

Complaint Handling Procedure

This procedure has been developed to complement our Complaints Policy and explains how we manage our complaints process from start to finish by aiming to resolve complaints quickly and have set out clear guidance for colleagues to follow to ensure that we are fair, consistent, and open in the way we deal with complaints.

Every complaint is different but by following the same clear steps, we can ensure you feel your complaint is being taken seriously and will be resolved.

Definition of Complaint

A complaint is 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 complainant does not need to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such.

The word complaint does not have to be used to identify a complaint, and when a customer expresses dissatisfaction, we will give the customer the choice to have a complaint raised. We will be led by the customer as to how best to deal with their dissatisfaction.

Sometimes it may be appropriate to deal with a customer query as a service request rather than a complaint, a service request is a request from a customer to put something right or where action can be taken immediately to resolve an issue.

When this occurs, this will be on agreement with the customer, or upon their request, and will not exclude the customers right to pursue a complaint should they wish.

Service requests are not complaints but will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.

If a customer is not satisfied with the response or resolution offered for a service request, this will then be raised as a complaint.

When a customer raises dissatisfaction with the response or resolution to their service request a complaint will be raised even if the issue is still being addressed.

Two examples in how we determine whether the request is a service request or complaint are as follows –

- a. customer calls in to report that the contractor has not arrived at the agreed time. If an explanation and resolution can be given on the call to the customers satisfaction, then the details will be recorded on the system. If the matter requires more than a brief call to the contractor then a complaint will be logged and actioned as per the complaints process.
- b. A customer calls in to report a repair, if this is the first time that a customer has reported the issue, this will be dealt with as a service request and a repair will be logged as per our repairs process.

If the customer is chasing up a missed appointment, if an explanation and resolution can be given on the call to the customers satisfaction, then the details will be recorded on the system.

If the customer is dissatisfied with the handling of the repair/the repetitiveness of the issue a complaint will be logged and will be actioned as per the complaints process.

Complaints Process

We have a two stage complaints procedure to manage matters where we are unable to agree a resolution with you at the first point of contact

All complaints will be acknowledged, defined and logged within five working days of being received and thereafter processed as quickly as reasonably possible, and within the timescales stated in the Complaints procedure.

Stage 1

At stage 1 of the complaints policy the complaint will be investigated by a Customer Complaints Investigator.

We will communicate with you through your agreed method of communication and if required may arrange to meet you in person to resolve efficiently

When acknowledging a complaint, Alliance Homes will set out in writing our understanding of the complaint, the outcome the customer is seeking and set out any aspects of the complaint that Alliance Homes is or is not responsible for. If there is any aspect of the complaint that is unclear a member of the complaints team will ask the customer for clarification.

Customers will receive a full response to their stage 1 complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

The response will be provided to the customer when the answer is known, not when all outstanding actions are completed.

If a complaint or appeal cannot be resolved within the initial 10-day investigation period, the customer will be contacted to update them on progress, explain what actions remain to be taken, and agree an extension of no more than 10 additional working days for those actions to be completed.

Any further extensions will only be requested if there is a good reason.

Escalation

If a customer remains unhappy after the stage 1 complaint, or any agreed actions have not been completed satisfactorily they may ask us to escalate to stage 2 of the complaints process, this should be requested within 10 working days where possible.

When escalating a complaint, Alliance Homes will set out in writing our understanding of the complaint, the outcome the customer is seeking and set out any aspects of the complaint that Alliance Homes is or is not responsible for. If there is any aspect of the complaint that is unclear the Customer Complaints Manager will ask the customer for clarification. A customer will not be required to provide reasons for requesting their complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2

Any stage 2 complaints will be acknowledged, defined, and logged within 5 working days of an escalation request.

The stage 2 is coordinated by our Customer Complaints Manager. A full investigation will be undertaken and a complete review of the previous response and subsequent actions of stage 1. To provide a quality check of the complaint and the proposed solution, the matter will be reviewed at a case conference, this will include a group of managers and senior managers who look at all complaints to ensure they have been fairly and consistently handled.

The Customer Complaints Investigator who completed the stage 1 investigation will be invited to attend the beginning of the case conference to discuss what actions they have investigated and how they came to their conclusion and will then be asked to leave the meeting, this is to ensure fairness and to remain independent.

A final response will be given after the stage 2 acknowledgement has been given and this will be within a 20-working day period.

If we are unable to resolve the stage 2 complaint within these timescales, the customer will be contacted to update them on progress, explain what actions remain to be taken and the reason why the extension is needed, and then agree an extension of no more than 20 additional working days for those actions to be completed.

Any further extensions will only be requested if there is a good reason.

The response will be provided to the customer when the answer is known, not when all outstanding actions are completed.

The customer will also be given the opportunity to comment on any adverse findings before we determine our final response, this will happen within the 20 working days timescale. We will then further consider any customer comments made. We will then confirm our response to you.

If a complaint falls outside of any of these timescales, we will agree with the customer suitable intervals to update them on their complaint.

Stage 2 is Alliance Homes final response to the complaint, if a customer remains unhappy after this stage the next steps are to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman.

Customers may also approach the Housing Ombudsman at any stage of the complaints process if the extension timescales of a complaint exceed those stated in the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Housing Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your stage 2 complaint you can choose to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with them and the service is free, independent, and impartial.

The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted as follows:

- Online: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Telephone: 0300 111 3000
- e-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Legal Complaints

We will wherever possible, continue to engage with you when a complaint or damp and mould issue has the potential to become a disrepair case.

We will continue to progress the complaint until the court papers have been issued, at which point the court case takes precedence. We will ensure throughout this process that required repairs are progressed in an appropriate timeline.