

**Inspiring Housing  
Community Land Trust**

**Customer feedback and complaints  
Policy**



**6<sup>th</sup> June 2022  
V1**

**Inspiring Housing CLT  
Customer feedback and Complaints  
Policy & Procedure  
Date first adopted: June 2022**

**Review dates:**

<b>Date of review</b>	<b>Amendments/Updates made</b>	<b>Reviewed &amp; accepted</b>	<b>Proposed next review</b>
November 2025	Updated to reflect Ombudsman self-assessment	Nov 25	Nov 26

**Policy Statement**

Inspiring Housing CLT is committed to providing excellent customer service to everyone who is affected by its operation. We do not look at complaints as unwanted and we are firmly committed to a process of continuous improvement of which the complaints procedure is just one element. Recognising that sometimes things go wrong, or mistakes are made, this policy outlines the procedures to follow to make a complaint and the internal procedures we follow to manage the process.

Residents will **not** be required to go through a separate complaints process with a third party. All responses provided by third parties will be treated as part of our official process, and we remain responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and the Code.

This procedure will be available on our website and will form part of the induction process for staff and Directors. A copy will be sent to anyone making a complaint.

**Objectives**

The objectives of this complaint procedure are to ensure that:

- To be transparent and accountable to our customers
- To improve our responsiveness to customer needs and desires, through the use of customer feedback
- To ensure all complaints are actioned in the most expeditious way,
- To improve service delivery by acting on customer feedback
- Support staff to respond to complaints

**Definition of Customer**

For the purposes of this procedure, customers are defined as anyone who has any dealing with the organisation; excluding staff who are asked to raise issues either with their line manager or under the internal grievance procedure.

Directors are also excluded from this procedure: any specific issues should be raised with the Chair of the organisation.

## **Misunderstandings**

Even if customers do not regard a particular concern as a ‘complaint’, we would still like to know about it as it may help us deal with something we would otherwise overlook.

These smaller things that go wrong or small misunderstandings can often be put right very quickly. We want to know about these; we want customers to get an acceptable solution very quickly but we also need to learn from the process.

In striving for excellent customer service, we realise that this is a high standard and in order to meet it, we need to be made aware of even the most minor failing.

In order to avoid customers feeling that a minor issue is not worth raising as a complaint, we will take steps to encourage comment and constructive criticism at every level.

Training will be provided to all staff in dealing with all reported issues and misunderstandings. This training will include an empowerment to immediately resolve any issue where our service level has not met our customer’s expectations, if this is possible. members of staff will record all issues dealt with in this way.

The customer’s name will not be included, and the staff member will make an objective judgement on the cause of the problem, and these will be analysed on a regular basis as part of our process of continuous improvement.

A service request from a customer requiring action to be taken to put something right will not be dealt with under this policy but will be recorded, monitored and reviewed. If however, a customer raises concerns about how their service request is being dealt with this could be address through the complaints policy

## **Definition of a Complaint**

***‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a customer or group of residents.***

The definition “complaint” does not include a comment provided by individuals asking for a simple remedy to a minor problem.

## **Early Resolution and Investigation**

We have processes in place to determine which complaints can be resolved promptly and which require further investigation. When assessing a complaint, we will consider:

- **Complexity:** Whether the issues raised are straightforward or involve multiple factors requiring detailed review.
- **Customer Vulnerability or Risk:** Whether the customer is vulnerable or at risk, ensuring appropriate support and prioritisation.

Most **Stage 1 complaints** can be resolved quickly with an explanation, apology, or practical resolution. Where further investigation is required, we will inform the customer and provide clear timescales for completion.

## Exclusions

The following matters are outside the scope of this complaints process:

1. **Legal Proceedings**  
Issues that are subject to ongoing or completed legal action, court proceedings, or tribunal decisions.
2. **Historic Matters**  
Complaints relating to events that occurred more than **12 months ago**, unless there is a valid reason for the delay and the matter is still relevant.
3. **Third-Party Services**  
Complaints about services not provided by us (e.g., utilities, council tax).
4. **Policy or Legislative Challenges**  
Complaints that seek to challenge government policy, legislation, or regulatory requirements.
5. **Insurance or Compensation Claims**  
Matters solely concerning insurance claims or compensation outside our responsibility.
6. **Employment Issues**  
Complaints relating to staff employment or HR matters.
7. **Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints**  
Complaints considered abusive, persistent without merit, or intended to harass.
8. **Service Requests**  
Requests for a repair or service that do not express dissatisfaction with how it was handled.

