



Portus
Supported Housing

Complaints Policy

Version: 1.0

Review

Date of this review	Date of last review	Author(s)	Owner	Next review date
31/10/25	New	Sophie Hayward Customer Director	Sophie Hayward Customer Director	01/12/2027

Details of amendments

Version	Date	Update/ amendment detail	Resulting from

Approved by

Executive Team	SF (CEO) 21/11/2025
Board	00/00/0000



1. Introduction

Portus Supported Housing is committed to delivering high-quality homes and services that meet the support requirements of our customers throughout their lives. When things do not go as expected, we want to know so that we can put matters right, learn, and improve.

We value complaints because they help us understand customer experiences, resolve issues quickly, and maintain trust and accountability. We also record and celebrate compliments to recognise excellent service.

This policy sets out how customers and their representatives can raise complaints about services we provide or those acting on our behalf.

We distinguish between complaints, service requests and incident reporting (such as repairs or antisocial behaviour). If we do not respond to a service request to the customer's satisfaction, it may become a complaint.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that customers can easily make a complaint, that complaints are handled fairly and promptly, and that lessons learned drive continuous improvement across Portus Supported Housing.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all customers, prospective customers, and their representatives across England and Wales, and covers dissatisfaction with any action, service, or lack of action by Portus Supported Housing or its contractors.

A complaint is defined in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.”

A customer does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. Whenever a customer expresses dissatisfaction, we will give them the choice to make a complaint.

Feedback provided through customer surveys is not automatically treated as a formal complaint. If a customer indicates that they wish issues raised in a survey response to be handled as a complaint, we will log it and apply this policy.

A complaint may be raised with any member of staff, who will ensure it is passed to the complaints team. All staff receive training on our complaints policy and procedure, the Housing Ombudsman Code, complaint handling best practice, and professional standards.

Complaints about regulated support services must be directed to the support provider, though we will coordinate where Portus Supported Housing's involvement is required.



4. Legal and regulatory framework

This policy complies with and supports:

- The Housing Act 1985, 1988, 1996 and 2004
- Localism Act 2011
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (mandatory in England)
- Regulator of Social Housing – Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard 2024
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) 2021

Portus Supported Housing will publish an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and Housing Ombudsman Code Self-Assessment.

5. Policy principles

We will:

- Treat complaints seriously and deal with them promptly, fairly and respectfully.
- Ensure accessibility and support customers to make a complaint where needed.
- Record, track and monitor all complaints and outcomes.
- Keep customers informed throughout the process.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Learn from complaints and embed service improvements.
- Offer appropriate remedies where complaints are upheld, including apology and compensation in line with policy.

A complaint will never be treated as a criticism - it is a chance to improve. We promote collaborative working and shared responsibility across teams in resolving complaints and learning from them.

We recognise that higher numbers of complaints may indicate that our complaints process is accessible and trusted. Low volumes may suggest potential barriers to raising concerns.

6. How to make a complaint

Complaints may be made by any customer or person affected by our service. With consent, a representative (including advocates, family members or support workers) may act on a customer's behalf.

Complaints can be made via any channel:

- Phone
- Email or letter
- Online website form
- In person
- Through a support provider
- Social media



This policy, complaints procedure, annual complaints performance and service improvements report, self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, and Housing Ombudsman contact details are published on our website.

We will ask customers about their communication and accessibility needs at the first point of contact. Alternative accessible formats, including large print, translations, audio or easy-read versions, are available on request. Any reasonable adjustments agreed with a customer will be recorded and regularly reviewed.

Portus Supported Housing follows a two-stage formal complaint process.

Our aim is to address all issues at the initial point of contact. A service request is a request requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but are recorded, monitored, and reviewed.

Follow-ups on a service request, such as a missed appointment, can often be resolved with early resolution, 'there and then' with an apology and by providing another appointment. This may not need to be entered into the complaints system.

If a customer remains dissatisfied with the response to their service request, or if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if requested, the issue will be logged as a formal complaint. This will not negatively impact the efforts to address the service request.

When we acknowledge a customer's complaint, we will be clear which aspects of the complaint we are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.

