



SP07 Complaints Policy

1. Scope

This policy sets out how Soha Housing manages complaints. We welcome all complaints and feedback; we always strive to resolve any complaint as quickly as possible and learn from it with a view to reducing repeat issues and improving future services.

This policy covers any complaint made to Soha by a tenant, shared owner or leaseholder. We will also manage any other complaints from stakeholders or community members in line with this policy, although they do not have the right to escalate a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman Service defines a complaint 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 or a group of individuals.

Along with this policy, Soha has a procedure, leaflet and information on our website to explain our complaints process. Our procedure includes how we will:

- Try to resolve a complaint quickly.
- Respond to complaints within agreed timescales.
- Address each part of a complaint when responding.
- Handle complaints in a fair and unbiased way.
- Advise and explain when we are unable to progress a complaint.
- Keep complaints confidential if preferred.
- Learn from complaints to drive service improvements and obtain the best outcomes for individuals.

2. Aim

Soha is committed to fairness and equality for all in our complaints process. We aim to have a flexible and positive approach to complaints. We will use them to review, learn and drive service improvements across Soha and improve outcomes for individuals.

When someone makes a complaint, we aim to:

- Act quickly to identify the problem and put it right.
- Listen to individuals, treat them with respect and get the right outcome for them.
- Keep individuals informed throughout the complaints process.

Soha offers a range of ways for individuals to raise concerns and make and escalate a complaint including.

In writing

Soha Housing
Royal Scot House
99 Station Rd
Didcot
OX11 7NN

By email

housing@soha.co.uk and/or complaints@soha.co.uk

Via an online form on Soha's website

[Complaints and feedback - Soha Housing](#)

Via the MySoha app

By telephone

Call 01235 515900

In person

By visiting Soha's office or when a member of Soha's staff visits you

Soha has a complaints leaflet which summarises the complaints process and tells individuals what to expect from us when dealing with complaints. Individuals can access the leaflet via our website, request one from any member of staff or request for a copy to be sent in the post. If individuals require assistance in making a complaint, Soha staff can assist in this. In addition, complaint documentation can be made available on tape or translated into another language, upon request by individuals. Our leaflet is also available in Easy Read format and available on our website and upon request.

We will ensure that individuals are aware of independent representation and support when pursuing their complaint. This may include signposting to voluntary agencies and statutory bodies like the Housing Ombudsman Service.

We will ensure that no individual or group of individuals will be treated less favourably than any other on account of a protected characteristic. We will also ensure individuals have fair access to our complaints service which suits their individual needs, have the opportunity to request any reasonable adjustments and to use a preferred method of communication when managing their complaint. This may include for example, providing translations in alternative languages or additional support for individuals who have difficulty reading and writing.

3. Implementation

An individual does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Any expression of dissatisfaction with Soha's service will be recorded as a formal complaint. We will initially seek to resolve complaints using our "quick response" process. Where this is not possible or the issue is complex we will carry out a full investigation. Both processes are formal complaints, and are managed, monitored and reported as "stage 1" complaints.

However, if the matter involves a request for service, this is not a complaint but will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A request for service is a request from an individual to Soha requiring action to be taken to put something right (for example to carry out a repair, or report a problem with a neighbour). See also section 5 – Policy Exclusions.

We accept complaints on the following:

- Dissatisfaction with service provided to you by Soha or its contractors.
- Dissatisfaction with our policies and procedures and any decisions arising from them including discrimination.
- Treatment by or attitude of Soha staff member or contractor, including allegations of bullying and discrimination.

Stage 1 complaint

The complaint will be recorded and acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and will be managed by either / both of the following.

Quick Response

The issue will be initially managed by a named Soha member of staff to try and resolve the complaint quickly. They are responsible for reviewing the circumstances giving rise to the complaint, communicating with the complainant and resolving the issue. The Complaints Team will provide an acknowledgement and written response to the complainant within five working days upon notification of the issue.

If we are unable to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the resident within 5 days or it is likely to take us more than 5 working days to resolve, we will commence a full investigation as per the section below.