## Integrity

During the process of dealing with a complaint we will be as open and transparent as possible. People raising complaints will be given full information about the progress of their complaint except in the cases mentioned below.

- If the complaint involves questions about the actions or competencies of individual members of staff or Director, other processes may subsume the complaints procedure and Inspiring Housing CLT may not be able to provide the person raising the complaint with all the relevant information. (For instance, employment legislation may prevent publication of the results of disciplinary processes)
- The legal requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (Whistleblowers) may restrict the information that can be provided to persons raising complaints. If either of these situations occurs a senior member of staff will provide an explanation without disclosing any restricted information.

To ensure confidentiality, information about the progress of a complaint will only be provided to the person making the complaint.

## Timeframe for Submitting Complaints

We encourage customers to raise complaints as soon as possible after the issue occurs.

- **Standard Timeframe:** Complaints should normally be submitted within **12 months** of the matter arising or becoming known to the resident.
- **Discretion:** We may consider complaints outside this timeframe if there is a valid reason for the delay and the issue is still relevant or ongoing.

## Complaints

Customer can use a number of different ways to let us know they are unhappy.

### Accessibility

- **Multiple Channels:** Complaints can be submitted via phone, email, in writing, or in person.
- **Inclusive Formats:** Information about the complaints process is available in large print, audio, and alternative languages upon request.
- **Support for Vulnerable individuals:** We offer assistance for customers who may have difficulty accessing the process, including home visits or advocacy support.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** Adjustments are made for customers with disabilities or communication needs to ensure equal access.

### Awareness

- **Clear Information:** Details of the complaints process, including timeframes and exclusions, are published on our website and tenant handbook
- **Staff Training:** All staff receive training on the complaints policy and how to assist residents in making a complaint.
- **Regular Reminders:** We promote awareness through newsletters, social media, and annual resident communications.
- **Transparency:** We report complaint performance and learning outcomes in our annual report and on our website.

### Right to Be Accompanied

Customers have the right to be accompanied or represented by an advocate, family member, friend, or support worker at any stage of the complaints process. We will make reasonable adjustments to facilitate this and ensure the process remains accessible and fair.

### Restrictions on Contact

Where restrictions on contact are applied due to unacceptable behaviour, these will always be:

- **Proportionate:** Limited to what is necessary to manage the behaviour effectively without disadvantaging the customers' ability to pursue their complaint.
- **Compliant with Equality Act 2010:** Decisions will demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act, ensuring that any adjustments required for protected characteristics are considered.
- **Clearly Communicated:** The customer will be informed in writing of the nature of the restriction, the reasons for it, and how long it will apply.
- **Reviewed Regularly:** Restrictions will be subject to periodic review to ensure they remain appropriate and necessary.

### Process

Customers making formal complaints are asked to write or email an explanation of the issue that has caused them to be dissatisfied. A complaint should also contain an explanation of what the person making the complaint requires to be done to resolve the issue.

Complaints should be sent to: [office@inspiringhousing.co.uk](mailto:office@inspiringhousing.co.uk) in order to register them within the procedure. The senior member of staff dealing with the complaint will send an acknowledgement within 5 working days giving a complaint registration number. Including this number with any further correspondence will assist Inspiring Housing CLT.

When a complaint is logged at **Stage 1** or escalated to **Stage 2**, we will clearly set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the customer is seeking. This will be referred to as “**the complaint definition**” in line with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code.

If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, we will contact the customer promptly to seek clarification before proceeding. The agreed complaint definition will be confirmed in writing to ensure transparency and shared understanding.

When a complaint is acknowledged at **Stage 1** or **Stage 2**, we will clearly confirm which aspects of the complaint we are responsible for, and which aspects fall outside our remit.

If any areas of responsibility are unclear, we will seek clarification from the customer before proceeding. This ensures transparency and helps manage expectations about what can and cannot be addressed within our complaints process.

This approach ensures transparency and maintains trust throughout the complaints process.

The senior member of staff will refer each complaint to an appropriate Board member for the first review, unless such a person is specifically mentioned in the complaint, in which case it will be referred to another Director of the organisation.

