

# SHDC Housing Comments, Compliments, Complaints Feedback Policy

## 1. Introduction

South Holland District Council is committed to delivering high-quality housing services and to listening, learning and improving when things go wrong. This policy sets out the Council's approach when receiving comments, compliments and complaints regarding its function as a landlord, and reflects the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, Renters Rights Act 2026 and other relevant legislation.

Compliment and complaint handling performs an important strategic role for the organisation providing vital intelligence on its health, performance and reputation. The policy and underlying procedures will allow the Council to provide a service which reflects our statutory responsibilities as a landlord as well as good practice. The policy will also ensure complaints are handled consistently, taking into account our Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

We aim to provide excellent housing services and give the best customer service possible. All feedback received is viewed positively as a valuable resource, enabling us to continuously improve the services we provide.

This policy also incorporates the key requirements of legislation, regulations and guidance including Local Government Act 1974, Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, Housing Act 1985, Housing Act 1988, Housing Act 1996, Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Human Rights Act 1998, Equality Act 2010 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to

- Current residential tenants, leaseholders and licensees
- Former tenants who ended their tenancy within the last 12 months
- Any individual or group affected by the Council's housing landlord services

It applies only to complaints about the Council's role as a **social housing landlord**. Other complaints are handled under the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy.

The Council will treat a complaint submitted via a third party or representative, including friends, family, MPs, Councillors and Citizens Advice, in line with our policy and procedure for complaints. In these instances, MPs and Councillors will be acting in their role as a representative. The Council will only share personal information with representatives where the complainant has given explicit permission for us to do so or otherwise as permitted by the data protection law. Third Party representatives can represent or accompany any meeting with us as their landlord.

Please note where this policy makes reference to 'tenants' it relates to residential

tenants, licensees and leaseholders of South Holland District Council excluding those that the Council is assisting under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

### 3. Policy Links

This Policy should be read with the following policies which it is linked to:

- SHDC Feedback and Complaints policy (for complaints relating to other Council matters)
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy: Housing Landlord Services
- Competence and Conduct Policy
- Compensation Policy (currently being drafted).

### 4. Definitions

A **request for service** is defined as a request by or on behalf of a tenant or group of tenants asking the Council to take action to provide a service or put something right. Service requests are not complaints. They are recorded and action taken monitored by the Complaints Team but managed by the service teams.

When a tenant makes a request for service, we will triage their request seeking to resolve it first time. Service Requests will be passed to specialist colleagues. We will communicate with tenants as required to provide updates via their chosen method. Where dissatisfaction is expressed with a response to their service request then a formal complaint will be raised.

A **compliment** is defined as positive feedback for a job well done. We record compliments to allow us to identify and strengthen best practice and to celebrate the success of our colleagues and partners when we get it right. We will maintain a central register of compliments. Compliments will be celebrated and shared amongst the department.

A **comment** is defined as any other form of feedback about our services. It could include ideas for improvements, observations about our services, and include negative feedback separate to a complaint. We record comments to understand our tenants' views about services, helping to drive service improvement.

A **complaint** is defined by the Housing Ombudsman *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 resident or group of residents.* (The word 'complaint' does not have to be used for it to be treated as a complaint).

A complaint will be logged **whenever dissatisfaction is expressed**, even if the underlying service issue is still being addressed and will follow our 2-stage complaint process.

### 5. Relationship Between Service Requests and Complaints

- Raising a **complaint does not stop or delay work** to resolve the underlying service issue

- The Council will **continue to address the service request** alongside investigating the complaint
- Complaints are **never treated as service requests** and are always logged as complaints

## 6. Complaints

The Council is committed to dealing with complaints in an open and transparent way that is fair and equal to everyone. Making a complaint will not have an adverse effect on any other services that a tenant receives from us.

We strive to resolve a complaint in a quick and efficient manner by treating tenants fairly and with respect and following our 2-stage complaints process.

