



COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS POLICY

1 Introduction

Crown Simmons Housing aims to provide a high standard of service to residents and members of the public. We welcome all customer feedback, including complaints and compliments, and see it as a positive opportunity to improve our service delivery. We aim to deliver the right service, first time, every time. When we fail to do this, we want customers to tell us, so that we can put things right and make sure we do better in the future.

2 Purpose

This policy sets out how Crown Simmons Housing will manage complaints, ensuring that they are dealt with fairly and consistently, as well as acknowledging compliments and comments. It explains what customers should expect in response from Crown Simmons Housing when they contact us to report a complaint, offer a compliment or make a comment about any aspect of service delivery.

When we get a complaint about our service, we will always take it seriously, investigate it fully, fairly and as quickly as possible, treat it confidentially, let the person who has complained know what we have done and check if they are satisfied.

We want to use all complaints and compliments positively, so that by listening to our customers and learning from what they say we will continually improve the quality of services that we provide. In addition, an annual report will be provided to the board to review the number of complaints, trends and lessons learnt.

3 Scope

This Policy applies to everyone who uses Crown Simmons Housing's services and people who are affected by them, including:

- Tenants, leaseholders and shared owners with Crown Simmons Housing
- Those applying to Crown Simmons Housing to either rent or buy a home
- Members of the public affected by our services
- Family members, friends or representatives acting on behalf of any of the above.

4 Compliments

A compliment received from our customers for a job well done, or recognition of a process that works well and exceeds expectations will be formally recorded by the Association to help us identify where and why our customers are happy with our service, as this will enable us to share good practice within Crown Simmons Housing.

5 Comments

A comment will be formally recorded by Crown Simmons Housing when a customer expresses a level of dissatisfaction about a service or identifies a suggestion for a service improvement but does not want to raise this as a complaint. We will collate this information and use it to help improve our standards of service delivery.

6 Complaints

Unfortunately, sometimes things can go wrong and our service fall below the standards you expect. When this occurs, we're committed to investigating and to putting things right quickly and effectively. We wish to learn from the errors we make and use this to improve our standards of service delivery.

We hope to be able to resolve most concerns informally, through discussion with the appropriate member of staff. We will ensure, however, that anyone wishing to make a **formal complaint** is advised how to do so and we will then ensure that the matter is properly dealt with. We aim to:

- make it easy for someone to complain
- keep them informed of our progress in dealing with your complaint
- provide them with a quick and full response to their concerns
- give those who complain the right to appeal our findings into their complaint.

7 What is a complaint?

Often the quickest and best way for a customer to get a problem put right, or to receive an explanation about a decision that has been taken by Crown Simmons Housing, is for the person concerned to raise the matter informally with a member of staff. Experience shows us that in many instances problems arise from a misunderstanding that can usually be cleared up and rectified quite easily. If, unfortunately, this doesn't resolve the problem to the person's satisfaction then they may wish to pursue matters further by making a formal complaint to Crown Simmons Housing.

Crown Simmons Housing defines a customer complaint as being:

An expression of dissatisfaction with the quality of services provided, or with an action, or lack of action taken by Crown Simmons Housing, a member of our staff or a contractor that we employ.

Complaints can be about a wide range of issues, including:

- the standard of our service or a service delivered on behalf of Crown Simmons Housing by another company (e.g. a maintenance contractor)
- the failure to deliver a service
- our response to a request for service
- the attitude or behaviour of our staff or staff of another company acting on our behalf
- about our policies or how they have been used.

We're unable to resolve the following through our procedure:

- Complaints about issues more than six months old
- Repeat complaints on an issue that has already gone through our complaints procedure
- Legal action
- Insurance claims
- Defects in new-build homes
- Complaints about another resident(s) – e.g. alleged anti-social behaviour
- Service charge disputes (we manage these through a separate service charge dispute procedure)
- Commercial decisions, e.g. our decision to dispose of stock.

