



**Green
Square
Accord**

COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Customer Experience**

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1. Our purpose

We're proud to be able to support tens of thousands of people across England by providing affordable housing and care to help people live independently.

Everything starts at home, and we are privileged to be able to do work which makes a real difference to the lives of people in our communities. Everything we do is about people – whether that's providing a good quality, safe home or providing care which helps someone to live an independent life.

We live and breathe this social purpose.

2. Introduction

This policy ensures you can easily tell us when something goes wrong, so we can put it right and improve our services.

We value complaints as opportunities to learn. Every piece of feedback helps us understand what matters most to our customers and how to deliver services that are fair, consistent and high quality.

When you make a complaint, we will:

- Listen and take it seriously
- Keep you informed throughout
- Act quickly to resolve it

- Say sorry where we've got things wrong
- Learn and make changes to policies and procedures to prevent recurrence

You can make a complaint in any way you prefer – by phone, email, letter, online, or in person. Further details are available on our website: [Make a complaint | GreenSquareAccord](#)

You do not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever you express dissatisfaction, we will give you the option to make a complaint.

We will also offer support if you need help to make a complaint.

This policy reflects the commitments made as part of the GSA Way, including learning from our mistakes and owning to the end, and is aligned to our wider Customer Strategy.

3. Scope and Exclusions

This policy applies to anyone affected by our homes and services, including:

- Current, former and prospective customers
- Shared owners, leaseholders, and owner-occupiers
- Care and Support customers and their representatives
- Members of the public, contractors, and partner agencies

We will consider all complaints individually, but there are some areas that are outside the scope of this policy:

- Service requests (e.g. reporting a repair, requesting information) when making the requests for the first time
- Issues over 12 months old unless exceptional circumstances apply (for example individual personal circumstances such as illness or where the delay in raising the complaint relates directly to GSA)
- Matters already investigated under this procedure. Where a customer advises that a previous complaint remains unresolved, we will escalate the previous complaint to the next stage.
- Matters subject to legal proceedings, where details of the claim have been filed in court
- Insurance or disrepair compensation claims (handled under separate processes)
- Rent or service charge levels (can be referred to the First-Tier Tribunal)
- Reports of Anti-social behaviour cases are covered our ASB Policy- complaints about how we handled your report of ASB would fall under this policy.
- Appeals made under separate policies e.g. lettings.
- Anonymous reports, although they may be investigated if they raise serious concerns.
- An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey

If we decide not to handle an issue as a complaint, we will clearly explain why and provide information about your right to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

4. Definitions

Complaint	<p>‘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.’</p> <p>(Housing Ombudsman Code, April 2024)</p>
Service Request	<p>A request for us to take action to put something right (for example, to carry out a repair, arrange a visit, or provide information).</p> <p>Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>If a service request is not completed or handled properly, it can become a complaint.</p>
Remedy	<p>The action we take to put things right – for example, an apology, explanation, practical resolution, or compensation in line with our Compensation Policy.</p>

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) –The MRC has lead responsibility for the development of a positive complaint handling culture within GSA. The MRC is the Chair of Operations Committee with Operations Committee having delegated responsibility for the operational oversight and management of complaints on behalf of the Board. The MRC is responsible for ensuring the GSA Board receives regular information on complaints and have sufficient oversight.

Executive Board – ensures compliance with regulations and effective governance and operational oversight of performance and key trends.

Director of Customer Experience – has overall accountability for operational delivery of complaint handling and acts as the Senior Lead Person responsible for complaints and assesses any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision

Head of Customer Experience – oversees day-to-day management, ensuring compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.

All Directors and Managers – ensure learning is acted upon within their areas and that colleagues are trained and accountable.

All colleagues – understand the policy, take ownership of complaints, and treat all customers with respect.

6. Our Policy

In line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, we operate a two-stage internal process after which a complaint can be escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service, or other relevant Ombudsman

Stage 1 – Investigation and Response

Handled by the relevant manager or Customer Care Specialist.

