



COMMENT, COMPLIMENT, COMPLAINT

We aim to provide good affordable homes in a way that satisfies the housing and social needs of each of our customers and by the principles of equality of opportunity.

Customer-focused housing services

We appreciate your participation in commenting on our services, how we do things, or complimenting our organisation. We actively welcome feedback.

We aim to provide a high quality and efficient service at all times but we realise that on occasions, you may not be satisfied.

We value your views and comments, whether positive or negative, as they enable us to learn and to improve our services, policies and procedures.

We are committed to maintaining and improving our customer focus.

We will acknowledge feedback and act upon it quickly and simply in relation to services.

Changing our policies and procedures can take a little longer.

What is feedback?

Feedback can either be a comment, a compliment or a complaint.

We do not have any set forms on which to give feedback as we like to remain as flexible and open as possible.

You can give us feedback in any number of ways...

You can give feedback to any member of staff.

All of our staff are authorised, trained and encouraged to take a complaint and are familiar with the policy and procedure.

Other avenues you may choose

- 1 Suggestion box
- 2 Contact the service concerned either in person, in writing or by telephone
- 3 At a Resident's Forum or public meeting
- 4 Via a Board member or tenant representative
- 5 By petition
- 6 Via a solicitor, advice centre or other advocate
- 7 By email to solon@solonswha.co.uk
- 8 Via the website www.solonswha.co.uk (Available mid 2010)
- 9 When work is carried out at your property a works order is issued which has a section specifically for your comments relating to the contractor and work carried out. A prepaid envelope provided for your/our convenience. At Solon we really appreciate your feedback via this route to help us assess the contractors we use.

Assistance to make a comment, compliment or complaint can be provided please ask if you would like help.

Arrangements can be made for translation or interpreting services.

What is a Comment?

“When you make a suggestion on how we could improve something or make a change to a service”

All comments will be acknowledged, considered and where appropriate, acted upon and we will always give feedback to the person making the comment.

What is a Compliment?

“When you tell us that:

- 1 we have done something well*
- 2 you are satisfied with our service*
- 3 you are satisfied with the way we have acted”*

We will acknowledge all compliments and make sure that the appropriate people know about the appreciation that you express.

What is a Complaint?

“When you tell us that ...

- 1 We did not deliver a service on time*
- 2 We gave you the wrong information*
- 3 You received a poor quality service*
- 4 You are unhappy with a member of staff”*

For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is not any of the following:

- 1 A request for service or information
- 2 A first report of a fault or defect
- 3 A question about a Solon policy
- 4 A matter for which there is an alternative route of appeal (i.e. someone objecting to an offer made under the homelessness procedure)

See Appendix 1 for guidance on the different stages of a complaint.

How can I be sure that you will deal with my comment, compliment or complaint?

The Performance Improvement Manager will be responsible for monitoring and keeping records at all stages and will monitor the timescales and targets to maintain our aim to respond to all comments, compliments and complaints within set targets.

The following principles will be followed when dealing with your comments:

- 1 They will be dealt with promptly, courteously, systematically and fairly.
- 2 Where appropriate, they will be treated confidentially. If information is to be discussed with staff or external bodies, you will be asked for permission before any information is disclosed.
- 3 They will be used to improve and develop procedures and services.

Please remember!!!

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Solon's POLICY and PROCEDURE for COMPLAINTS **or what you can expect and how we look at your** **complaint**

The Complaints Process

We will make every effort to resolve your complaint as quickly as we can using Stage 1 of this process.

If we have done something wrong, we will apologise to you and make appropriate changes to services.

