



## **S4B Complaints and Compliments Policy**

**April 2021**

### **1. Aim**

This Policy sets out S4B's approach to the handling of customer feedback. S4B will provide a high quality responsive service to our customers. Our primary aim is to resolve customer concerns at the first point of contact without unnecessary delay. Where this is not possible S4B will follow a clear two staged procedure to address complaints about services or activities.

We aim to provide a simple and accessible process that ensures complaints are dealt with in a fair, impartial and consistent manner when things go wrong. The policy will ensure that comments, compliments and complaints are recorded and monitored to help S4B to learn and continually improve. The aim of this policy is to:

- Encourage opportunities to receive and use feedback, both positive and negative.
- Make it easy for customers to exercise their right to complain when they are dissatisfied.
- Ensure all complaints are dealt with quickly, consistently and sensitively.
- Value complaints and compliments as opportunities to learn and improve services.
- Ensure that principles of equal access to services and respecting the diversity of our customers are applied.

### **2. Definition**

We will adopt a broad definition in relation to complaints, in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by S4B, our own staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

The complaint could be about the way a person was treated, staff conduct, or the standard of service they received. In general, our complaints procedure will be used when customers think we have done something in the wrong way or have not done something that they think we should have.

However, a complaint is not:

- An initial request for a service, such as a first report of a repair.
- A request for information or an explanation of policy or practise.
- An appeal against matters subject to court proceedings.
- On matters which we consider to be legal claims.
- On matters which we consider to be anti-social behaviour claims.
- We will be unable to investigate complaints over six months old, unless there are exceptional or extenuating circumstances.

A resident does not have to use the word complaint in order for it to be treated as such. S4B does recognise there is a difference between a service request (pre-complaint), survey feedback and a formal complaint, however we will take appropriate steps to resolve any issue for residents as early as possible.



### 3. Who can complain?

The complaints and appeals procedure will be available to any person who receives a service from S4B, is affected by a decision or action taken by S4B or anyone who represents such a person.

For example:

- Tenants, Leaseholders, licensees and former tenants of S4B
- Neighbours of S4B managed properties
- Contractors or consultants
- Community based organisations working in the area

S4B will need to be satisfied that representatives have permission to act on behalf of the complainant. In cases where the representative could access potentially sensitive information about the complainant, S4B will seek written permission from the complainant that they have agreed to be represented.

### 4. How to make a complaint

We seek to make it easy of residents to complain. Complaints can be made to S4B in the following ways via the S4B Helpdesk:

- Verbally at the S4B Housing Office (15 Brunswick Street, M13 9SU)
- Over the telephone (0300 555 0128)
- Via the S4B website ([www.s4bmanchester.co.uk](http://www.s4bmanchester.co.uk))
- By post
- By e mail ([info@s4bmanchester.co.uk](mailto:info@s4bmanchester.co.uk))
- Via social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram & Twitter)
- By another person on behalf of a complainant with their permission.

### 5. How we deal with complaints

When we receive the complaint we will act swiftly and follow a clearly defined process. We will receive it in a positive manner and use it as constructive feedback on our service. We will record all complaints and ensure we learn from them by reviewing our policies and procedures where appropriate.

At the investigation stage, the complainants will be provided with information about our complaints procedure and offered assistance to complete any forms (if required) or offered an advocate if the resident is vulnerable.

If the complaint is made in person, the staff member will make a record of the complaint and ensure it has been communicated properly by checking back with the customer to make sure they have got it right.

We will provide a full and thorough response within the agreed timescale and we will use digital methods, including email and telephone SMS text, where appropriate to communicate with you.

At each stage the complainant will be provided with information about how to escalate the complaint to the next stage if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

We will provide a full written response to the complainant within 10 working days. If a complaint is complex and further investigation is needed then a holding response will be sent and a full written response in such time as agreed with the customer e.g. in cases where a meeting is to be held with the customer.



## 6. Appropriate remedy

We will ensure that any remedy offered reflects the extent of any and all service failures, and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result.

These shall include:

- acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- apologising
- taking action if there has been a delay
- reconsidering or changing a decision
- amending a record
- providing a financial remedy
- changing policies, procedures or practices.

Factors that will be considered in formulating a remedy will include, but are not limited to the:

- length of time that a situation has been ongoing
- frequency with which something has occurred
- severity of any service failure or omission
- number of different failures
- cumulative impact on the resident
- a resident's particular circumstances or vulnerabilities.

## 7. The Framework

The complaints procedure has two stages:

**Investigation** Initial service failure or expressed dissatisfaction which is formally logged for investigation. A record will be made of the complaint and a full written response will always be provided as soon as possible, and no later than 10 working days.

**Review** If the customer's initial complaint has not been resolved or the customer remains dissatisfied, they should outline their remaining concerns, and this will be investigated by a Service Manager responsible and a written reply made within 10 working days.

If the customer is still dissatisfied following the Review response, they have the right to take the matter to the Housing Ombudsman. The details of which are noted below:

Housing Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London, E14 9GE

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

## 8. Equality of Access

S4B will ensure that there is equal access to this service by meeting all reasonable requests to address specific needs resulting from a complainant's disability or cultural background. S4B will always respect requests for confidentiality. Documents will be available in other languages on



request, in large text or audio format. S4B will provide support to customers where needed in the participation of the complaints procedure.

## 9. Responsibility and Monitoring

The S4B Operations Manager will be responsible for collating and presenting information on the number, type and processing of complaints to the S4B Board. They will also be responsible for implementation of the S4B complaints procedure including the subsequent management, monitoring and liaison with Service Managers.

The S4B Board will monitor operational compliance with the policy.

Linked documents:	Reasonable and Persistent Complaints Policy (Appendix 2.1)
Date implemented:	April 2021
Policy lead:	Louise Blanchflower, S4B Operations Manager
Approved by:	S4B Board
Approved on:	March 2021
Next review date:	March 2022