
Complaints Handling Policy

1.0 Policy

- 1.1 Sapphire Independent Housing is committed to increasing satisfaction through delivering an excellent service.
- 1.2 We recognise that there may be times when we do not get things right and when this happens we will apologise and rectify the problem promptly, efficiently and sensitively.
- 1.3 Our staff take a positive approach to encouraging and responding to feedback, including complaints, comments and compliments.
- 1.4 We will identify potential improvements through the complaints process, and through collecting and monitoring customer feedback.

2.0 Publicity

- 2.1 Sapphire Independent Housing is committed to publicising the complaint policy and procedure in the following ways so that all customers have access to it:
 - Feedback Forms will be available in our supported housing schemes and staff will be available to explain the procedure and provide guidance to customers
 - The Resident Pack will contain a clear written explanation of the complaints procedure
 - The Complaints procedure will be explained to new clients as a part of the Booking In stage
 - Our website will display the complaints policy

3.0 Definition

- 3.1 A complaint is defined as:

‘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 resident or group of residents.’

- 3.2 A complaint may be made because Sapphire Independent Housing has:
 - Provided a poor service or failed to provide a service at all
 - Failed to do something that we have an obligation to do
 - Treated someone unfairly
 - Our staff have behaved unhelpfully, inappropriately or discourteously

4.0 When NOT to use the Complaints Procedure

- 4.1 The complaints procedure should not be used for the following:
 - To request a service e.g. for maintenance work to be carried out
 - To complain about things outside of the control of Sapphire Independent Housing e.g. move-on availability
 - Compensation claims
 - To report anti social behaviour or nuisance, as these are dealt with under a separate anti social behaviour policy and procedure
 - To appeals against warnings, notices to quit or evictions
(*Please refer to our Appeals Procedure*).

- Legal proceedings have started.
- Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy

5.0 Comments and Compliments

- 5.1 Comments about the service are when someone wants to provide feedback about their experience but are not expecting us to carry out any follow up actions. A comment can also include a suggestion for service improvements.
- 5.2 Compliments are when someone wants to praise staff who delivered a service particularly well.
- 5.3 All comments and compliments will be recorded and passed on to the relevant individual and their service manager.

6.0 Who can Make a Complaint

- 6.1 A complaint can be made by anyone who receives a service from the organisation or is affected by a decision or action taken by Sapphire Independent Housing
- 6.2 We accept complaints from an advocate or representative when the customer has confirmed they wish that person to act on their behalf.

7.0 How to Make a Complaint

- 7.1 A complaint can be made in any of following ways:
- in person to any member of staff
 - over the telephone
 - in writing either by letter or by completing a feedback form (forms can be posted in the suggestion box in our hostels)
 - via email at info@sih.org
 - via your scheme resident representative or an advocate of your choice.
- 7.2 We encourage customers to say what actions they feel would resolve their complaint however we cannot guarantee that we will meet these.

8.0 Rights

- 8.1 Customers making a complaint have a right to:
- Make a complaint without fear of reprisal or victimisation
 - Treated fairly in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy
 - Ask for reasonable support from Sapphire Independent Housing staff as they require to meet their needs
 - Have an independent advocate to provide independent impartial support to them throughout the complaints procedure
 - Receive support if they have learning disabilities e.g. information will be provided in a form that is easily accessible and correspondence can be provided through the keyworker
 - Be kept informed of the progress of their complaint
 - Be informed of the outcome of the complaint
 - Escalate the complaint if they are not satisfied with the outcome..

9.0 Confidentiality

- 9.1 In line with the Data Protection Act 1988 all personal and sensitive information will be treated as confidential.

9.2 We will only involve other agencies with the consent of the resident involved unless law requires to us or the information is necessary for the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults.

10.0 When a Complaint may be refused

10.1 In exceptional circumstances, Sapphire Independent Housing may refuse to deal with a complaint. Such circumstances include:

- If a complaint is about a matter which has already been considered under our complaints procedure. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your original complaint and it has been investigated via our complaints procedure you have the right to refer the issue to the Housing Ombudsman
- Where a complaint is persistent, vexatious or unreasonable
- If you have not requested to escalate or take the matter further within ten working days of the outcome of the previous stage.

10.2 If your complaint has been refused the reasons for this will be explained fully in writing.

11.0 Monitoring and Reporting of Complaints

11.1 Sapphire Independent Housing will monitor all complaints and feedback received and will present a report to the Board on an annual basis, this will also be published on the Sapphire Independent Housing's website.

11.2 The feedback will be used to identify areas for improvement and to take appropriate action as necessary to improve the service.

12.0 Responsibility

12.1 Awareness of this policy and Sapphire Independent Housing's commitment to early resolution of complaints will be included in staff induction and core training.

12.2 Every staff member has the responsibility for dealing with a complaint before it escalates through our complaints procedure, finding immediate solutions wherever possible.

12.3 If complaints cannot be resolved quickly informally the formal procedure (see 13 below) will apply.

13.0 Complaints Formal Procedure

13.1 The simplest and quickest way to resolve a problem is to raise it with the relevant staff member. If you feel the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may invoke the formal procedure.

13.2 Stages

| | |
|------------------|--|
| STAGE ONE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days • We aim to investigate and respond to your complaint within ten working days • We may request further time to formally respond to your complaint in complex cases • If you are not satisfied with the outcome of stage one, you can escalate the complaint within ten working days |
| STAGE TWO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your complaint will be reviewed logged and escalated within five working days • We respond to your complaint within twenty working days • We may request further time to formally respond to your complaint in complex cases |
| NOTE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the investigation and our formal response may take longer we will ensure that the complainant is kept fully informed on a regular basis, even if there is no specific progress to report. |

13.2 In the event that you feel Sapphire Independent Housing has failed to deal with your complaint satisfactorily after the conclusion of stage two you have the right to refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, however they will expect that you have exhausted Sapphire Independent Housing's, i.e. the end of stage 2.

Complaint form: [Fill in the online complaint form](#)

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Phone: [0300 111 3000](tel:03001113000)

Calls are recorded for training and monitoring purposes.

Write to:
Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