Stage 1

- 1 We will make sure that we deal with your complaint quickly and keep you up-to-date with what is going on.
- 2 We will write to acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days and let you know who will be dealing with it.
- 3 It may be that the first person you speak to can resolve the complaint. We will write to confirm that the complaint has been resolved and ask if you have any more comments. We always keep a record of the complaint so that we can learn from this complaints process.
- 4 If the complaint is not resolved straight away the Department Manager will deal with it. For example, if a customer complains about a maintenance issue, the complaint will be passed to the Asset Manager.
- 5 The Department Manager will look into the complaint and contact you in writing within 10 working days with the outcome. They may contact you by phone or email to discuss the complaint in more detail. Sometimes a complaint can be complicated and it may take longer to be dealt with - the Department Manager will contact you to agree a date when we will give a full answer.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 you can ask for the Customer Service Director to investigate your complaint. We ask that this be done within 2 months of the end of Stage 1.

You can make this request in any of the ways listed on page 1.

- 1 We will acknowledge your Stage 2 complaint within 3 working days and pass the details to the Customer Service Director.
- 2 The Customer Service Director will investigate the complaint, looking at the action taken to date, the outcome of Stage 1 and the outcome you were seeking. They will see if anything needs to be done differently and if so, make recommendations to sort out your complaint.
- 3 The Customer Service Director will respond within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 complaint and tell you the outcome of your complaint and tell you about your right to appeal to the Chair of the Complaints Panel.
- 4 Where the complaint is complicated the investigation may take longer than 10 working days, however, the Customer Service Director will agree with you a date by which the complaint will be resolved.

Stage 3 - Appeal

If you are not happy with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation and response, you can request that the Complaints Panel hears your complaint.

You will need to give reasons why you believe that the responses you had from Stages 1 and 2 were not satisfactory, and you must make the request within 2 months of receiving the outcome of Stage 2.

The Complaint's Panel consists of our Chief Executive and two Board Members, one of whom should be a Resident Board Member.

1. We will acknowledge receipt of the request for an appeal within 3 working days.
2. We will prepare the paperwork for the Complaints Panel and send copies to you and all members of the panel within 7 working days.
3. You can send in further comments at this stage for consideration by the Complaints Panel.
4. The Complaints Panel will investigate the complaint, and may consult you and relevant staff if it needs further information.
6. The Panel will then have 20 working days to review the complaint and respond to you in writing with the results of its findings.

This letter will either:

- a) Give you a decision by the Panel and tell you that you have a right to refer your complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service if you are still not satisfied.

OR

- b) Invite you to a hearing

Examples where this may be appropriate might be when:

- the issue is complex.
- you cannot express yourself in writing.
- what you say about your complaint and what the staff say are different.

What will happen?

- You will have at least a week's notice of the hearing.
- You will be asked to say whether you will come to the hearing.
- You can allow the Panel to meet without you being there.
- You can bring a friend, representative or advocate.
- We will offer help and assistance with travel arrangements and childcare.
- The hearing must be attended by at least two of the three Panel members in order to be able to make a judgement.

It is the Panel's decision whether to hold a hearing.

7. The Chair of the Panel will write giving you its decision within 5 working days of the hearing, and tell you of your right to refer your complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service within 12 months, if you are still dissatisfied.
8. The Panel will report back to the Board on any other policy matters or issues of concern that arise from the operation of the Complaints Process.

Monitoring

For the purpose of monitoring complaints, Solon will use Housemark to compare its performance with other housing providers. Solon will therefore use Housemark guidance to measure its performance information.

Independent Housing Ombudsman

Information and forms on the Independent Housing Ombudsman will be provided to all customers with the outcome of their complaint.

Their contact details are:

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

Telephone
020 7421 3800
084 5712 5973
020 7404 7092 (Minicom)

Fax
020 7831 1942

Email
info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

The Performance Improvement Manager will make the relevant files and records available to the Investigating Officer on request and we will co-operate fully with the investigation.

Resolving your complaint

All Managers will consider the appropriate remedy in a particular case. For example: “aborted appointment” – the first remedy here would be to rearrange the appointment within a time that is suitable for the customer.

