

# Sage Homes Complaints Policy<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This policy is adopted by the companies which (at the time of adoption) bear the names Sage Housing Limited, Sage Rented Limited, Sage Shared Ownership Limited, and Sage Housing Group Limited and all other members of the Sage Homes group of companies and/or registered providers from time to time. "Sage Homes" or Sage, as used this policy, may refer to any one or all of these.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. We at Sage Homes are - committed to providing excellent services to our customers and to being open and honest when things go wrong so that we can fix them, learn from our mistakes and improve the way we work.
- 1.2. We can only put things right if we know about them. We encourage our customers and those directly impacted by our services/businesses (or their advocates) to let us know when things go wrong.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1. This policy sets out our approach to handling customer complaints. We aim to make the process simple and clear and to deal with complaints openly, fairly, in a timely fashion and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's guidance, particularly its Complaints Handling Code.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to complaints received from our customers, service users, or third parties complaining on their behalf ("advocates") making a complaint on their behalf.
- 3.2. Sage Homes expects its staff to be familiar with this policy and to use it in dealing with any complaints.
- 3.3. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about Sage Homes' standard of service, action or lack of action (by Sage Homes or its staff or those acting on its behalf) which detrimentally affects a Sage Homes customer or group of customers. We will treat any communication from a relevant party that falls within this definition as a complaint, whether or not the complainant describes their communication as a "complaint".
- 3.4. You may want to complain because you are of the view that Sage Homes:
  - failed to follow its own process
  - failed to follow its own policy
  - significantly or repeatedly failed to provide a service that it is supposed to provide
  - failed to respond to you; or
  - failed to do something it has said it would do.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

### 3.5. Outside scope

Our complaints process will not be suitable in certain circumstances. There are issues that are better dealt with using other processes. Issues relating to the matters listed below are outside the scope of this policy and we may not accept them or escalate them under this policy:

- requests which are dealt with under specific legislation, such as Subject Access Requests
- compensation claims; in most cases claims for compensation will be referred to the appropriate insurer
- a first service request. We deal with service requests as part of our day-to-day business rather than through our complaints process. If you need us to carry out a repair, or you want to report anti-social behaviour (or hate crime or domestic abuse) please go to [mysagehome.co.uk](https://mysagehome.co.uk).
- matters which have already been through our complaints process;
- enquiries from councillors or Members of Parliament (MPs) unless they are acting as advocates for a complainant.

### 3.6. Additionally, we may be unable to or may not investigate a complaint:

- that relates to an ongoing or court-settled legal matter. It is unlikely that we would be able to investigate if legal proceedings are pending. We cannot investigate any complaints on which the courts have already made a decision
- that is not about Sage's services or actions or those of a contractor or partners acting on our behalf.

### 3.7. If we cannot deal with your complaint, we will write to you explaining why and including a list of your options.

## 4. Making a complaint

4.1. Our Head of Customer Service will oversee and monitor the handling of all complaints made under this policy.

### 4.2. How to contact us:

- You (or your advocate) can complain to us in person, using e-form, or by emailing us on [complaints@sagehomes.co.uk](mailto:complaints@sagehomes.co.uk), telephoning us on 020 8168 0500 or by letter to us at Sage Homes, 5th Floor Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EA
- If you express your dissatisfaction to us via social media, we will contact you privately to discuss your complaint
- We accept complaints and feedback from third parties advocating on behalf of Sage Homes customers, such as family members, friends or representatives, solicitors, advice agencies or advocacy workers. To comply with data protection legislation, we must have written and signed consent from the relevant customer before we can respond to a third party.

### 4.3. We ask that you:

- submit your complaint within six months of the incident occurring\*
- submit a request for a stage 2 review of your complaint within 25 calendar days of your stage 1 response\*
- make yourself available (on the telephone or other means appropriate to your needs and agreed with us) to discuss the details of your complaint
- be available, if required, to provide access to your home to resolve issues
- provide further evidence where we request this (eg photographs)
- work with our team in a constructive and courteous way.

\*We will not usually accept a complaint outside these timescales, unless exceptional reasons for the delay can be demonstrated.

## 5. Our complaints process

- 5.1. We will listen to your complaint carefully, consider your expectations and desired outcomes and deal with it on its merits.
- 5.2. We will support you to make sure you are fully informed throughout the process and are aware of the resolution.
- 5.3. We will respond to your complaint in writing and/or, where possible, any other preferred method you may have.
- 5.4. We can provide written responses in a preferred form or language on request.
- 5.5. Sage Homes has a three stage complaints process. We have set this out in detail below. However, please be aware that:
  - before or at any stage of your complaint you can approach the Housing Ombudsman for independent advice
  - You can also contact the Housing Ombudsman for a further investigation if, after you have exhausted the Sage Homes procedure, you remain unhappy.

