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# How do I complain?

*What is a complaint?*

*How do I complain?*

*What will happen next?*

South Lakes Housing is an independent, not-for-profit Housing Association and largest provider of affordable housing in South Lakeland

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## What is a complaint?

*A complaint is defined as when a customer expresses dissatisfaction about the work of SLH and wants corrective action to be taken. This could include but not limited to; a failure of service provided, a failure to meet published service standards, the way an incident or a request has been handled, unhelpful staff or contractors, providing incorrect information, failure to comply with data protection obligations and complaints about misuse of office/conflicts of interest.*

You can make a complaint:

- In Person
- By telephoning 0300 303 8540
- Completing the online complaints form  
<https://www.southlakeshousing.co.uk/feedback/>
- Emailing [customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk)
- Writing to South Lakes Housing, Bridge Mills Business Centre, Stramongate, Kendal, LA9 4BD
- Via an SLDC Councillor, MP or any other advocate

**Via our Website:** [www.southlakeshousing.co.uk](http://www.southlakeshousing.co.uk)

**Speak to a member of our staff in person or on the telephone.**

It is often quicker and easier to resolve complaints by speaking to someone about a complaint. We have trained our staff in taking a customer complaint. You can do this by telephoning 0300 303 8540 or by emailing [customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk)

We will try to resolve these issues immediately, where the matter cannot be resolved by the person you speak to we will tell you that your complaint is being dealt with as a formal complaint and has been passed on to the relevant manager to investigate

## Formal Complaints Process

### Stage 1- Manager Review

Your complaint will be logged and we will give you a reference number.

Your complaint will be given to someone who is qualified to respond to you.

We will acknowledge that we have received your complaint within **2 working days**.

The manager of the department dealing with your complaint will send you a written explanation within **5 working days**.

If we need to make further investigations, we will let you know in writing and tell you when we will be able to give you a full reply (usually this will be within **10 working days**, however if we need to involve outside organisations, it may take up to **28 working days**).

If you are still not satisfied you can ask the Director/Assistant Director/Senior Manager to independently review your complaint. You have 28 days to do this.

### Stage 2 – Director Review

You can either write yourself or you can ask the Departmental Manager to pass your complaint to the Chief Executive.

The Director/Assistant Director will acknowledge that he has received your request to independently review your complaint within **2 days**.

The Director/Assistant Director will review the case, carrying out appropriate investigations, requesting information and interviewing those people involved.

The Director/Assistant Director will write to you telling the findings of his review within 15 working days if possible or with further acknowledgement that your complaint is still being dealt with.

If the customer is not satisfied with the answer they receive, they have the right to appeal to the Board of South Lakes Housing. Appeals to the Board must be submitted to the Chief Executive within 28 days of his response being sent.

### **Stage 3a – Board Panel Review**

You can either write yourself or you can ask the Departmental Manager to pass your request for an Appeals Panel to the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive will acknowledge that he has received your request for an Appeals Panel within **5 days**.

The Chief Executive will refer the complaint to an Appeals Panel who has been appointed by the South Lakes Housing Board of Directors

The Appeals Panel will carry out a thorough examination of your complaint. The Chief Executive will let you know their decision within **21 working days** of the review.

Appeals may be refused if the matters raised by the complainant have already been dealt with by the Stage 2 Investigating Manager. Complainants must set out why the matter(s) have not been addressed sufficiently and clearly identify how the complaint could be remedied at Stage 3 via the Board Panel Review.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can complain to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

## **Stage 3b – Tenant Complaint Panel Review**

Complainants may wish to refer their complaint to the Tenants' Committee Tenant Complaints Panel instead of referring to the Board Panel.

The Panel will receive appropriate training and support to investigate a complaint and to adhere to data protection protocols. This can include an SLH member of staff or an Independent Tenant Advisor.

The Tenants' Committee will agree the Complaints Panel membership at the AGM. Tenant Board Members cannot be on the Panel. The Tenant Complaint Panel will be registered with the Housing Ombudsman.

Their remit includes making decisions on complaints and making recommendations to SLH. SLH will consider their findings seriously and, although not binding on SLH, will ensure that these are taken into consideration and documented should these be taken into account at a later stage.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can complain to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

## **Stage 4 – Housing Ombudsman Referral**

You have the right to refer your case to the Housing Ombudsman. You can do this by following the website link below.

<http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

# Summary of the Complaints Process

## Summary of the SLH Complaints Procedure

### Stage 1: Manager Review

Acknowledged within 2 working days  
Full reply within 5 / 10 working days

*Customers can appeal against the decision of the manager, this will be reviewed by a senior person*

### Stage 2: Director / Senior Manager Review

Acknowledged within 2 working days  
Full reply within 15 working days

*Customers can decide either to refer their complaint to a Board Panel or Tenant Complaint panel*

### Stage 3A: Board Panel Review

Acknowledged within 5 working days  
Full reply within 21 days of hearing date

### Stage 3B: Tenant Complaint Panel Review

Acknowledged within 5 working days  
Full reply within 21 days of hearing date

*Customers can then refer their case to the Housing Ombudsman if they are still dissatisfied*

### Stage 4: Housing Ombudsman Review

#### Supporting notes

The Complaints Procedure has been designed to ensure that complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity and in most cases, this will be concluded at Stage 1. There are several stages should the customer continue to be dissatisfied.

If a customer is not satisfied with the answer they receive at earlier stages of the complaints process (stages 2 and 3), then they have the right to appeal to the Board of SLH or to the Tenant Complaints Panel. Appeals to the Board or Tenant Complaints Panel must be submitted to the Chief Executive within 28 days of the response being sent.

*Appeals may be refused as determined by the Chief Executive if the matters raised by the complainant have already been dealt with by the Stage 2 Investigating Manager. Complainants must set out in their opinion why the matter(s) have not been addressed sufficiently in their opinion and clearly identify how the complaint could be remedied at Stage 3 via the Board Panel Review or Tenant Complaint Panel Review.*