Tenants can raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. This can be verbally, in writing, via our feedback forms, by direct email, this list is not exhaustive. Our culture will be to accept all complaints on the basis that complaints should not be seen as negative by having a well-published and accessible complaints process that will encourage transparency with tenants.

Tenants can complain about issues such as:

- A failure to provide a housing service at the level or standard set out in the Council's adopted policies, procedures or rules.
- Delays in responding to housing enquiries and requests where we have exceeded our set timescales
- Misconduct by an Officer.
- A failure to consider all information in coming to a decision.
- A failure to inform people of their rights.
- Malice, bias or discrimination.

Complaints through third parties:

- We recognise that some people who wish to complain may need support to do so. We accept complaints made by third parties (including, for example, family members, friends, advocates, or support workers) on behalf of a complainant and will take steps in line with our Data Protection Policy to make sure that the complainant is in agreement, which may include seeking written permission where this is necessary. We will also give customers the opportunity to be accompanied or represented by a third party at a meeting with us about a complaint where this is reasonable.
- Councillors and Members of Parliament (MPs) may also bring a formal complaint by acting as their constituent's advocate; formal complaints will be handled in line with this Complaints and Compliments Policy,

### Items not considered to be a complaint

The following scenarios will be excluded from this policy because they are either covered by another policy or are outside of the Council's control:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Where this should be directed</b>
<b>Reporting a repair or fault</b>	Please contact our Customer Services Team – 01775 761161.
<b>Complaints from one tenant about another</b>	Please see our Tenancy Management Policy. We will accept complaints if a tenant is dissatisfied with how their case was handled by Officers.
<b>Administration of the Housing Register</b>	Corporate complaints procedure <a href="https://www.sholland.gov.uk/Feedback">https://www.sholland.gov.uk/Feedback</a>
<b>Issue relating to homelessness/the Housing Options service</b>	Corporate complaints procedure <a href="https://www.sholland.gov.uk/Feedback">https://www.sholland.gov.uk/Feedback</a>
<b>Setting of rent or service charges</b>	First Tier Tribunal – Property Chamber (Residential Property)
<b>Matters that have already been considered under this or any other Council complaints policy or procedure</b>	These matters are considered to be closed.
<b>Complaints that have been investigated by the Housing or Local Government Ombudsman</b>	These matters are considered to be closed
<b>Damage to a tenant's belongings caused by circumstances beyond the Council's control e.g. through storm or flooding</b>	Contents insurance is the responsibility of the tenant. This is a term of the tenancy and tenants are informed of this requirement at tenancy sign up and at each settling in visit when they move in.
<b>Matters where the Council's/tenant's/a third party's insurer is determining liability.</b>	These matters will be investigated as part of the liability case.
<b>Matters relating to ongoing legal cases (examples include personal injury and housing disrepair claims).</b>	These matters will be investigated as part of the legal case, this only applied where legal proceedings have started.
<b>A request for an appeal or review of a statutory decision</b>	Appeals and reviews will be managed in line with the relevant policy and/or legislation.
<b>Any issue which is set out in Council policy and the policy has been followed</b>	We will not accept a complaint where the Council has followed its own policies. Our Housing policies are available at <a href="http://www.sholland.gov.uk/myhome">www.sholland.gov.uk/myhome</a>
<b>The issue giving rise to the</b>	We will not accept a complaint where the

complaint occurred over 12 months ago OR it has been over 12 months since the complainant became aware of the issue	event occurred more than 12 months ago, OR it has been more than 12 months since the complainant became aware of the issue, except where there are health and safety issues or safeguarding concerns
Councillor's conduct	Corporate complaints procedure <a href="https://www.sholland.gov.uk/Feedback">https://www.sholland.gov.uk/Feedback</a>
Freedom of Information requests	Freedom of Information policy <a href="https://www.sholland.gov.uk/FOI">https://www.sholland.gov.uk/FOI</a>
Data protection and data protection requests	Data Protection Policy <a href="https://www.sholland.gov.uk/dataprotectionpolicy">https://www.sholland.gov.uk/dataprotectionpolicy</a>
Complaints from contractors about their commercial or contractual relationships with the Council.	Corporate complaints procedure <a href="https://www.sholland.gov.uk/Feedback">https://www.sholland.gov.uk/Feedback</a>
Expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey	The person completing the survey will be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to

We will not consider a complaint where an external appeals process is being pursued. This means in cases where, for example, a leasehold valuation tribunal, rent assessment committee, or a court of law is considering the complaint, we will follow the external process. The decision of the external process will be final, and a complaint related to the same issue cannot be lodged again or reopened.

