

Complaints: what you can expect

Overview

We want to provide good homes and services. If something has gone wrong, or you are unhappy with a service, please tell us. We will listen, look at what happened fairly and explain what we can do to put things right. This guide explains what counts as a complaint, how to contact us, what happens at each stage and where you can go if you would like an independent review.

Who this guide is for

This guide is for customers who receive housing, property or supported living services from us. You can make a complaint if you are:

- a current customer, including a tenant, shared owner or leaseholder we provide a service to
- a former customer
- registered to apply for a Sanctuary home
- acting for a customer with their permission, including a family member, MP, councillor or organisation.

You can also complain anonymously, through other residents or a residents' association, or through an advocate or representative. We will follow the process as closely as we can.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you tell us you are unhappy with the standard of our service, something we or someone working for us has done, or something we have not done. It may affect you, another customer or a group of residents.

You do not need to use the word "complaint". If you report a problem for the first time, we will usually treat this as a service request. If you are unhappy with our response, or we cannot resolve the issue straight away, we will treat it as a complaint.

When we may use a different process

We will accept complaints unless there is a fair reason not to. Sometimes another process is more suitable. This may apply to:

- something that happened more than 12 months ago, unless you can show that you told us and no action was taken
- your first request for a service, such as reporting a repair for the first time
- chasing a service request that we can resolve straight away. If we cannot offer a suitable solution at the time, or if you ask us to, we will log a complaint
- a matter already considered by the Housing Ombudsman, the Building Safety Regulator, or one that has completed our complaints process
- a matter where legal proceedings have started, such as a Small Claims Court or First-tier Tribunal case
- the behaviour of a tenant or someone in their household, which is handled through our antisocial behaviour process
- feedback about a policy or procedure where there has been no service failure. We will pass this to the policy owner for a future review



- a decision that has its own appeal process, such as a service charge, succession or home improvement decision
- a personal injury claim or a claim for damaged items worth more than £5,000, which will be assessed and is usually passed to our insurers
- an enquiry or complaint from a member of the public
- a concern about how personal data was handled, shared or processed, a data breach, or a response to an information rights request. Our Data Protection team handles these separately
- a complaint about the sale process or defects in a Beech Grove or NU Living home, which follows the relevant customer care complaints process.

If we do not accept your complaint, we will explain why. We will also tell you which process applies and how you can challenge our decision with the relevant independent body.

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint in the way that works best for you:

- Visit the Complaints page at www.sanctuary.co.uk/contact-us/complaints.
- Phone our Customer Hub on 0800 131 3348.
- Email complaints2@sanctuary.co.uk.
- Tell any colleague in person.
- Write to Sanctuary House, Chamber Court, Castle Street, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR1 3ZQ.
- You can also use other communication methods, including social media.

Support to use the complaints process

We will treat you fairly and with respect. Please tell us if you have a disability, communication need or need other support to use the complaints process. We will consider reasonable adjustments, which may include:

- using a different way to communicate with you
- translation, large print or braille
- signposting you to advocacy or mediation support, where appropriate.

Our two-stage complaints process

We will look at your complaint on its own facts, keep an open mind and use records and evidence. You can share information with us and tell us what outcome you would like. We will respond to each point you raise and give clear reasons for our decision.

Stage 1

1. We will acknowledge, define and log your complaint within five working days. We will agree what we are looking into, who will handle it, when we expect to respond and what actions may be needed.
2. We aim to send our Stage 1 response within 10 working days after we acknowledge your complaint.
3. We will try to discuss the outcome with you before confirming it in writing.
4. Our written response will explain what we considered, our decision, any action we will take and when, any remedy or compensation, and how to ask for Stage 2 if you remain unhappy.

If you raise related points before we send the Stage 1 response, we will include them where possible. We may open a new complaint for unrelated issues, issues raised after our response, or issues that would unreasonably delay the response.

Stage 2

1. If you remain unhappy, you can ask us to move your complaint to Stage 2.
2. We will acknowledge the Stage 2 complaint within five working days. You can send more information and tell us what would resolve the complaint.
3. A different complaint manager will carry out a separate review. Anyone who is the subject of the complaint, or who was involved at Stage 1, will not take part in the Stage 2 investigation.
4. We will send our final written response within 20 working days of your complaint moving to Stage 2. It will explain the evidence considered, our decision, any action and timescales, any remedy or compensation, and the independent body you can contact.

We do not have a third stage. After our Stage 2 response, you have 10 working days to send further comments about the findings. We may then close the complaint and will explain if we do.

If we need more time

For a complex complaint, we may extend Stage 1 by up to 10 working days or Stage 2 by up to 20 working days. We will discuss this with you, explain why and confirm the extension in writing. We will keep you updated.

Actions, remedies and compensation

We will respond once we know the outcome, even if some agreed actions are still outstanding. We will track those actions and keep you updated. If we have made a mistake, we will put it right as soon as we can. This may include an apology, an explanation, another remedy or compensation. Any compensation will consider the impact on you and your individual circumstances. If we ask you for evidence, this does not mean we will make an offer.

Closing a complaint

We may close a complaint:

- if you agree at any point
- if we do not hear from you within 10 working days after a response or request
- if another process is more suitable or legal action has started
- after we send the final response and there is no further appropriate action.

Independent review

If you remain unhappy, we will tell you which independent body is relevant and include contact details in our complaint responses:

- Housing complaints, including property services: the Housing Ombudsman Service. You may also ask an MP, local councillor or recognised tenant panel to help.
- Building safety complaints: the Building Safety Regulator.
- Supported Living complaints: depending on the nature of the service and complaint, Supported Living customers may be able to contact the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or Ofsted, as appropriate.

You can contact the relevant ombudsman or regulator after you have completed our complaints process. Where relevant, we will include information about the Housing Ombudsman and Building Safety Regulator at both stages.



Respectful contact

We understand that complaints can feel upsetting, frustrating or stressful. We will respond positively and sensitively. If behaviour is rude, abusive, threatening or stops colleagues doing their work, we may need to agree contact arrangements. We will tell you in writing and explain how you can appeal.

How we learn from complaints

We record complaint outcomes and use feedback to improve our services. We publish an annual complaints performance and service improvement report on our Complaints webpage, including our assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. We also share an annual update and lessons learned with customers.