

## Solo Housing Complaints, Compliments & Comments Policy

### 1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 Solo Housing aims to provide a high standard of service and satisfaction within its organisation (or via organisations or agents acting on behalf of Solo) and recognises that occasionally those standards are not always met, or the standards are complimented or commented on.
- 1.2 Complaints, compliments and comments provide vital intelligence on the health, performance and reputation of Solo Housing and will be used in a transparent way to promote learning and development.
- 1.3 In relation to complaints Solo Housing has adopted the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and will promote the code with all relevant stakeholders and residents, including how the Ombudsman can advise a resident in making a complaint.
- 1.4 This policy will be produced in an accessible format in line with the Equality Act 2010 and will operate along with a *Reasonable Adjustment Policy*
- 1.5 The policy is publicised in leaflets, newsletters, online and through regular correspondence with residents.

### Complaints

#### 2. Definition

- 2.1 A complaint is 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, group of residents or person using or involved with the services of Solo Housing.
- 2.2 The word complaint does not have to be used for it to be treated as such.
- 2.3 Complaints may be communicated verbally, electronically, or in writing, including via social media channels, such as Facebook and Linked In. Complaints may be made by residents (or someone acting on their behalf), other users of our services, landlords, neighbours, stakeholders or a member of the general public.
- 2.4 Solo Housing will respond to all complaints regardless of the communication channel with confidentiality as per the *Solo Housing Confidentiality Agreement* and the *GDPR and Data Protection Policy*.
- 2.5 Solo Housing will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. For example:

- a. Matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy.
  - b. A service request that can be resolved/responded to straight away.
  - c. Where the complainant is refusing to cooperate with the complaints process (e.g. failing to provide information to help progress the complaint or failing to advise of the preferred outcome to from the complaint)
- 2.6 When Solo Housing decides that a matter is not considered to be a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.
- 2.7 A resident has the right to challenge a decision by bringing the complaint to the Ombudsman and where appropriate the Ombudsman will instruct Solo Housing to take on the complaint.
- 2.8 Employees who wish to make a complaint should use the Grievance Policy or the Whistleblowing Policy to address their concerns.

### **3. Aim of the Policy**

- 3.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that the complaints process is flexible and responsive to the needs of individual complainants. In addition, it emphasises the need to communicate effectively with complainants and involve them in the decisions concerning the handling of their complaint.
- 3.2 As part of this Policy and the accompanying Complaints Procedure:
- a. Complainants are listened to, understood, and treated sensitively and fairly.
  - b. Complainants are given an opportunity to explain the outcome they are seeking before a decision is reached.
  - c. Complainants are not disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint.
  - d. Complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly and openly.
  - e. Complainants are given the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented and / or accompanied at any meeting with Solo Housing where reasonable.
  - f. Complainants are kept informed of the progress and outcome of the investigation.
  - g. Apologies are given where appropriate.
  - h. Action to rectify the cause of the complaint is identified, implemented and evaluated.

- i. Learning from complaints informs service development and improvement.
- j. The complaints handling complies with confidentiality and data protection policies and is transparent.
- k. Persons responsible for complaint handling are given support and training to effectively deal with the complaint.
- l. The person dealing with the complaint will have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. They should be competent, empathic and efficient.

#### **4. Complaints Management**

4.1 All complaints must be managed in line with the Complaints Process.

4.2 A complaint should be resolved at the earliest opportunity.

4.3 All complaints will be logged, and the outcomes recorded. At each stage of the complaints process the complainant should receive acknowledgement in writing setting out clear timeframes and expectations in accordance with the Complaints Procedure.

4.4 The complaints log is reviewed annually by the Chief Executive Officer and regular reports will be made to the Executive Committee.

4.5 Where a complaint made has been escalated to one of our regulators the CEO will make the Executive Committee aware immediately and will provide updates on the outcome.

4.6 Communication with the complainant should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors as their actions are undertaken on behalf of Solo Housing.

4.7 If a complainant displays threatening or abusive behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that causes staff, residents or other users of the service to feel unsafe, or following investigation, the claimant's demands are found to be unreasonable, Solo Housing reserves the right to close the Complaints Process. Unreasonable demands can include seeking disproportionate amounts of information, demanding an unrealistic nature or scale of service, or seeking to prolong contact with Solo Housing by continually raising new issues throughout an investigation.