### 5.6. Stages of complaint

We aim to resolve complaints for our customers as quickly and simply as possible after they have contacted us to complain.

If your complaint can be resolved with a quick fix/there and then (eg a chaser on a missed appointment which requires the provision of another appointment), we will do so. If further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter or you request it, we will log your issue as a complaint and move to Stage 1.

#### Stage 1

We will acknowledge your complaint within two working days. If necessary, we will contact you to obtain further details and clarify your expectations and desired resolutions.

If your case is covered by any of the exclusions listed above and we therefore cannot deal with it under this policy, we will explain why. The way in which we may deal with a complaint informally will depend on the nature of, and circumstances surrounding the complaint, but we anticipate that it will usually involve a conversation or correspondence between the complainant and a member of our Customer Services Team.

In any case we will investigate your complaint and respond to you formally within 10 working days.

If we cannot resolve all of the issues relating to your complaint within 10 working days, our formal response to you will include a timetable for completing any outstanding actions.

If your complaint is particularly complex and requires further investigation, then we will agree a new timescale with you, but this should be no greater than 20 working days.

If you believe that we have not dealt with your complaint satisfactorily, then you may ask us to escalate your complaint to Stage 2.

### **Stage 2**

We ask that you request a review within a reasonable timeframe following the end of the Stage 1 process, and within no more than 20 working days.

Our customer service manager will co-ordinate and handle the review of your complaint and notify our Leadership Team of it.

Your request will be acknowledged within two working days.

If there are no grounds to investigate at stage 2, we will contact you to explain our decision

If there are grounds for stage 2, a senior manager will review the case and we will communicate their findings as the stage 2 response.

Again, we may contact you to discuss your complaint.

Your complaint will be reviewed by at least one manager who was not involved in the original decision.

We may contact you to discuss any aspect of the matter, including the Stage 1 outcome, and to give you the opportunity to respond and/or ask questions.

We will reply to you substantively within 20 working days. If we do need to agree a new timescale with you, this will not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

Emphasis is on trying to reach a resolution. If that resolution is not reached, the customer has the right to approach the Housing Ombudsman.

We will contact you with our formal response to your escalation within 20 working days. If we must take longer to respond to you formally, then we will contact you to agree a new deadline, which will not be longer than 30 working days.

**5.7. Throughout our complaints process, we will:**

- be sympathetic to your vulnerabilities in finding a solution.
- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at either stage of the process, work with you to understand your dissatisfaction and set matters out in writing
- let you know when we have a responsibility to other customers' right to privacy and cannot disclose information.
- If appropriate, explain in detail why this matter is not suitable for the complaints process, or any particular stage of the complaints process or why we cannot or will not accept a complaint
- Try to assist with any special requirements you may have (for example, we will offer translation and interpretation services to those of you whose first language is not English, if you want this)
- Tell you the name of the officer or team dealing with the complaint
- Advise that the complaint is closed, where this is the case.

**5.8. We will also:**

- ensure that customers have fair and effective ways of providing feedback about our services.
- respond to feedback in a fair and professional manner.

**5.9. Depending on the outcome of the complaint we may:**

- Acknowledge when things go wrong and do our best to fix them
- Apologise
- Improve procedures so similar problems do not happen again
- Pay a financial remedy, if applicable.

**5.10. We are committed to learning from complaints**

We will:

- Seek feedback on our complaints handling.
- Bring select cases to our Customers' Scrutiny Panel to review performance and find lessons learned.
- Share and apply lessons learned across the organisation.
- Provide relevant training to staff.
- Review and amend policies and procedures where necessary.

### **5.11. Unreasonable complaints**

Sage Homes has the best interests of customers and staff at heart, and we will support the team who are assisting with resolution of complaints. We expect our customers to behave in a respectful manner whilst we work with you to resolve your complaint.

If we receive persistent malicious, rude, offensive, or vexatious communications that we consider to be unreasonable, we may:

- refuse to handle the complaint (and close the complaint)
- if the customer is a tenant, refer to the Place Manager for tenancy action; and
- take legal action.

## **6. Other matters**

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6.2. No other matters.

## **7. Other documents**

7.1. ASB policy

## **8. Policy review**

8.1. At least once every two years or more commonly as may be required.

## **9. Full rewrite of policy 11 July 2024**