Full investigation

A Complaint Officer will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days. We will then investigate the complaint and a response will be issued within 10 working days from the date we acknowledge the complaint. If an extension to this timescale is required due to the complexity of the complaint, then we will inform the individual of the reason(s) and the revised response date (up to a maximum of a further 10 working days, 20 working days in total). For any extension, we will provide the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

Any complaints regarding staff conduct will be fully investigated and we will revert to internal HR procedures where appropriate.

If new issues are raised during this stage of the investigation and are related to the complaint, we will try to incorporate these into the investigation and response. However, if the new issue(s) are unrelated to the original issues being investigated it will be logged as a new complaint.

If an individual is dissatisfied with the outcome offered at Stage 1, they have 1 month in which to tell us they wish to escalate the complaint to Stage 2, however, individuals can request escalation to stage 2 within 12 months from the date of the stage 1 response at Soha's discretion. It is not necessary for them to say why they are requesting a Stage 2 review, but we will attempt to understand and clarify our understanding of any outstanding issues and the outcome the individual is seeking.

We will confirm the following in writing to the individual at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:

- a) the complaint stage;
- b) the complaint definition;
- c) the decision on the complaint;
- d) the reasons for any decisions made;
- e) the details of any remedy offered to put things right;
- f) details of any outstanding actions; and
- g) details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.

Stage 2 review

The request for progression to stage 2 will be recorded and acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. The stage 2 process is:

- **a review of the adequacy of the stage 1 response**, as well as
- **consideration given to any new and relevant information not previously considered.**
- **not a more** thorough, detailed investigation of the stage 1 complaint.

The stage 2 review will be undertaken by 1 member from Senior Leadership Team and 1 member of the Complaints Team not directly involved with the initial complaint. Their role is to reach a conclusion collectively to review if Soha's response at Stage 1 was fair, comprehensive, proportionate and in line with Soha's policies and procedures. If an agreement cannot be reached, the decision will be escalated to Soha's Executive Team for a final decision.

The stage 2 review meetings will be scheduled to take place regularly so that, decisions are issued within twenty working days following the date the complaint was acknowledged.

Complex cases

If an extension to this timescale is required due to the complexity of the complaint, then we will inform the individual of the reason(s) and the revised response date (up to a maximum of 40 working days).

We will provide the individual with contact information for the Housing Ombudsman.

This is the final stage of Soha's formal complaints process.

If a resident has exhausted our complaints process and they remain dissatisfied, they can refer their case directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service (contact details in Section 4).

Data Protection Complaints

Complaints relating to how we process personal data will be accepted and managed by the Complaints Team. However, we will follow a separate process as detailed in the SP06 Data Protection Complaint Handling Procedure. Any oversight will be handled by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) Complaints

Complaints relating to STAIRs will be accepted and managed by the Complaints Team. However, we will follow a separate process in line with guidance set out by the National Housing Federation as follows:

- Residents have 3 months from date of issue to raise a complaint in writing with Soha.
- Soha will investigate, review and respond in writing within 30 days
- Soha will either uphold our position, publish information not already published, provide information previously upheld or acknowledge failings in the handling of an information request and take action to put things right.
- Soha will provide the resident with full reasons for the decision made.
- If the resident remains dissatisfied they can ask the Housing Ombudsman to make a determination on their case

Energy Complaints

Complaints relating to services where we are the direct supplier of energy to specific schemes will be accepted and managed by the Complaints Team. However, we will follow the process set out by the Energy Ombudsman as per below:

- Resident raises complaint with Soha

- Soha has 8 weeks from the date of the complaint to resolve the issue
- If unresolved the resident and Soha must send evidence to the Energy Ombudsman within 14 working days
- Determination will be sent to all parties within 28 days.

4. Housing Ombudsman Scheme

The Housing Ombudsman Scheme is a service which was set up to look at complaints about housing organisations and is free, independent, and impartial. The Ombudsman aims to resolve disputes involving tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities).

Individuals can contact the Ombudsman **at any time** for support in helping to resolve a dispute. Their contact details are as follows:

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000 (lines are open Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 5.15pm)

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk (where there is more information and residents can complete the online form to ask the Ombudsman to investigate their complaint)

The Ombudsman requires every social landlord within its scheme to be compliant with its Complaints Handling Code. The Code acts as a guide for individuals setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they make a complaint. The requirements in the Code also provide individuals with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through their landlord's internal complaints procedure.