Stage 1 - Investigation and response

Acknowledgement: within five working days.

Response: within ten working days of acknowledgment.

New complaints are logged and acknowledged within 5 working days of being received as a stage one complaint. The customer will be contacted via their method of contact, and the details of the complaint will be discussed, any outcomes sought, as well as their preferred method of contact.

The acknowledgement will set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes that the customer is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the customer will be asked for clarification.

Additional complaints raised during the investigation will be included in the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. If the stage 1 response has been provided, the new issues are unrelated to those already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.

The complaint will be investigated, and a response will be provided by their preferred method of contact, within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

If we need more time to investigate the complaint, we will provide an explanation to the customer. We will respond within 10 working days or within a timeframe agreed by both parties and agree suitable times for keeping customers informed about their complaint.



The response will propose a resolution and address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, legislation, or best practices where appropriate.

If the customer remains dissatisfied with the resolution in the first stage, they can request it to be escalated to stage 2. The customer has 28 days from the date of the outcome letter to escalate their complaint to the next stage of the process. If a complaint is raised to stage two, an independent review of the complaint will be carried out.

The Stage 1 response will:

- restate the agreed complaint definition and outcomes sought
- address all points raised in the complaint
- provide clear reasons for all decisions
- outline any remedies or actions to be taken
- explain how to escalate to Stage 2

Investigations are completed by an appropriate manager with no prior involvement.

Stage 2 - Review (Final stage)

Stage 2 complaints are logged and acknowledged within 5 working days of the initial escalation or expression of dissatisfaction with the Stage 1 response.

Customers do not have to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 review. Portus Supported Housing will make reasonable efforts to understand why the customer remains unhappy as part of the stage 2 response.

A senior manager, different from the person who dealt with it in the first stage, will review the investigation, complaint decision, and any additional information submitted for the review request to ensure that the initial investigation was conducted appropriately.

We aim to respond with an outcome within 20 working days of the acknowledgement. If the investigation takes longer than the initial 20 working days, then we aim to respond within a further 10 working days or at an agreed timeframe through the preferred method of contact.

Where an extension is required and agreement cannot be reached, we will provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.

The Stage 2 response will:

- restate the complaint definition and outcomes sought
- summarise the findings of the Stage 1 investigation
- explain the outcome of the Stage 2 review and reasons for the decision
- outline remedies and outstanding actions
- advise how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.



We will deal with complaints impartially, consider all evidence, and avoid conflicts of interest.

Complaint responses will be provided to the customer when the answer is known. Any outstanding actions required to address the issue will be tracked and actioned with updates provided to the customer.

Housing Ombudsman (England customers)

Stage 2 is the final stage of our internal process, if the customer feels that their complaint has still not been resolved, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman. Further details can be found at:

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

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

7. Complaints about contractors

Contractors delivering services for Portus Supported Housing must comply with this policy. Portus Supported Housing remains fully responsible for the actions of contractors and will lead complaint investigations where required.

8. Exclusions

We will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to. There may be occasions when the complaint cannot be investigated. In exceptional circumstances, the customer will be notified of why we cannot investigate. Examples include:

- The complaint is unreasonable, without foundation and used to harass, annoy, or subdue somebody, in accordance with our Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.
- Is subject to on-going legal proceedings or where the case may be under ongoing criminal investigation and details of the claim have been filed in court.
- If the complaint has not been made within a reasonable timeframe - for example, the issue prompting the complaint happened over twelve months ago.
- Issues previously addressed or considered under the complaints policy. However, where the problem is a recurring issue, we will usually consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint as we feel that this will help resolve the issue for the customer and provide a better outcome.



If we decide not to accept a complaint, the customer will be informed of the reason and where to direct their complaints, such as contacting the support provider, police, Housing Ombudsman, etc.

Each complaint will be considered on its own merits.

If we do not accept a complaint, we will set out the reason in writing and inform the customer of their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman for independent advice.

9. Persistent or unreasonable behaviour

We are committed to treating all customers with respect and ensuring their concerns are listened to. In a very small number of cases, a customer's behaviour during the complaints process may become persistent or unreasonable and impact staff wellbeing or the ability to progress the complaint fairly.