We may refuse to consider a complaint where we are taking linked legal action against the complainant, including the issue of a claim against the complainant e.g. a complaint about the conduct of an Officer who is a witness in a claim for possession. We will continue to seek complaint resolution with a tenant pursuing Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Condition Claims in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service's guidance from November 2021.

Where we determine the issue will not be treated as a complaint, we will explain why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and provide information on how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

Where we conduct surveys, we will ensure that the survey makes tenants aware of this policy and how to give feedback.

Each complaint will be considered on its own merit and there will be no blanket refusal if a complaint fits into a category above. Where we do not accept a complaint, we will provide an explanation to the resident setting out the reasons why and their right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman.

## 7. Making a compliment or complaint

Compliments and complaints can be made in a variety of ways:

- Online at [www.sholland.gov.uk/myhome/feedback/complaint](http://www.sholland.gov.uk/myhome/feedback/complaint)
- By email to [housingcomplaints@sholland.gov.uk](mailto:housingcomplaints@sholland.gov.uk)
- By telephone 01775 761161
- By post to Housing Feedback, South Holland District Council, Council Offices, Spalding, Lincs PE11 2XE.
- In person to any staff member

We will accept compliments and complaints from the following individuals:

- a) A person who is or has been in a landlord/tenant relationship with the Council. This includes people who have a lease, tenancy, licence to occupy or other arrangement to occupy premises owned or managed by the Council. If the complaint is made by an ex-occupier, they must have had a legal relationship with the Council within the last twelve months;
- b) A representative(s) of any of the people above who has that person's written consent to make a complaint on their behalf;
- c) A representative(s) of any of the people above who does not have the capacity to give their consent to someone to act on their behalf. The Council must be satisfied that the representative has the legitimate authority to act on the person's behalf; or
- d) A person with the legal capacity to make a complaint on behalf of any of the people above who is deceased e.g. matters relating to the termination of the tenancy after the tenant has passed.
- e) A non-tenant complaining about the management of our properties if this affects their daily lives – i.e. an overgrown garden impacting their space – these complaints will be pointed to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGCSO) for help throughout their complaint process.

We will not proceed with complaints where they are:

- Made via social media - we will signpost the complainant to complain via our website. Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.
- Anonymous however, we will still consider whether action is required by us to deal with the issue.

To ensure tenants are aware of the ways to give us feedback and how to contact the Housing Ombudsman or the LGCSO, we have:

- Established a section on our website focused on tenant feedback and how feedback is handled.
- Amended frequently used letter templates including gas servicing.
- Provided 'feedback cards' to our Officers and contractors to hand out to tenants (for completion after Officers/contractors have left their home)
- Installed posters in our Community Centres.
- Include a section in our annual report on compliments and complaints received, our learnings from them and improvements made.

### Our Two Stage Complaints Process

There are 2 stages to our formal complaints process following which the matter may be considered by the Housing Ombudsman / LGCSO.

In the first instance we will always attempt to speak to the complainant to understand the reason for the complaint and will formally acknowledge their complaint within 5 working days.

We aim to resolve the majority of complaints at stage 1. We will respond to a complaint when the answer is known not when outstanding actions required to address the issue are complete. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly, keeping the tenant informed of the timescales for resolution.

