



## S4B Complaints and Compliments Policy

May 2023

### 1. Aim

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 S4B 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.
- 1.3 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 fairly, 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

- 2.1 We will adopt a broad definition in relation to complaints, in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- 2.2 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'.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 A customer does not have to use the word complaint in order for it to be treated as such. S4B does however recognise there is a difference between a service request, survey feedback and a formal complaint, however we will take appropriate steps to resolve any issue for residents as early as possible.
- 2.5 A **compliment** is a polite expression of praise, admiration or gratitude about a service, contractor or member of staff. It's great when customers let us know what we are doing well, as we can learn and share best practice across S4B.



2.6 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.
- Complaints over six months old, unless there are exceptional or extenuating circumstances.
- Matters that have previously been considered under this policy and as such exhausted the S4B complaints procedure.
- Complaints regarding serious allegations against staff which would be more appropriate to be investigated through relevant disciplinary procedure. Such outcomes would not be shared with the complainant under GDPR.
- Allegations of Data Breaches or issues relating to Subject Access Requests are managed through GDPR and investigated by S4B's Housing Management Contractor Data Protection Lead and reported where necessary to the ICO.

This list is not exhaustive.

2.7 Should S4B decide not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the rights the customer has to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

### 3. Who can complain?

3.1 The complaints and compliments 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

3.2 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 to ensure that they have agreed to be represented.



#### 4. How to make a complaint

4.1 We have a variety of ways to enable customers to provide us with their views or feedback.

- **In Person** - Verbally at the S4B Housing Office, 15 Brunswick Street, M13 9SU.
- **Telephone** – By calling 0300 555 0128.
- **Online** - via the S4B website, [www.s4bmanchester.co.uk](http://www.s4bmanchester.co.uk).
- **Post** -in writing to us at S4B Housing Office, 15 Brunswick Street, M13 9SU
- **Email** - [info@s4bmanchester.co.uk](mailto:info@s4bmanchester.co.uk)
- **Social Media** - WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram & Twitter.
- **Another Person** – acting on behalf of a complainant but only with their permission.

4.2 We will make our customers aware of our Complaints Policy by publicising on our web site, in our newsletters and other campaigns, to ensure that customers know how to make a complaint, compliment, or raise a query with us.

#### 5. How we deal with complaints

5.1 When we receive the complaint, we will act swiftly and follow a clearly defined process. We will receive all complaints in a positive manner and use it as constructive feedback on our services.

5.2 We will record all complaints and ensure we learn from them by reviewing our policies and procedures where appropriate.

5.3 At all stages of our complaint process, 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.

5.4 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.

5.5 Where further detail is required in relation to the complaint case, we will make contact with the customer via the phone, or their chosen method of communication, to discuss the complaint and desired outcome.

5.6 We will acknowledge receipt of complaints within 5 working days, providing a unique reference number and date for when a response will be received by.

5.7 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.

5.7 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.

5.8 We will provide a full written response to the complainant within 10 working days at both stage one and stage two of the procedure. If a complaint is complex and further investigation is needed then a holding response will be sent and a full written response



will be provided 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

6.1 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

7.1 Wherever possible and appropriate to do so, S4B will seek to resolve customer concerns at the first point of contact without unnecessary delay. Where we do successfully resolve at the first point of contact, we will continue to log this and identify learnings.

7.2 Where it is not possible to resolve an issue at the first point of contact, S4B will follow a two stage complaint process as outline below:

**Stage One 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.

**Stage Two Review** If the customer's initial complaint has not been resolved or the customer remains dissatisfied, they can ask for it to be reviewed at Stage two within 8 weeks of the Stage one complaint response, although we will encourage customers to advise S4B within 10 working days so we can resolve this in a timely manner.



We ask customers set out why they remain unhappy with their complaint and what they are seeking as an outcome as part of the stage two investigation.

A senior service manager will investigate all remaining concerns and a written reply made within 10 working days. On occasion, it may not be possible to provide our response within this time and as such, we will write to the customer to advise of the delay and agree an appropriate timeframe.

7.3 Customers can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage of their complaint to receive impartial advice. Should a customer remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their stage two complaint, they can escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted via:

- their website, <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/>
- by email [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- writing to: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ
- or contact them on telephone number 0300 111 3000.

## 8. Equality of Access

8.1 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

9.1 The S4B General 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:	S4B Unacceptable Behaviour Policy May 2023
Date implemented:	May 2023
Policy lead:	Louise Blanchflower, S4B General Manager
Approved by:	S4B Board and Manchester City Council
Next review date:	May 2024