

Compliments and Complaints Policy

Policy

Policy Reference	
Approved by	Customer Service Committee
Approved Date	27/05/2026
Review Date	27/05/2027
Responsible Board	Customer Service Committee
Responsible Executive	Executive Director of Housing & Communities

References and Engagement

Related Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Standards • Compensation Policy • Reasonable Adjustments Policy • Reasonable Behaviour Policy • Customer Care Policy • ASB Policy
Who this policy applies to	Ocean housing tenants, leaseholders, shared owners and staff
Customer Engagement	Together With Ocean / Have Your Say
Equality Impact Assessment Date (if applicable)	01/03/2026
Legislation/Regulation Referenced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code
Performance Monitoring	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OHL Performance Bulletin <input type="checkbox"/> SLT Performance Bulletin <input type="checkbox"/> Internal Monitoring/Compliance <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) Other:

Location and Version Control

Document Location	Ocean Housing Intranet & Website
Version	1.0

1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 At Ocean Housing, we value all feedback, compliments, comments, and complaints, as opportunities to learn, improve, and strengthen the services we provide. This policy complies with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (2025/26) and incorporates all recommendations from the Ombudsman's review issued on 1 April 2026.
- 1.2 We are committed to handling complaints fairly, transparently, and consistently. We will ensure that every complaint is considered on its merits, that customers are given a fair opportunity to set out their position, and that decisions are based on all relevant information and evidence.
- 1.3 We aim to ensure that every customer feels heard, respected, and confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon.

1.4 Key Aims

- 1.5 Our aims are to:
 - Encourage open and honest feedback.
 - Promote transparency and accessibility.
 - Empower staff to respond constructively.
 - Resolve complaints fairly and within the timescales set by the Code.
 - Learn from complaints to drive service improvement.
 - Manage unreasonable behaviour appropriately.

2.0 Customer Feedback

- 2.1 We welcome and value all customer feedback as an important indicator of service quality and a driver of improvement. Customers will feel safe, supported, and confident sharing their experiences without fear of negative consequences.

3.0 Compliments, Comments, and Suggestions

- 3.1 We welcome and encourage compliments from customers who are particularly satisfied with the service they've received, especially when a team member has gone above and beyond. Recognising excellent service not only boosts morale but also helps us understand what works well. All compliments and suggestions for improvement are recorded and used to inform future service enhancements.
- 3.2 When a compliment is received, it is shared with the relevant staff member

(where known) and their Head of Service. Exceptional service may also be recognised through nominations for our annual Ocean GEM (Going the Extra Mile) awards. Compliments contribute to our overall customer satisfaction monitoring and are reported quarterly to both the Together With Ocean (TWO) tenant group and the Ocean Housing Board.

4.0 Complaints

4.1 Who Can Make a Complaint

4.2 Customers include tenants, leaseholders, shared owners, ReSI shared owners (where we will act as the managing agent), freeholders paying a service charge, and housing applicants. Enquiries from Members of Parliament (MPs) or local councilors are handled under a dedicated contact protocol separately from this policy.

4.3 Advocates

4.4 Advocates acting on behalf of a customer can do so subject to the completion of a signed advocacy form as evidence of a complainant's authorisation or, if it is not possible for the complainant to authorise an advocate in this way, we will request other evidence that the advocacy is legitimate.

4.5 Reasonable Adjustments

4.6 Reasonable adjustments will be considered when a customer has difficulty in making a complaint. Further details can be found in our Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

4.7 How to Make a Complaint

4.8 We accept complaints from residents in person, online, by phone, email, social media, live chat, through our app, or via our staff. Feedback submitted through a survey is not regarded as a complaint, but we ensure wherever possible that survey participants are informed about how they can make a complaint if they wish.

4.9 We will ensure that there are appropriate remedies in place at any stage of the complaint process without the need for escalation.

4.10 Definition of a Complaint

4.11 A complaint is:

“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service,

actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its staff, or those acting on its behalf.”

4.12 Recognising Complaints

4.13 We acknowledge that the word *complaint* does not need to be used. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction, we will give them the choice to register a formal complaint.

4.14 Complaints about Contractors and Third Parties

4.15 We are responsible for the services provided on our behalf, including those delivered by contractors and third parties.

4.16 Where a complaint relates to a contractor or partner organisation, we will ensure that this is handled through our complaints process. Residents will not be required to raise their complaint separately with a contractor.