Where a complaint is justified and upheld, the reply will include an apology. Where there is also evidence of financial loss resulting directly from the subject of the complaint, consideration will be given to appropriate recompense.

Please see the Compensation Policy for further information.

Misconduct of Employees

Where a complaint alleges potential employee misconduct our disciplinary procedure may have to be involved. In these cases, the customer will be interviewed by the Investigating Officer and appropriate action will be taken.

This could include, taking disciplinary action against staff and if the misconduct is serious, could lead to dismissal.

Unacceptable behaviour

On rare occasions we receive complaints from individuals whose actions or behaviour we consider unacceptable. Such complainants have the potential to consume resources and cause stress for our staff whilst achieving no benefits for customers and service users.

In these instances we aim:

- To deal fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately with all complainants, including those whose actions we consider unacceptable.
- To provide a service that is accessible to everyone who is entitled to it. However, we retain the right, where we consider complainants actions to be unacceptable, to restrict or change such access.
- To ensure that other residents and our staff do not suffer any disadvantage from complainants who act in an unacceptable manner.
- We acknowledge that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint.

We consider the following to be unacceptable behaviour:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour
- Unreasonable demands

In order to deal with these situations we may have to restrict contact in relation to the complaint. We can offer contact through a third party in extreme situations.

The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse, or harassment towards staff is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the perpetrator. Incidents may be reported to the Police.

We do not deal with correspondence or other forms of communication which is abusive to staff or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence. When this happens we will tell the sender that we consider their language offensive, unnecessary, and unhelpful. Whenever possible we will ask them to stop using such language and state that we will not respond to them if they do not stop.

Staff will end telephone calls if the caller is considered aggressive, abusive, or offensive. The staff member taking the call has the right to make this decision, tell the caller that the behaviour is unacceptable, and end the call if the behaviour does not stop.

Do Solon do anything else with my comment, compliment or complaint?

All feedback from residents is taken very seriously.

All of your comments, compliments and complaints are monitored and used to make changes to services where they are needed.

Obviously if we get some positive feedback we will keep the service as it is! It is just as important to know that we are doing something the right way for you.

We will let you know if something you have said to us has meant that we have changed the way we do things. We will do this by keeping you up-to-date in the newsletter and on our website. We may also write to you personally to let you know.

Can I help make changes to services on a regular basis?

We invite all of our residents to come along to our resident groups, events and to comment on any of our services at any time. By doing this you can help to make changes to our services to make sure they suit your needs. We actively welcome feedback.

Contact our Resident Involvement Coordinator on 0117 9167768 or at solon@solonswha.co.uk for more info.

Appendix 1 – Housemark guidance for Stages of a complaint to which Solon adheres:

Stage 0

A Stage 0 complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction which is resolved at the first point of contact, sometimes called an informal complaint. An example would be a tenant who telephones to report that a contractor has failed to meet an AM appointment and the staff member receiving the call is able to arrange an alternative appointment, at a convenient time for the tenant, there and then.

Some landlords may not currently collect data on Stage 0 complaints. It is recommended that landlords record all Stage 0 complaints as these are service failures and examples of issues that could escalate if not dealt with effectively at an early stage.

Stage 1

A Stage 1 complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact. Stage 1 complaints require investigation and a full written response issued by the service manager. The complainant should be given details of how to progress to the next stage of the procedure and a deadline for doing so.

Stage 2

A complaint progresses to Stage 2 upon notification from the complainant that the complaint was not resolved at Stage 1. Stage 2 complaints require internal management review by an alternative manager or specialist team. Stage 2 is a review stage – it is not an appeal nor is it intended that further investigation should be undertaken or new information provided.

Stage 3

A complaint reaches Stage 3 upon notification from the complainant that the complaint was not resolved at Stage 2. Stage 3 complaints provide independent internal review, often by a complaints panel. Again, it is not intended that further investigation should be undertaken or new information be provided at this stage. Stage 3 marks the final stage in the organisation's internal complaints procedure.