We aim to resolve most complaints quickly by explaining what went wrong, saying sorry and taking corrective or remediation action.

Stage 2 – Review

If you remain unhappy, you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 2. When we send you our Stage 1 response, we will let you know how to request this. At Stage 2, it is reviewed by a person who was not involved in Stage 1 to ensure independence and a fair review of your case.

At both stages we will:

- Define your complaint in our acknowledgment
- Act fairly, openly and without bias
- Consider all evidence carefully
- Give you the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on your behalf
- Explain our findings clearly and provide remedies where appropriate
- Communicate the actions we will take, including any remedies
- Keep you informed of progress throughout your complaint
- Let you know how your complaint can be escalated to the next stage, or the relevant Ombudsman Service

When something has gone wrong, remedies may include:

- An apology and explanation
- Taking practical action or changing a decision
- Correcting records or processes
- Providing financial redress where appropriate
- Reviewing and improving policies or services

We will not:

- ◆ create any barriers to making or chasing a complaint; for example, by insisting complaints can only be made in writing

While we acknowledge that complaints can cause frustration, we will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour towards our colleagues during the complaint handling process. Our policy on unacceptable behaviour is on our website: [Microsoft Word - Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](#). Any action to manage unacceptable behaviour will be proportionate and in line with the Equality Act 2010.

We will comply with all aspects of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, including timescales to acknowledge and respond at each stage and how to escalate your concern if you remain dissatisfied. These are shown below:

STAGE 1

We will contact you to ensure we understand the reasons for your complaint. We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days from the date we receive it. When we acknowledge your complaint, we will let you know the date by when you can expect our response. This will usually be within 10 working days from the date of the acknowledgement.

When we have investigated your complaint our response will include the details of our decision and any remedy offered to put things right. We will seek your agreement if we need to extend the response deadline for any reason.

STAGE 2


If you remain unhappy after you receive our Stage 1 response, within 20 working days you can ask us to escalate your complaint to Stage 2. We will send you an acknowledgement within five working days of receiving your request. Your complaint will be reviewed by someone not involved in the Stage 1 investigation.

When we acknowledge your request to escalate your complaint we will let you know the date by when you can expect our response. This will usually be within 20 working days from the date of the acknowledgement.


When we have investigated your complaint our response will include the details of our decision and any remedy offered to put things right. We will seek your agreement if we need to extend the response deadline for any reason.

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

If you remain dissatisfied after we have responded to your complaint at both stages of our complaints procedure, you have the right to escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. We will give you information about how to do this when we respond to your complaint at Stage 2.

 0300 111 3000

 info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

 housing-ombudsman.org.uk

We will not refuse to escalate your complaint to the next stage without good reason and in very exceptional circumstances. If this is the case we will clearly set out the reasons for our decision and provide you with details of the Ombudsman Service so that you can raise this with them.

In any circumstance where we extend our response time, we will let you know the reason for the delay and the revised response date. In line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, we may (with good reason) extend Stage 1 complaints by an additional 10 working days (20 working days in total) and Stage 2 complaints by an additional 20 working days (40 working days in total).

While we do all we can to ensure we respond within timescale, in any circumstance where the response date will fall outside of the maximum timescales, in line with the Housing Ombudsman Code of Conduct, we will let you know how you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

We monitor complaint numbers, response times, outcomes and customer satisfaction to identify trends and help us to improve services. We use internal targets and sector benchmarks to monitor how we are doing. In areas relating to compliance against response timescales, targets are set at 100%. In other areas (such as satisfaction, complaint volumes; escalations to Stage 2), focus is on seeing improved trends of performance.

Findings are reported quarterly to the Leadership Team, Operations Committee and Board, and summarised annually in our published Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report, which includes:

- Performance information and learning outcomes
- Actions taken to improve services
- Our annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code

We also complete quarterly reports on how we are learning from issues and themes arising from complaints.

Complaints information is also subject to independent scrutiny and review by our Customer Panel. We also have dedicated customer group supporting us to look at our complaint processes including root-cause issues and learning.