### **Stage 1 – Formal Complaint**

- Complaints are **acknowledged, defined and logged within 5 working days**
- The acknowledgement will:
  - Set out our understanding of the complaint
  - Confirm the outcomes the resident is seeking
  - Clarify which issues we are and are not responsible for.
- A full response will be issued within **10 working days**
- Complaints about the conduct of staff will be investigated internally and in line with data protection legislation. The outcome of any internal investigations will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the complainant; however, a written response will be provided informing the complainant of any improvements from investigations and confirming the complaint has been taken seriously. No staff names will be referred to within any response as per the Housing Ombudsman Code.

### **Extensions (Stage 1):**

- Will not be made without good reason. These will usually be agreed when the complaint requires more investigation so that a full and comprehensive response can be provided or if the complainant requests an extension
- May be extended by **up to 10 additional working days** with the consent of the complainant, when more extensive investigations need to take place
- Reasons for the extension and the revised response date will be clearly explained and provided in written format
- Where responses have been extended or exceed Code timescales, we will agree suitable update intervals with the complainant
- If the complainant does not agree to the extension, a response will be provided within the 10-day time frame, with explanations as to why it is not a full response due to on-going investigation. These will be recorded and monitored.

All investigations carried out are by Senior Officers / Team Leaders who are trained in complaint handling and the service area they are investigating to ensure that tenants are given confidence complaints will be handled fairly by the appropriate person.

## **Stage 2 – Review of Complaint**

- Residents can request escalation if dissatisfied with Stage 1
- Requests will be acknowledged within **5 working days**
- A stage 2 response will be issued within **20 working days**

### **Extensions (Stage 2):**

- These will usually be agreed when the complaint requires more investigation so that a full and comprehensive response can be provided or if the complainant requests an extension.
- May be extended by **up to 20 additional working days** with agreement of the complainant, when more extensive investigations need to take place
- Reasons for the extension and the revised response date will be clearly explained and provided in written format
- Where responses have been extended or exceed Code extension timescales, we will agree suitable update intervals with the complainant and provide clear reasons for the late response and the expected date of resolution.
- If the complainant does not agree to the extension, a response will be provided within the 20-day time frame, with explanations as to why it is not a full response due to on-going investigation. These will be recorded and monitored.

Stage 2 is the final stage of the Council's complaints process.

The timescales are set by the Housing Ombudsman in the Complaint Handling Code. Complainants can seek advice from the Housing Ombudsman throughout their complaint, not only when the complaints process is exhausted.

If we are unable to comply with the code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, we will inform the Housing Ombudsman and where possible provide information to residents. We will publish this notification on our website if possible and provide an estimate time of resolution to residents and the Housing Ombudsman.

Our complaints process is published on the website including South Holland District Councils Self-assessment against the complaint handling code. Information on the complaints process is included in our suite of standard letters that are used outside of the complaints process. All staff are also required to understand the complaints

process and are encouraged to report dissatisfaction by tenants.

The self-assessment of the Housing Ombudsman will be reviewed following:

- A significant restructure
- Merger
- Change in procedure.
- A Housing Ombudsman investigation.

Timeline for complaints

STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS:



STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS:



**Stage 1: Formal complaint made**  
**Investigating Officer: Senior Service Officer / Team Leader**

Complaints will be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure within five working days\* of the complaint being received. We will manage expectations, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic and will give timescales when the response is due.

The Senior Service Officer / Team Leader will investigate the complaint and respond with their findings within 10 working days\*\* of the complaint being acknowledged and logged.

Where additional complaints are raised during the investigation they will be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.

If we are not able to respond within 10 working days due to exceptional circumstances such as awaiting for comprehensive reports from Contractors, we will contact the complainant to agree an extension. The reasons why an extension is required will be explained and recorded to aid in transparency of the complaint process. We will also agree a timeframe for keeping in touch with the complainant during any extension. If we are unable to agree an extension with the tenant, we will provide them with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman Service so they can seek support. Where a complaint takes some time to investigate, we will keep the complainant updated as to the progress of the investigation.