## **5. Timeframes**

- 5.1 There is no time limit for a complainant to make a complaint. Complainants should however be encouraged to bring the complaint forward as soon as possible, as a delay can make an investigation more difficult and may limit the action that can be taken.
- 5.2 Solo Housing will aim to respond to all complaints in accordance with the timeframes referred to in the Complaints Procedure.
- 5.3 Please note: Mediation may be used in the stages of the Complaints process if both parties agree.

## **6. Putting Things Right**

- 6.1 Where something has gone wrong, Solo Housing will acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. Examples of where action to put things right are:
- a. There was an unreasonable delay
  - b. Inaccurate or inadequate advice, explanation or information was provided to the resident
  - c. Solo Housing policy or procedure was not followed without good reason
  - d. There was a factual or legal error that impacted on the outcome for the resident
  - e. There was unprofessional behaviour by staff
- 6.2 Solo Housing will acknowledge and apologise for any failure identified, give an explanation, and where possible, inform the complainant of the changes or actions taken to prevent the issue from happening again.
- 6.3 Solo Housing recognises that putting things right is the first step to repairing and rebuilding the relationship with the complainant. It is important to make sure expectations are managed and Solo Housing do not promise anything that cannot be delivered or would be unfair to other residents or users of the Solo Housing services.

## **7. Appropriate Remedy**

- 7.1 Solo Housing will resolve the complaint in the most appropriate way considering service failures and the level of detriment caused as a result. Remedies shall include:
- a. Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
  - b. Providing an explanation, assistance or reason
  - c. Apologising
  - d. Taking action if there has been a delay
  - e. Reconsidering or changing a decision
  - f. Amending a record
  - g. Providing a financial remedy
  - h. Changing policies, procedures or practices

- 7.2 In formulating a remedy, Solo Housing will consider the following factors but not limited to:
- Length of time that a situation has been ongoing
  - Frequency with which something has occurred
  - Severity of any service failures or omission
  - Number of different failures
  - Cumulative impact on the resident
  - A resident's particular circumstances or vulnerabilities
- 7.3 Any remedy must be agreed with the complainant and followed through to completion.
- 7.4 In awarding compensation, Solo Housing will consider whether any statutory payments are due if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, as well as any time and trouble the complainant has been put to, as well as any distress and inconvenience caused.
- 8. Duty to cooperate with the Ombudsman.**
- 8.1 At the earliest opportunity, Solo Housing will promote the right for a resident to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service, who can assist a resident throughout the life of the complaint.
- 8.2 Solo Housing will provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.
- 8.3 In the final stage of a complaint, Solo Housing will advise residents of their right to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service and how to do this.
- 8.4 Solo Housing will cooperate with the Ombudsman's requests for evidence and provide this within 15 working days. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, Solo Housing will provide the Ombudsman with an explanation for the delay. If the explanation is reasonable, the Ombudsman will agree a revised date.

## **Compliments**

### **9.0 Definition**

A compliment is an expression of praise, commendation, or admiration, not always requiring a response. Compliments may be communicated verbally, electronically, or in writing. Compliments may be made by residents, other users of our services, landlords, neighbours, stakeholders or a member of the general public.

### **10.0 Aim of the Policy**

- 10.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that compliments are acknowledged and recorded and that the employee(s), contractor(s), service user(s) or Committee member(s) that the compliment relates to, is made aware and praised for their accomplishment. In addition, it emphasises the need to communicate effectively with the employees, contractors, service users and Committee members

10.2 The policy seeks to ensure that:

- a. Compliments are listened to and recorded
- b. Feedback is provided to the person(s) it relates to
- c. Feedback on compliments is shared with employees in a timely manner
- d. Compliments will help us share good practice and improve services

### **11.0 Compliments Management**

11.1 Where a compliment is received for an employee, Line Managers will also be informed to aid in the performance management, and the supervision and appraisal processes.

11.2 Where appropriate, compliments may also be used as feedback to funders and used on Solo Housing's website.

## **Comments**

### **12 Definition**

a verbal or written remark expressing an opinion or reaction

### **13. Comments management**

We would like to know people's thoughts on what we have done well and what we have done not so well.

We welcome all comments and will pass all details on to the relevant Line Manager to determine if and how improvements can be made.