Through our commitment to ensuring we are acting fairly and equitably, we also monitor complaints by protected characteristics, such as age, gender and race, and our working to further expand our work in this area.

8. Assurance

Assurance checks are carried out at three levels:

1. Operational assurance – routine quality checks by our Customer Experience team
2. Compliance assurance – additional periodic reviews by our internal Quality and Compliance team
3. Independent assurance – external regulators or auditors (e.g. Housing Ombudsman, RSH, CQC; Internal Auditors)

9. Equality Impact Assessment

We apply this policy fairly and make reasonable adjustments so that everyone can access the complaints process.

Adjustments may include:

- Using your preferred communication method (e.g. phone, email, large print)
- Extending time limits where reasonable
- Providing information in alternative formats
- Meeting in accessible locations or with advocates present
- Supporting you if you ask for or need help in making your complaint.
- Enabling you to be supported by an advocate, friend or family member.

Further information on Reasonable Adjustments is available on our website: [Reasonable adjustments | GreenSquareAccord](#)

We consider vulnerabilities and personal circumstances when handling all complaints and ensure confidentiality throughout.

An Equality Impact assessment has been completed, and the outcome of this assessment is that this policy has no significant negative impact on any group of customers who have a protected characteristic.

10. Data Protection Considerations

Complaint records are shared on a dedicated site with restricted access. Ahead of a planned move to a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, a DPIA will be completed.

11. Training and Competency

All operational colleagues are required to complete training on this policy and our complaint handling standards.

Those directly involved in complaints receive additional training on investigation and learning from complaints.

We use customer feedback and learning from complaints to check that colleagues delivering services and handling complaints have the right competencies and demonstrate our values.

12. Communication and Implementation

This policy and our Customer Complaints Procedure are published on our website, along with an easy-to-read version.

Any changes or updates are shared with colleagues and our website updated.

13. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy complies with:

- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (April 2024)
- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 – Regulation 16 (for services regulated by the Care Quality Commission).

As relevant to your complaint and the service you have received from us, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman or Care Quality Commission (CQC) at any time during our process.

Contact details are provided in Appendix 1.

14. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

We will provide information as required in line with relevant law and regulation.

We collect information (personal data) to enable us to:

- ◆ manage and support our relationship with customers to comply with legal obligations
- ◆ improve our services
- ◆ achieve our legitimate business aims

We are committed to complying with data protection legislation when handling data.

Customers have rights including access to their data and to object to the way it is processed. For more information on how and why we process customer data and how customers can exercise their rights please view our full Privacy Policy on our website at [Privacy notice – GreenSquareAccord](#).

15. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy Name	Complaints Policy		
Date Approved	February 2026	Date of Next Review	February 2028
Date of Issue	February 2026		
Date of Last Review	December 2024	Review Frequency	Every 2 years
Type of document	Policy		
Executive Sponsor	Gary Hardy- Interim Chief Customer Officer		
Owner Name and Job Title	Tansy Crowley-Sweet- Head of Customer Experience		
Subject Matter Expert	Kathryn Jewell- Customer Care Manager		
Consultation undertaken	Customer Experience Team Operational Teams Customer Panel		
Review Route	Customer Experience, Customer Panel, Quality and Compliance, Executive Board		
Approval route	Operations Committee		
Linked Policies, Procedures or Strategies	Customer Strategy Complaints Procedure Remedies and Compensation Policy and Guidelines Complaints- Managing allegations of bullying and discrimination Customer Contact Service Standard Vulnerable Customer Policy, procedure and strategy Data Protection Policy Privacy Notice Unacceptable Behaviour Policy Reasonable Adjustments Policy		
Customer Information (where applicable)	Feedback and complaints GreenSquareAccord		
Forms and Other Links (e.g. links to internal forms and documents and / or external legislation)			