Where we make adverse findings against the complainant or any member of staff, agent or contractor of the Council, they will be given the opportunity to comment on those adverse findings before a final decision is made. This may lengthen the process.



\*Working days are Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays.

\*\*Timescales can be extended both by agreement and in extenuating circumstances as per the Complaint Handling Code

**Stage 2: review of complaint –  
Investigating Officer : Service Manager or Service Director – Housing**

If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at stage 1, the complaint can be escalated to stage 2. Stage 2 complaints will only be accepted within 12 months of the initial Stage 1 complaint being responded to. Stage 2 requests will be logged and acknowledged within 5 working days of the escalation request.

Where additional complaints are raised at stage 2, they will be incorporated into a stage 1 response, if they are relevant and a stage 1 response has not been issued. Where this will delay a response to stage 2, a separate complaint will be logged.

Residents are not required to explain their reason for requesting a stage 2 consideration. The complaint must be progressed unless an exclusion ground applies. In instances where the Council declines to escalate a complaint, the Officer will clearly communicate in writing the reasons for not escalating as well as the tenant's right to approach the Ombudsman about the decision.

Investigating Officer will investigate the complaint and respond within 20 working days\*\* of the request to escalate the review. If we are not able to respond within 20 working days, we will contact the complainant to agree an extension, which will be no longer than 20 working days. If we are unable to agree an extension with the complainant, we will provide them with the contact detail of the Housing Ombudsman Service so they can seek support.



**Housing Ombudsman**

If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at stage two, they can escalate the complaint to the Ombudsman.

The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

- Online complaint form: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/online-complaint-form/](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/online-complaint-form/)
- Phone: 0300 111 3000
- Postal address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET

The Council will cooperate with the Ombudsman providing information within 15 working days of request.

For non-tenant complaints the LGSCO Ombudsman details are:

- Online complaint form: [www.lgo.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.lgo.org.uk/contact-us)
- Phone: 0300 061 0614
- Postal address: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

Within the complaint acknowledgement letter(s), we will set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the complainant is seeking, confirming the deadline for a response. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the complainant will be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties giving the resident a fair chance to set out their position.

A complaint investigation for stage 1 & 2 will be carried out within the timescales set out in the housing ombudsman code. The investigator will:

- Deal with complaints on their merits.
- Act independently and have an open mind.
- Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- Consider all information and evidence carefully including previous complaints about a recurring issue.
- Collaborate and co-operate working with colleagues across other departments.
- Present any adverse findings to the complainant before a final decision is made.
- Keep the complaint confidential, as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.
- Keep the complainant updated of the investigation where the investigation is taking longer than the standard timescale by a method of communication agreed with the complainant.
- Act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing.
- Take into account our Reasonable Adjustments Policy

Complaint responses for stage 1 & 2:

- Be written in plain language that is appropriate to the complainant.
- Address all of the points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice, where appropriate
- Not identify individual members of staff or contractors (as per Ombudsman recommendations)
- Advise of:
  - The complaint stage.
  - The complaint definition.
  - The decision of the complaint.
  - The reasons for decisions made.
  - The details of any remedy offered to put things right.
  - Details of any outstanding actions - these actions will be tracked and actioned expeditiously with regular updates provided to the complainant. Outstanding actions will not delay the complaint response.
  - Details of any service improvements as a result of the complaint.
  - Details of how to escalate the matter further if dissatisfied
- Clearly set out the obligations of both parties where the complaint relates to legal obligations as a landlord.

We will not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the

complaint's procedure. Reasons for declining to escalate a complaint will be the same as the reasons for not accepting a complaint (as set out in section 4). Where we refuse to allow a complaint to escalate, we will write to the complainant to confirm:

- That the request to escalate the complaint has been refused
- The reasons for refusing the escalation.
- The right to approach the Ombudsman about the decision (and their contact details).

We will keep a full record of a complaint, including the original complaint, any further correspondence from the complainant, any acknowledgements and responses to either stage of the complaint. All information will be securely stored following our Data Protection retention schedule and the housing ombudsman requirements.