4.17 We will work with contractors and third parties to investigate complaints and ensure that appropriate action is taken to put things right.

4.18 Service Requests

4.19 A service request is a first request for a service e.g., the *first report of a boiler not working*. These are not complaints, but if dissatisfaction is expressed, customers will be offered the option to raise a complaint. We will not stop our efforts to address the service request, if the resident complains.

4.20 Exclusions

4.21 The following exclusions apply to accessing the complaints process:

- Issues more than 12 months old unless the resident only recently became aware of the issue.
- Matters where legal proceedings have started, defined as when a claim form and particulars of claim have been filed at court.
- Complaints which are already fully considered under this policy.

4.22 Each complaint will be considered on its own merits. Where we decide not to accept a complaint, we will clearly explain the reasons why and advise the resident of their right to refer this decision to the Housing Ombudsman.

4.22 Time Limits

- We will accept complaints raised within 12 months of the resident becoming aware of an issue.
- We will apply discretion where there are good reasons for a delay.

4.23 Accessibility and Support

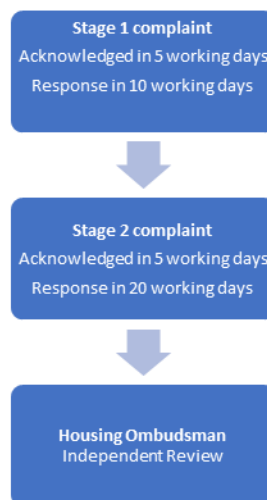
4.24 We will make it easy for residents to raise a complaint and will provide a range of channels to do so. This policy is available on our website and in alternative formats on request.

4.25 We will consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk to determine if it can be addressed more quickly.

4.26 Residents may be supported by an advocate or representative at any stage of the complaints process.

4.27 We will also provide clear information about the Housing Ombudsman Service and how residents can access independent advice at any stage.

4.28 Two-Stage Complaints Process



4.29 There are only two stages. No informal or additional stages exist in the complaints process.

4.30 The Executive Director of Housing and Communities, supported by the Head of Standards and Performance is appointed as the senior lead for complaint

handling.

- 4.31 The Complaints and Compliance team are responsible for the administration of the Ocean Housing complaints process and have access to staff at all levels to facilitate a prompt resolution of complaints.

5.0 How We Will Handle Your Complaint

5.1 Customers complaining to Ocean can expect us to:

- deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind.
- give the resident a fair chance to set out their position
- take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and
- consider all relevant information and evidence carefully

5.2 Each complaint is assessed individually to ensure a fair and thorough response.

We will consider:

- What the complaint is about
- What evidence is needed to fully understand the issues
- Any risks the complaint raises
- Relevant vulnerabilities of the customer
- What outcome the customer is seeking, and whether it is reasonable
- Any urgent actions required

5.3 When determining an appropriate remedy, we consider:

- How long the issue has been ongoing
- How often has the issue occurred
- The severity of any service failure or omission
- The number of failures identified
- The cumulative impact on the customer
- The customer's individual circumstances or vulnerabilities

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

- Apologising.
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons.

- Taking action if there has been delay.
- Reconsidering or changing a decision.
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum.
- Providing a financial remedy.
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

6.0 Compensation

6.1 Compensation will be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature and impact of the complaint. There are four main types of compensation:

- **Mandatory payments** - such as statutory home loss payments
- **Quantifiable loss payments** - where actual financial loss can be demonstrated
- **Discretionary payments** - for time, trouble, distress, or inconvenience
- **Personal injury payments** - for incidents such as slips, trips, or falls

6.2 Further information on the different types of compensation and process each will follow is contained in our Compensation Policy.

7.0 Stage 1 Complaint Handling

7.1 Acknowledgement (within 5 working days)

7.2 We will:

- Acknowledge the complaint.
- Provide a complaint definition summarising:
 - our understanding of the issue
 - the outcomes the resident seeks
 - which aspects we are and are not responsible for

7.3 We will also confirm how the complaint will be handled and the timescales for our response.

7.4 Investigation and Response (within 10 working days)

7.5 We will investigate the complaint fairly and thoroughly, considering all aspects of the complaint definition and any relevant evidence.