- All correspondence about complaints will be treated as confidential.
- When the first reviewer has considered the detail of the complaint, the person raising the complaint will receive a written response detailing any proposed remedial action. This will be done within 10 days of the receipt of the original complaint.
- If this is not possible, the senior member of staff will explain this in writing within the 10 days. The person raising the complaint will also be told in this response that they can request a second review.
- A complaint response will be provided to the resident **as soon as the answer to the complaint is known**, rather than waiting for all outstanding actions to be completed.
- Any actions required to address the issue will still be tracked and actioned promptly.
- We will provide appropriate updates to the customer on the progress of these actions until completion. The response will clearly set out what has been decided, what actions remain, and the expected timescales for those actions.
- If a second review is requested, the matter will be referred to another Director of Inspiring Housing CLT and the customer will be notified with 5 days of the complaint being escalated.
- Following the second review, the person raising the complaint will be provided with a written response within 20 days detailing any changes to the previously proposed remedial action. In the majority of cases the second review will be the final position of Inspiring Housing CLT.

### **Addressing All Points and Providing Clear Reasons**

Our complaint responses will:

- **Cover All Points:** Address every issue set out in the agreed **complaint definition**.
- **Provide Clear Reasons:** Explain the outcome of each point clearly and transparently.
- **Reference Relevant Standards:** Where appropriate, reference the relevant policy, law, and good practice that informed our decision.
- **Ensure Understanding:** Responses will be written in plain language so customers can easily understand the reasoning behind decisions.

## Acknowledging When Things Have Gone Wrong

Where we identify that something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this openly and set out the actions we have taken or intend to take to put things right. These actions may include:

- **Apologising** to the customer.
- **Acknowledging the error** and its impact.
- **Providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons** for what happened.
- **Taking corrective action** if there has been a delay.
- **Reconsidering or changing a decision** where appropriate.
- **Amending records** or adding a correction or addendum.
- **Offering a financial remedy** where justified.
- **Reviewing and changing policies, procedures, or practices** to prevent recurrence.

Our approach ensures transparency, fairness, and compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code.

## Providing written confirmation of decision

Stage 1 Completion – Written Confirmation	Stage 2 Response and Outstanding Actions
<p>At the completion of <b>Stage 1</b>, we will provide the resident with a written response in clear, plain language that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Complaint Stage:</b> Confirmation that the complaint is at Stage 1.</li> <li>• <b>The Complaint Definition:</b> A summary of the agreed definition of the complaint.</li> <li>• <b>The Decision:</b> The outcome of the complaint.</li> <li>• <b>Reasons for Decisions:</b> Clear explanations for each decision made, referencing relevant policy, law, or good practice where appropriate.</li> <li>• <b>Remedy Offered:</b> Details of any remedy provided to put things right.</li> <li>• <b>Outstanding Actions:</b> Information on any actions still to be completed and expected timescales.</li> <li>• <b>Escalation Details:</b> How to escalate the matter to Stage 2 if the resident is not satisfied with the response.</li> </ul>	<p>At Stage 2, we will provide the resident with a written complaint response <b>as soon as the decision on the complaint is known</b>, rather than waiting for all outstanding actions to be completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outstanding Actions:</b> Any actions required to implement the resolution will still be tracked and completed promptly.</li> <li>• <b>Regular Updates:</b> We will keep the resident informed of progress on these actions at agreed intervals until completion.</li> <li>• <b>Transparency:</b> The Stage 2 response will clearly state the decision, any remedies offered, and details of outstanding actions with expected timescales.</li> </ul>

## Handling Additional Complaints During Investigation

If a customer raises additional complaints while an existing complaint is being investigated:

- **Related Issues Before Stage 1 Response Issued:** If the new issues are related to the original complaint and the Stage 1 response has not yet been issued, they will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response.
- **Unrelated Issues or After Stage 1 Response Issued:** If the new issues are unrelated to the original complaint or incorporating them would unreasonably delay the Stage 1 response, they will be logged as a **new complaint** and handled separately.

This approach ensures timely responses while addressing all relevant concerns fairly and transparently.

### Escalation of Complaints

We will not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of our complaints procedure unless there are **valid reasons** for doing so. If escalation is refused, we will:

- **Provide Clear Reasons:** Set out the reasons in writing to the customer, ensuring they are transparent.
- **Ensure Compliance:** Confirm that any decision to refuse escalation complies fully with the Code and does not disadvantage the customer.
- **Offer Alternative Routes:** Where escalation is not possible, advise the customer of their right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

### Time Scales - Remedies at Any Stage

We have processes in place to ensure that a complaint can be resolved at **any stage** of the complaints process. Appropriate remedies will be considered and, where possible, provided without requiring escalation to the next stage.

This means:

- If a suitable resolution is identified during Stage 1, it will be implemented immediately, even if the complaint could proceed to Stage 2.
- Remedies may include actions such as completing outstanding works, providing clear information, issuing an apology, or offering compensation where appropriate.
- Our priority is to resolve complaints promptly and fairly, avoiding unnecessary delays or escalation.