## 8. Complaint Outcomes

Housing services categorises decisions about complaints as:

- **Complaint upheld**  
This is where the Investigating Officer agrees that the complaint was justified and that there has been a failure to provide the service to the expected standard.
- **Complaint partially upheld**  
This is where the Investigating Officer agrees that part of the complaint was justified and there has been a failure to provide the service to the expected standard and part of the complaint was not justified and is therefore not fully upheld.
- **Complaint not upheld**  
This is where Housing Services do not agree that the complaint was justified.

### Putting things right

Where something has gone wrong, we will ensure that our response acknowledges this, and we will set out the action we have taken or will take to put it right. This may 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 compensation; and/or
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

Remedies will clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the complainant where appropriate. Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the residents as a result of any fault identified taking into account any guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman.

We will look past the individual complaint and consider whether the process or

systems need to be reviewed. We will take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints.

In some cases, a complainant may have legal entitlement to redress. We will still offer a resolution where possible after obtaining legal advice regarding how the resolution should be worded.

## **9. Unreasonable, persistent or vexatious complainants**

In general, dealing with a complaint is a straightforward process, but in a minority of cases people pursue their complaints in a way that can delay the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource implications for the Council making it necessary for special measures to be taken

The Council's Unreasonably Persistent Complaints, Customer Behaviour and Vexatious Requests policy sets out our right to restrict or change access to our services where we consider a customer's actions to be unacceptable. A copy of this document is available on our website at <https://www.sholland.gov.uk/media/17706/Vexatious-Policy/pdf/SHDC-CouncilDemocracy-InformationGovernance-VexatiousPolicy.pdf?m=637461267801170000>

We may consider legal action, which may include action against the tenancy, where it is apparent that the restrictions have been ineffective, and a tenant continues to act in an unreasonable manner.

## **10. Remedies and Compensation**

Putting things right is the first step to repairing and rebuilding the landlord and tenant relationship. If something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions that we have already taken or intend to take to put things right.

Remedies can include an apology, an explanation, preventative action, staff training, amendments to policies/procedures, payments for loss or damage, or financial compensation in exceptional circumstances. Any remedy offered will reflect the extent of any and all service failures, and the level of detriment caused to the complainant as a result.

We will carefully manage the expectations of residents and not promise anything that cannot be delivered or would cause unfairness on other residents.

For in-depth details on how compensation is awarded please refer to our Housing Compensation Policy.

Remedies may include:

- An apology
- Action to fix the issue
- Service improvements

- Financial compensation

Compensation will reflect:

- The impact on the resident
- The severity of service failure
- Any vulnerabilities within the household
- Housing Ombudsman guidance

Statutory compensation (for example Right to Repair, Home Loss and Disturbance payments) will be paid where applicable.

## **11. Learning from complaints**

We are committed to using tenant feedback as a learning experience and, where appropriate, we will put things right.

We use complaints to drive improvement by:

- Identifying trends and root causes
- Improving services and training
- Reporting learning to tenants and Members

Learning outcomes are reviewed through tenant groups, officer forums and Cabinet governance processes.

We are committed to improving service delivery through the complaints reporting and feedback process and ensuring our tenant voice is heard. Data on complaint and service request handling, alongside other management information, provides assurance and aids in the assessment of risks. Information on complaints can provide essential insight into the Service including any themes or trends, systematic issues and risks. We will also use the findings to revise policies and procedures, to train staff and contractors and improve communication and record-keeping. Data captured from complaints received will also improve information provided to tenants to help them understand what the Council's responsibility is, what is the responsibility of other organisations and what is the tenant's responsibility.

We will report any improved service change made following a complaint outcome and publish it on the Council's website at [www.sholland.gov.uk/myhome](http://www.sholland.gov.uk/myhome) and our Annual Report.

Learnings are reported at the quarterly Housing Complaints Working Group attended by the Service Director for Housing, Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing, Information Manager and Data Protection Officer, Service Leads, Complaints Co-Ordinator and the Tenant Influence and Engagement Lead.

