

## Complaint Handling Policy

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At Stones Properties, we are committed to delivering a professional and high-quality service to all our clients and customers. However, we understand that there may be occasions when you feel dissatisfied with our service. Your feedback is important to us, and we are committed to resolving complaints fairly, transparently, and promptly.

This policy explains how you can make a complaint, the steps we will take to resolve it, and how to escalate your complaint to The Property Redress Scheme if necessary.

### Defining a complaint

Following the introduction of the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code in September 2020, a **complaint** is universally defined as:

*"an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents."*

A **service request** is a request from a resident to their landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests should be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. If further enquiries are needed following a service request to resolve the matter or if a resident requests it the issue must be logged as a complaint,

An **enquiry** is when a customer contacts us to ask about something concerning their home or tenancy. For example, a customer might ask for information about their rent account, or to query or clarify something on their rent statement. This is not a complaint. If we fail to provide or clarify this information, then this could become a complaint.

A **comment or suggestion** is when a customer expresses an idea or opinion on an aspect of their home, tenancy, or in relation to the wider day-to-day running of SP. This is not a complaint. If we fail to acknowledge or respond to a comment or suggestion with respect, then this could become a complaint.

Staff are trained to recognise the difference between a complaint, service request, enquiry and a comment/ suggestion. Staff are encouraged to take appropriate steps to resolve the issue for residents as early as possible.

We will ensure that customers are aware of how we are deciding to record any of the above and ensure that they are in agreement with this.

There are a number of exceptions to when we will not initialise the Complaint procedure and these are:

- The issue of the complaint occurred over six months ago (where the problem is a recurring issue, SP will consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue). This will not be the case where there is a safeguarding or health & safety issue.
- The matter has already been considered under the complaints policy.
- A resident complains about their level of rent and service charge e.g. they are unhappy with the amount of increase rather than believing it has been incorrectly calculated.
- The issue is subject to legal action or to an enforcement notice or other statutory notice
- Compensation claims for damage to personal property or personal injury. Where appropriate these will be dealt with directly or through insurers.
- Several related complaints are made which would be more effectively dealt with together rather than on an individual basis. However, in this instance the complaints will be logged, although the policy timescales may not apply depending on the components to be investigated.
- If a complainant is rude or non-co-operative during the complaint's procedure. In this case the Unreasonable and Persistent policy would be referred to
- Complaints about employee conduct. The outcome of any internal investigation will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the customer, in line with data protection.

We consider these exclusions to be fair and reasonable.

Stones reserves the right to refuse to deal with complaints or to deal with them differently if they are pursued unreasonably or could be handled more effectively in a different manner. Additionally, a complaint will not be re-opened at the complainant's request if, after review by Stones, it is established that no new evidence relevant to the complaint has been provided.

### **How to Raise a Complaint**

A range of channels are available to make a complaint and customers can use the method they prefer unless they are subject to restrictions under our Unreasonable and Persistent behaviour policy. These are:

- Email using [Hello@Stonesproperties.co.uk](mailto:Hello@Stonesproperties.co.uk) (available for use 24/7)
- In writing to Stones Properties, 341 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6AX
- Telephone by calling 0113 2102360
- In person by visiting the office at 341 Harehills lane, Leeds, LS9 6AX
- Via social media platforms WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram

### **Our Complaint Handling Process**

#### **Acknowledgement**

Once we receive your complaint, we will:

Acknowledge receipt within 3 working days and provide the name and contact details of the person handling your complaint.

#### **Investigation**

Your complaint will be investigated thoroughly. This may include:

- Reviewing relevant documentation and correspondence.
- Speaking with staff members involved.
- Requesting additional information from you if necessary.

## Response

We aim to provide a full written response within 15 working days. If more time is needed, we will inform you of the delay, explain the reasons, and provide a revised timescale.

Our written response will include:

- A summary of your complaint.
- The findings of our investigation.
- An explanation of our decision.
- Details of any actions we will take to resolve the issue.

## Escalating Your Complaint

If you are not satisfied with our initial response, you may escalate your complaint.

### How to Escalate

Contact us and request that your complaint be reviewed by a senior manager. Provide details of why you are dissatisfied with the initial response.

We will review your case and respond in writing within 15 working days.

## Referral to The Property Redress Scheme (PRS)

If you remain dissatisfied after completing our internal complaints process, you can escalate your complaint to The Property Redress Scheme (PRS).

Contact Details for PRS

- Website: [www.theprs.co.uk](http://www.theprs.co.uk)
- Email: [info@theprs.co.uk](mailto:info@theprs.co.uk)
- Phone: 0333 321 9418
- Postal Address: Premiere House, 1st Floor, Elstree Way, Borehamwood, WD6 1JH

The Property Redress Scheme provides an independent and impartial dispute resolution service. You must refer your complaint to PRS within 12 months of receiving our final written response.

## Monitoring and Improvement

We use complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve. After resolving a complaint, we:

- Review our processes to identify any recurring issues.
- Implement changes to prevent similar complaints in the future.
- Maintain a record of complaints and their outcomes for continuous improvement.

## Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be handled in strict confidence and in compliance with data protection laws. Your personal information will only be shared with those directly involved in resolving your complaint.

If you have specific accessibility needs or require assistance in submitting your complaint, please let us know so we can accommodate your requirements.

The relevant Data Protection legislation will be upheld at all times during the complaint's procedure.

We value the opportunity to address your concerns and enhance our services. Should you have any questions regarding this policy or wish to discuss your complaint further, please do not hesitate to contact us using the information provided.