7.6 Our response will clearly set out:

- our understanding of the complaint;
- the decision (upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld);
- the reasons for our decision;
- any actions we have taken or will take to put things right, including timescales.
- details of how to escalate to stage 2 if not satisfied with the response

7.7 Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these 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 or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.

We will provide a full written response within 10 working days of acknowledgement.

7.8 Extensions

7.9 If more time is required:

- any extension will be no more than 10 working days, unless there is good reason.
- We will explain why an extension is needed
- we will agree suitable update intervals with the resident
- we will give an expected response date

7.10 Where timescales are extended, we will provide an updated response date, agree how we will keep the resident informed, and provide details of how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

7.11 Outstanding Actions

7.12 Where the answer to the complaint is known:

- We will issue the complaint response without waiting for outstanding actions to be completed.
- Outstanding actions will be tracked and updates provided.

8.0 Stage 2 - Final Review

8.1 Escalation

8.2 Residents are not required to explain why they wish to escalate. Where possible we will endeavor to provide appropriate remedies at the earliest stage of the

complaints process without the need for escalation.

8.3 The review will be carried out by an Executive Director and be a different person to the one who handled the complaint at Stage 1.

8.4 Acknowledgement (within 5 working days)

8.5 We will:

- Provide an updated complaint definition.
- Clarify issues we can and cannot address.

8.6 Response Timescale (within 20 working days)

8.7 We complete a full and thorough investigation, involving all required staff and provide a full written response within 20 working days of acknowledgement, clearly setting out our final decision, the reasons for that decision, and any actions we will take.

8.8 Our response will clearly set out:

- our understanding of the complaint;
- the decision (upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld);
- the reasons for our decision;
- any actions we have taken or will take to put things right, including timescales.
- details of how to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman if not satisfied with the response

8.9 Extensions

8.10 If more time is required:

- any extension will be no more than 20 working days, unless there is good cause.
- we will provide the expected response date.
- we will agree update intervals with the resident.
- Where timescales are extended, we will provide details of how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

8.11 Outstanding Actions

8.12 We will:

- Issue the final response when the answer is known, not when actions are complete.
- Track outstanding actions and provide updates.

9.0 Housing Ombudsman

9.1 Residents may contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any stage for advice and guidance. Following completion of our complaints process, residents may refer their complaint to the Ombudsman for an independent review.

9.2 We will provide residents with information about how to contact the Housing Ombudsman throughout the complaints process.

9.3 Housing Ombudsman Contact Details:

Address: PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET.

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

10.0 Learning, Governance, and Reporting

10.1 Effective complaint learning is central to our approach. We are committed to not only reviewing all complaints for learning, but also actively analysing complaint data alongside other key performance indicators such as satisfaction surveys, repair logs, and service requests to identify recurring themes and systemic issues. Our aim is to transform feedback into actionable insights, enabling us to proactively address root causes and prevent similar complaints in the future.

10.2 Our learning process includes regular reviews at all stages of complaint handling. Outcomes and actions are documented, shared with relevant teams, and tracked to ensure continuous improvement. We will also engage staff, residents, and Board members in discussions about lessons learned, fostering a culture of openness and collaborative problem-solving.

10.3 In accordance with the complaint handling code, we acknowledge that a high volume of complaints may indicate our reporting process is accessible and well-publicised, while lower numbers could suggest there are barriers preventing residents from raising concerns.

10.4 **We will:**

- Publish quarterly and annual reports for transparency, including summaries of lessons learned, actions undertaken, and progress on resolving core issues.
- Provide oversight through senior management, Board, and resident panels, ensuring accountability and engagement in the learning process and in the resolution of systemic concerns.
- Meet quarterly with the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) to review complaint performance and learning.
- Initiate targeted improvement projects to address core issues identified from complaint analysis, such as process reviews, staff training, or policy updates.
- Maintain full records of complaints and learning outcomes, ensuring clear documentation of actions taken and progress made.
- Ensure that Ombudsman guidance and learning inform decision making and remedies.

11.0 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

- 11.1 We will ensure fair access, provide alternative formats/languages, and comply with the Equality Act 2010.

12.0 Training and Culture

- 12.1 Complaint handling staff and managers will receive training in identifying complaints, implementing the Code, and applying this policy as part of their induction. This ensures that residents can raise a complaint with any member of staff, and staff will ensure the details are forwarded to the appropriate person within the landlord's organisation for prompt handling.