Implementation Plan (post-approval roll-out)	To be completed by policy owner <i>What actions must be completed to effectively implement the policy?</i>		
Mandatory Actions	Responsible	Timeframe	
Published to Intranet	Policy Manager	1 week after approval	
Include in monthly Operational briefing on policy updates	Quality and Compliance Team	Within 1 month of approval	

Training (provide details) Review e-learning content and request any updates via L&D	Quality and Compliance Team	Within 2 weeks of approval
Additional Actions	Responsible	Timeframe
DPIA to be completed by Customer Experience ahead of move to CRM	Customer Experience Leadership Team	As part of CRM mobilisation

Version	Description of Change	Date Approved
1	New GSA Policy	15 March 2021
2	Addition of: Member of the public and anyone living in our communities Addition of: Where issues raised are excluded from this policy, we will ensure feedback is captured when this policy is reviewed	06 May 2021 06 May 2021
3	Removal of exclusion: “Decisions made where a GreenSquareAccord policy has been followed” following HOS feedback	24 Sept 2021
4	Policy reviewed re HOS Code amends – no changes needed	May 2022
5	Addition of exclusion: Anything connected to the way in which we process personal data, as this would be managed by our Data Protection team	November 2022
6	i) Addition of exclusions around Lettings and Disposals decisions (Section 4) ii) Minor wording changes/corrections iii) Transferred to new policy template iv) Addition of references to Customer Contact Service Standard and Vulnerable Customer Policy v) Amends to Care & Support regulatory information vi) Addition of First Tier Tribunal contact information vii) Changes made following HCX review including adding Our Policy section, reference to compliments, various wording changes to service standards, removal of Unacceptable Behaviour section and changing the tone of the policy addressing it to the customer and not about the customer	May 2023
7	Additional wording on providing HOS contact information when we consider there is a valid reason not to investigate a complaint to reflect updated HOS Code	August 2023
8	Updates to coversheet and to wording of ‘Information Sharing and Confidentiality’ section.	Oct-23: N/A – non-material changes

9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Slightly amended wording of complaint definition to align with updated HOS Complaint Handling Code effective from April 2024 ii) Definition of service request and clarity between service request and complaint iii) Wording changes to exclusions - policy now reflects HOS code that complaints within last 12 months will be considered (was previously 6 months). iv) Roles and responsibility section now includes reference to the Senior Lead Person for complaints and the Member responsible for complaints (MRC). v) Update to equality impact assessment section to provide examples of reasonable adjustments in complaint handling. vi) General wording changes and updates for ease of reading. vii) Updated to reflect Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and that the HOS Complaint Handling Code is a statutory requirement from April 2024 viii) Contact details for Regulators/Ombudsman moved to appendix at end of policy. ix) Heading reworded and ordered to align with current policy template. 	March 2024
10	<p>Updated to new policy template.</p> <p>Content updated following review by HOS Duty to Monitor Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 exclusions removed • Includes reference to the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy and Procedure 	November 2024
11	<p>Scheduled review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No material changes- content based on Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code • Main changes are language/ style to simplify content and remove repetition • Confirmation of which roles act as Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) and Senior Lead responsible for complaints • Summary detail of two-stage process and timescales added. • Updated HOS details to include link to online form • Review frequency moved from annual to two-yearly 	February 2026

Appendix 1: Contact Details

Complaints relating to Landlord services

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D Preston
PR2 0ET

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Online form : [Online complaint form | Housing Ombudsman Service](#)

The First-tier Tribunal may be able to assist you if you are unhappy with the outcome of rent and/or service charge related complaints as your complaint may be out of the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman.

First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Midlands Region:
Centre City Tower
5-7 Hill Street
Birmingham
B5 4UU

Telephone: 0121 600 7888

Email: rpmidland@justice.gov.uk

Southern Region:
Havant Justice Centre
The Court House
Elmleigh Road
Havant
Hants
PO9 2AL

Telephone: 01243 779394

Email: rpsouther@justive.gov.uk

Complaints related to CQC registered services.

CQC National Customer Service Centre
Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4PA

Telephone: 03000 616161

Email: www.CQC.org.uk

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Email: [Contact us - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)