

South Western Housing Society Ltd

Complaints Policy

1. Statement of Intent

The Society aims to provide services, which meet the customers' needs. The Society aims to resolve complaints effectively within set targets and to the customer's satisfaction.

2. Policy

The Society will investigate fully all complaints made about its services from customers. The Society has a procedure for dealing with complaints, which is publicized in the tenant's handbook and available in leaflet form. This provides for clear stages of progression of a complaint. If a customer is not satisfied with the investigation or outcome of his or her complaint he or she has a right to complain to the Independent Housing Ombudsman. The Society's complaints policy is based on the following assumptions:

- Complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, systematically and fairly;
- A member of the Board may bring a complaint directly to the Society's notice if appropriate;
- Complaints will be dealt with in confidence;
- Complainants will be kept informed of progress and the outcome of any investigation;
- Complaints will be recorded, monitored and acknowledged where appropriate;
- Complainants will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present at any interview;
- The complaints form will clearly monitor the ethnicity, gender and disability of each complainant; this information will be used for monitoring purposes only to comply with legislation regarding the provision of goods and services.
- The Society will use the complaints system to learn from its mistakes and raise the level of customer satisfaction;
- The Society will advise all dissatisfied complainants of their rights and redress;
- Where mistakes have occurred, the Society will not only apologize, but also seek to put the complainant in the position he or she enjoyed before the mistake was made;
- The Society will publish information about its performance against standards and targets in handling complaints;

- All staff likely to be involved in handling complaints will receive training.

3. Implementation

3.1 Information

Information leaflets on the Society's procedures are available from all offices and are contained within the tenant's handbook. The Society's complaint procedure has four stages as described below.

3.2 Procedure

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with service. The complaint procedure should not be used as an appeals mechanism against action taken under the Society's policy.

Stage 1

Customers with a complaint about the service of the Society or its agents will be asked to contact the housing office, either in writing or by telephone. All complaints will be recorded and the complainant will receive a response within five working days of the complaint being received.

Stage 2

If the customer remains dissatisfied, they will be asked to complete a complaints form and a senior officer will deal this with. A written reply will be provided within 15 working days of the complaint being received, if it is necessary further time will be allowed to complete investigations, in these circumstances the customer will be written to, advising them of the situation.

Stage 3.

If the customer remains dissatisfied they can appeal to the Chief Executive who will respond to their complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being received.

Stage 4.

If the customer remains dissatisfied the customer can appeal to the Board of the Society. This will be to a panel of three members. The complainant will be invited to present their case in person and will be able to bring a friend/family

member to support them. The complainant will receive at least five days notice of the meeting. Officers will be asked to present their case to the meeting. The panel will aim to make its decision within 10 working days of the meeting. The decision will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

3.3 Independent Housing Ombudsman

If the complainant remains dissatisfied they will be advised to contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman, details of which will be provided on all relevant literature. The Society, on receipt of a request from the Housing Ombudsman, will make all files and records available to the Ombudsman. The Chief Executive must be informed immediately if a customer states that he or she is going to approach the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

3.4 Recording the Complaint

All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken.

3.5 Compensation/apologies

At any stage of the procedure an apology or payment of compensation may be offered (see the Society's compensation policy). Compensation payments are offered where the Society considers the complainant has suffered actual monetary loss or considerable delay in an action being carried out.

3.6 The Society will monitor all complaints at its monthly management meeting and report to the board accordingly

4. Responsibility

The Chief Executive is responsible for the implementation of the complaints policy, and will approve payments of compensation under this policy.

5. Review

The complaints policy will be reviewed every three years.