If we anticipate that a response to a complaint during stage 1 or 2 will fall outside the timescales set out in this policy, we will:

- **Notify the Customer Promptly:** Inform the customer as soon as possible that the timescale cannot be met.
- **Agree Suitable Update Intervals:** Discuss and agree with the customer how often we will provide progress updates until the response is issued.
- **Provide Reasons and Revised Timescale:** Clearly explain the reason for the delay and confirm the revised expected response date in writing.

### Standards for Complaint Handling

At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers will:

- **Act Fairly and Independently:** Deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and maintain an open mind throughout the process.
- **Ensure Customer Participation:** Give the customer a fair opportunity to set out their position and provide supporting information.
- **Manage Conflicts of Interest:** Take appropriate measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest to maintain impartiality.
- **Consider All Evidence:** Review all relevant information and evidence carefully before reaching a decision.

These principles apply consistently at **Stage 1** and **Stage 2** to ensure transparency, fairness, and compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

The final response will also indicate if, and how, the complaint can be progressed beyond this second stage. Should a complainant still be unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they have the option of referring the matter to either an independent tenant panel, or the Housing Ombudsman. Customers should be aware that neither of these options are managed by Inspiring Housing CLT and we cannot accept any responsibility for their willingness to consider a complaint, not for any judgements made by either of these bodies.

### **Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)**

The Housing Ombudsman Service is a legal body established to impartially consider complaints and disputes between tenants / leaseholders and their landlords. They will consider all of the evidence from both sides of any dispute and can make recommendations to both parties on how to rectify both the matter at hand and to ensure that such a situation does not occur again.

Any customer who is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint may refer their case to the Ombudsman for a judgement, provided that a minimum of 8 weeks have expired since Inspiring Housing complaints process has ended (i.e. 8 weeks after a customer has received their written review of the complaint).

Should a customer wish to take a complaint to the Ombudsman sooner than the 8 week period, they can do with the support of a designated person recognised by the Ombudsman:

- A member of the House of Commons (i.e. an MP)
- A member of the Local Authority for the area in which the property is located (i.e. a Local Councillor)
- A designated Tenant Panel (as outlined above)

Making a referral to the Ombudsman is free and further details can be found at: <http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

### **Results of Complaints**

The Board of Directors will receive a report at least once a year showing how many complaints have been received, the general nature of the problem and a list of remedial actions that have been taken. The Board may, at their discretion, require more frequent reports.

A summary statement will be included on Inspiring Housing CLT website and, at the discretion of the Board, published in our annual report.

### **Continuous Improvement**

Inspiring Housing CLT strives to be a learning organisation and will further develop quality improvement procedures, which will include information received from this process. Inspiring Housing CLT would appreciate feedback from complainants about their experience of Inspiring Housing complaints procedure and may use this to improve the way complaints are managed in the future.

### **Standard Objective for Complaint Handling**

All employees and any third parties involved in complaint handling must adhere to the following principles:

- **Collaborative Approach:** Work co-operatively across teams and departments to resolve complaints effectively and promptly.
- **Collective Responsibility:** Take shared responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, focusing on solutions rather than attributing blame.
- **Professional Standards:** Act in accordance with professional standards for complaint handling as set by any relevant professional body, ensuring fairness, respect, and integrity throughout the process.

This objective applies consistently across all stages of the complaints process and supports a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

### **Service standards and performance measures**

#### **Formal Complaints**

- The number of complaints received by service area and complaint theme
- The percentage of complaints received successfully resolved after an investigation

#### **Investigating complaints**

- All formal complaints to have a written acknowledgement sent to the complainant within 5 working days of our receipt of the initial complaint
- A written response detailing the findings of the complaint investigation to be sent out to the complainant within 10 working days of our receipt of the initial complaint
- The percentage and number of complaints upheld or partially upheld

#### **Reviewing Investigations**

- All requests for a complaint review to have a written acknowledgement sent to the complainant within the 5 working days of our receipt of the request for a review
- A written response detailing the findings of the complaint review to be sent out to the complainant within 10 working days of our receipt of the request for a review
- The percentage and number of complaints upheld or partially upheld

### **Equality and diversity**

We will apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on any protected characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010.

### **Complaints**

Any resident or other stakeholder who is dissatisfied with how we have managed their properties is able to submit a complaint using our Complaints process.

Once our Complaints policy is complete and if they remain dissatisfied, then they can contact the Housing Ombudsman.