Where this happens, we may apply proportionate and temporary measures including:

- Setting clear boundaries around contact
- Requesting that communication is limited to a single agreed channel
- Limiting frequency of contact where this becomes excessive
- Ending contact if behaviour becomes abusive or threatening, while continuing to progress the complaint itself

Any restrictions will be clearly explained to the customer in writing, including:

- Why the decision has been made
- What the change means
- How long it will last
- How the behaviour can be modified to remove restrictions

We will continue to ensure the complaint is investigated properly and the customer is not disadvantaged for raising a concern.

10. Compensation and remedies

Where something has gone wrong, remedies may include an apology, explanation, practical action to put things right, correction of records, reconsideration of a decision, service improvements, or financial redress. Our approach is guided by the Housing Ombudsman's Remedies Guidance.

If a complainant requests compensation as part of the resolution to a complaint, or if a senior manager deems compensation appropriate, it will be offered in accordance with our Compensation and Remedies Policy.

Remedies will reflect the impact on the customer as a result of any fault identified, in accordance with our Compensation and Remedies Policy.



11. Learning from complaints and compliments

Portus Supported Housing views complaints as key source of insight. We will:

- Analyse themes and use complaints to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.
- Share outcomes transparently with the Board monthly.
- Share complaints performance information, wider learning and improvements from complaints with our customer committee quarterly and customers bi-annually in our newsletter, as well as annual reporting.
- Review learning in operational and governance forums. Celebrate compliments to reinforce positive performance.

12. Monitoring, review and compliance

Portus Supported Housing will ensure that complaints handling is embedded, transparent and continuously improving. We will monitor compliance with this policy, track performance against the Housing Ombudsman Code, and ensure strong governance and accountability in how complaints are managed.

To achieve this, we will:

- Provide quarterly performance reporting and learning to the MRC and Customer Committee.
- Complete and publish an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- Publish annual complaints performance and service improvement report, as well as our Annual Customer Report.
- Carry out regular audits of complaints handling and follow-up actions to ensure quality and fairness.

Review this policy every two years or sooner if significant regulatory changes occur.

Our annual complaints report will include volumes and types of complaints, themes and trends, outcomes at each stage, compliance with timescales, remedies provided, learning and service improvements, complaints refused and reasons, satisfaction with complaint handling, and any findings, orders or recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman. The Board's response will also be published.

We keep full and accurate records of all complaints, including all correspondence, the agreed complaint definition, evidence considered, decisions made, remedies provided, any extensions agreed, and learning identified.

13. Responsibilities

Our Customer Director is the designated Complaints Officer responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and liaison with the Housing Ombudsman, as well as assessing any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.



Our Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) provide independent oversight of our complaint handling, receiving quarterly performance reports, meeting regularly with the Complaints Officer and Customer Committee.

Portus Supported Housing is responsible for ensuring any third parties handle complaints in line with this policy and the Housing Ombudsman's Code. Third parties, including contractors, will follow our policy and procedure. Customers will not be expected to go through two complaints processes

14. Equality, diversity and inclusion

We will ensure equal access to the complaints process. Reasonable adjustments will be offered to meet communication, language and support needs. Any agreed adjustments will be documented and regularly reviewed.

If you need support in putting your complaint in writing, please let us know. You can request a reasonable adjustment from us through the staff member you are engaging with or by contacting us through your preferred method.

Examples of the support we can provide include providing information in different formats and adjusting our communication methods.

15. General data protection regulation (GDPR)

We are committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who submit complaints to us. We understand the importance of handling personal information in accordance with GDPR. Any personal data collected during the complaints process will be treated with care and used solely for the purpose of addressing and resolving the complaint. We will only share this information with relevant parties involved in the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

We will retain this information for as long as required to meet our legal obligations and address any potential follow-up inquiries.

16. Related documents

- Complaints Procedure
- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment
- Customer Engagement & Involvement Policy
- Compensation Policy
- Unreasonable Behaviour Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy
- Tenancy and Neighbourhood Policy