Tenants are informed of learnings at our Complaints and Performance Focus Group

and monthly bulletins are sent out to all tenants signed up to our Tenants Forum.

## **12. Scrutiny and oversight**

Complaint performance is scrutinised in the following ways:

- tenant led Complaints and Performance Focus Group
- Housing Performance and Compliance Clinic attended by the Service Director for Housing, Director for Communities and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing (Member Responsible for Complaints) considering monthly performance on complaint volumes, comparisons year on year and compliance with the Complaint Handling Code
- Complaints Working Group attended by the Service Director for Housing and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing (Member Responsible for Complaints).
- Performance Monitoring Panel and Cabinet (on a quarterly basis).
- Our Tenant Influence Panel on a quarterly basis.

Surveys on the complaints process are sent to all tenants who have submitted a complaint.

Quarterly reports are produced for Complaints Working Group and the Tenants Complaints and Performance Focus Group highlighting:

- the number of complaints and compliments received
- performance against the Housing Ombudsman code of practice
- compliance to the Housing Ombudsman code of practice
- trends, themes and learning outcomes
- individual complaint outcomes, where necessary, including where the Ombudsman has made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies
- Compensation payments awarded.

These two groups challenge and scrutinise performance and outcomes and ensure all complaints are dealt with fairly and transparently according to this policy.

## **13. Governance**

Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. We will update tenants on wider learning and improvements in response to complaints and compliments in our annual report and our website.

We produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, which is scrutinised by our Tenants scrutiny group, the Tenant Influence Panel, members at Performance Monitoring Panel and Cabinet which includes:

- An annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with its requirements. This will also be carried out immediately following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures. Following each self-assessment, we will:
  - Publish the outcome of the self-assessment on our website
  - Include the self-assessment in our annual report to tenants as part of

our complaints handling performance

- A qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance. This will also include a summary of the types of complaints that have been refused
- Any findings of non-compliance of the Housing Ombudsman Code
- Any service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints
- Any annual report of our performance from the Housing Ombudsman
- Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the of South Holland District Council as a landlord

Tenants will be surveyed on their satisfaction with complaint handling as part of the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measure surveys, of which are reported to the Regulator of Social Housing and published nationally. As part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, we will also supply data to the Regulator of Social Housing regarding the number of complaints received and the percentage of complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman timescales.

The Portfolio Holder – Strategic and Operational Housing is the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) The lead Officer for Complaints is the Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead and is responsible for ensuring the Portfolio Holder - Communities & Operational Housing receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on our complaint handling performance.

#### **14. Accessibility and equal opportunities**

The Council recognises and values the diversity of its communities. We aim to reduce barriers and ensure that everyone has equal access to the complaints service. The Council is committed to treating everyone fairly and shall ensure that it complies with the Equality Act 2010.

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to accommodate a person's needs in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. This includes the following:

- Use of plain language;
- Accepting complaints over the phone or in person where it is not reasonable to request that they are submitted in writing;
- Providing information and responses in braille, large print, audio, easy read format and other languages where needed; and
- Providing translators (including sign language translators) where needed.

#### **15. Record keeping and data sharing**

We respect the confidentiality of all tenants. The collection, storage, access to, provision and disclosure of data is in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy and the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

In order to progress a complaint, it may be necessary to share the complaint with a third party such as a contractor.

## **16. Complaint Handling Staff**

The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead of the Housing Service is the designated responsible officer for complaint handling (Lead Officer for Housing Complaints). Whilst service complaints are investigated by the officers identified within the policy the “Lead Officer for Housing Complaints” is responsible for ensuring compliance with the policy and code.

Our Data Protection and Privacy statement is available at <https://www.sholland.gov.uk/article/9020/Tenancy-and-Leasehold-Agreement-Management-privacy-notice>

**Last reviewed - May 2026**  
**Next Review – May 2027**