Soha carries out an annual self-assessment of compliance against the Code. The self-assessment is then reviewed by the Complaints Working Group and the Board before being published on our website.

5. Policy Exclusions

This policy is not intended to be used for:

- Initial requests for service - This is when a request is received from an individual requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint may be raised when

the individual raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.

- Reports of Unwelcome or Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) - There is a separate policy and procedure for this. However, if the individual is dissatisfied with the handling of an ASB case, this can be managed as a complaint.
- Requests to re-open a concluded complaint or to have a complaint re-considered where our final decision following a Stage 2 investigation has been given.

Soha will not normally consider a complaint that relates to an incident that took place more than twelve months ago. However, discretion will be used if there is a valid reason for doing so.

When a decision is made not to deal with an issue through our complaints process, the full reason(s) for this will be clearly explained to individuals and their right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.

6. Unreasonable or Unacceptable Complaints/Behaviour

Soha is committed to providing a complaints service for individuals that is fair and accessible and for them to be listened to and understood. We will always treat individuals with respect and we expect our staff to be treated in the same way. We recognise that some circumstances relating to a complaint may cause individuals to be distressed or upset and to act out of character, but we will not tolerate unreasonable behaviour. In certain cases, we reserve the right to restrict or change this access.

If we continue to be contacted about a closed complaint, or a complaint that is very similar to the closed complaint, we will acknowledge the contact and take no further action unless there is new evidence or information to consider.

If contact becomes excessive or increasingly resource intensive, we may consider putting a contact management plan in place. This could be contact by email only, no more than once a week and to a named member of staff, unless it is an emergency. When a decision is made to do this, the Complaints Manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will explain in writing why we are doing this, what the conditions are, and when this will be reviewed (please see SP63 Unacceptable Behaviour Policy).

7. Monitoring and Reporting

Soha uses a variety of methods to monitor and analyse complaints data. The Regulator of Social Housing expects all landlords to include questions on effective complaints handling as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which it is required to publish from 1 April 2024.

The TSMs are considered on a quarterly basis by the Senior Leadership Team and quarterly by the Board and Complaints Working Group. We also use external benchmarking results to check performance within the sector.

In addition, we provide an annual report to the Members' Forum and the Board on complaints performance and case studies from the previous year, which is used to identify trends, hear resident voices and enable improvements to be made.

We want to learn from complaints and have an established Resident Experience Group comprising staff, residents, and Board members. The remit of the group is to:

- Adopt a lessons learned approach to complaints and to use the feedback, knowledge and intelligence from complaints, Customer Services, Communications and Resident Liaison Officer from Soha Response to continuously improve our services and our accountability to residents.
- Use the learning from complaints to drive satisfaction across Soha.
- Ensure the complaints process is robust, fit for purpose and give individuals the opportunity to engage meaningfully in this process.
- Provide a comprehensive reporting mechanism back to the Board, Senior Leadership Team, Service Areas, Members' Forum and residents.

Soha has a named Board member who takes a lead role for the Board in ensuring that the Board has appropriate assurance that Soha manages complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman's complaints handling code and learns from complaints to drive service improvements.

8. Review and Responsibility

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or earlier to account of changes in regulation or legislation.

The Chief Executive is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy. However, all staff have a responsibility to be aware of and adhere to this policy.

9. Context

RSH Regulatory Framework
Housing Acts
Equality Act 2010
UK General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018
Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code 2022
Housing Ombudsman Compensation and Remedies Guidance 2024
Draft joint complaint handling code Sept 2023
SP11 Compensation Policy and Matrix
SP06 Data Protection Policy
SP63 Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

Complaints Procedure – Appendix A

SP06 Data Protection Complaint Handling Procedure – Appendix B

National Housing Federation STAIRs Operational Guidance for Registered Providers
– Appendix C

Energy Ombudsman Welcome Guidance – Appendix D

Members' Forum Approved	16 July 2026	Board approved (via e-decision) Further revisions to external guidance Original policy approved (with revisions in July and November 2024)	4 August 2026 25 January 2024
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