsman or local authority (care related). Our complaints process will end at this stage.

6.5 Following completion of this process, if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they will be able to appeal to the Housing Ombudsman Service, through its approved process. If the complaint is care related they can appeal to their local authority.

6.6 Where a complaint is received which is already being investigated as a serious untoward incident or a safeguarding matter, the response should be based on the result of these investigations and co-ordinated within these processes. The outcome and subsequent actions of any investigation will be notified to the complainant, although full disclosure may not be possible depending on the circumstances and considering matters of confidentiality.

6.7 Information about the Group's complaints processes will be available on the website or on request.

6.8 At every stage of the Group's complaints procedure, we will inform customers who remain unhappy with the resolution of the escalation process to the next stage. At which ever point we close our complaints process we will notify the customer, and ensure they are aware of the details for the relevant regulatory body for the area of service they are complaining about

6.9 Where there is a complaint regarding the Right to Repair, we will acknowledge the complaint and resolve under the Right to Repair legislation.

6.10 Where a complaint includes a claim for compensation, it will be dealt with as a claim for compensation under the Group's Compensation policy. This does not include gestures of goodwill.

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 regularly be provided to tenant scrutiny panels, and through the Executive Management Group (EMG) to the Board, alongside scrutiny of the Ombudsman's annual landlord performance report. Performance and outcomes will also be included within the Annual Report.

7.3 An annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code will be carried out and agreed by EMG and the Board.

8.0 Complaints to other bodies

8.1 Where a complaint is made direct to regulatory body such as the Housing Ombudsman scheme, the customer will be informed that the Group's complaints process needs to be followed first. Where a complaint has completed the Group's complaints process and the regulatory body request information, this will be dealt with by the Customer Feedback & Engagement team.

8.2 The Nominated Individual is responsible for providing the following details to the CQC when requested to do so and by no later than 28 days, beginning on the day after receipt of the request:

- A summary of complaints made under such complaints system;
- Responses made by the registered person to such complaints and any further correspondence with the complainants in relation to such complaints;
- Any other relevant information in relation to such complaints as CQC may request.

9.0 Disciplinary or criminal issues

9.1 As with serious incidents and safeguarding matters, it may not be possible to follow the normal complaints process if a complaint results in the disciplinary process being invoked and / or a referral to the police in the case of a criminal act being alleged.

The Wrekin Housing Group	Policy control sheet Complaints policy Policy reference number - 2021/025
Policy Author	Dona Guy Customer Voice Co-Ordinator
Direct Lead	Jan Lycett Executive Director of Business Solutions
Version	V1.2 – November 2021
Target audience	Customers and Stakeholders of The Wrekin Housing Group. Employees of The Wrekin Housing Group.
Consultation	Tenants Panel Executive Management Group
Date of Equality Impact Assessment	September 2021 No individuals or groups of people are disadvantaged by the adoption of this policy.
Date of Data Privacy Impact Assessment	September 2021
Approving Body	Executive Management Group
Date of final approval	4 th November 2021
Implementation date	November 2021
Monitoring arrangements	Executive Management Group – monthly
Reporting	All Service Managers – monthly Customer Voice Panel – quarterly
Review date	March 2023
Expiry date	September 2023
Review cycle	Three-year review cycle
Policy category	Customer Care
Associated policies and procedures	Customer Service policy Compensation policy Repairs and Maintenance policy Code of Conduct The Wrekin Tenants Charter National Consumer Standards The Housing Ombudsman Scheme The Complaints Handling Code
Policy location	Intranet The Wrekin Housing Group website

Summary of changes table

Revision history			
Author	Summary of changes	Version	Authorised by & date
Dona Guy	Included Care & Support	V1.2	Executive Management Group – 4 th November 2021