8 How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made in whatever way the customer chooses. They do not have to be in writing. People can complain verbally in person or by phone, by text, by email or by writing to us and the matter will still be treated in accordance with this policy.

We operate a two stage process for investigating and responding to formal complaints.

We will offer a standard Customer Complaints form to anyone wishing to make a formal complaint, although it is not necessary they complete this form in order to be able to make a formal complaint.

Complaints can be reported to any member of staff.

Every formal complaint will be officially recorded by Crown Simmons Housing and allocated to an appropriate member of staff to investigate, to try to resolve to the customer's satisfaction and to formally respond to in writing.

9 Assistance with making a complaint

We will offer advice and assistance to anyone who may require help to make a complaint, for example, with filling in a complaints form.

We can put people in touch with outside agencies, such as a Citizens Advice Bureau, to obtain independent support and advice. We can call on specialist support agencies to assist in advocacy or mediation.

Anyone making a complaint may bring a friend or representative with them to any meeting that they have with Crown Simmons Housing about their complaint.

We will publish an advice leaflet for customers explaining how people can complain and the review stages of the process for formal complaints. This leaflet will be given to all new residents, to anyone who is unhappy with any aspect of our service and to anyone on request.

10 Stage 1

We ask dissatisfied customers to provide us with as much information as possible about the nature of their formal complaint. This should include telling us;

- what has happened
- why they are dissatisfied
- what action they would like us to take to solve the problem

Stage 1 complaints will be investigated and responded to by a designated member of staff. If the complaint is about a member of our staff, the complaint will be investigated by their line manager. A meeting with the member of staff investigating the complaint under Stage 1, may be required.

We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint under Stage 1 within 3 working days and will provide a full written response within 10 working days.

11 Stage 2

If a person is unhappy with our response under Stage 1, they should contact Crown Simmons Housing within 20 working days of receiving our Stage 1 response, stating why they feel their complaint has not be handled satisfactorily by Crown Simmons Housing.

We will acknowledge receipt of a request for a review under Stage 2 within three working days and provide the complainant with a full written response within 15 working days.

This Stage 2 review will be carried out by a senior manager who has not already been directly involved in the matter.

12 Closing complaints

We will automatically close a formal complaint and officially record the matter as having been resolved at the last stage under which it was considered by Crown Simmons Housing, unless the complainant has contacted the association and asked for it to be escalated to the next stage within 20 working days of our response under Stage 1 or Stage 2.

Once a complaint has been closed it cannot later be re-opened or escalated to the next stage in the complaints process.

13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied

Stage two is the final stage of the decision making process. Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the review, they have the right to request that the complaint be considered by a designated person.

Under the Localism Act 2011, tenants of housing associations are able to ask for their complaints to be formally considered by a 'designated person' once an association's internal complaints procedure is finished. A designated person can be an MP or a local Councillor – but none of these is actually required to act as a designated person if they do not wish to do so.

www.writetothem.com (list of local councillors)

www.findyourmp.parliament.uk (list of MPs)

A designated person can be a MP, Ward Councillor or Tenants' Panel. Their role is to try and resolve a complaint in one of two ways:

- They can try and resolve the complaint themselves in whichever way they think may work best by making contact with Crown Simmons directly.
- Or they can refer you straight to the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

At this time Crown Simmons does not have a Tenants' Panel, so complainants will need to contact either an MP or Ward Councillor if they remain dissatisfied.

If the complainant does not wish to use the designated persons route but wishes to pursue the complaint further they may contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman, but can only do so after 8 weeks after they have exhausted Crown Simmons' complaint process.

The Ombudsman's contact details are shown below.

Independent Housing Ombudsman
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN
Tel: 0300 111 3000
Fax: 020 7831 1942
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

The Housing Ombudsman Service will not be able to consider the complaint unless the complainant has first completed Crown Simmons Housing' two stage process, set out above.

If the complaint is about support provided for residents living in retirement housing, the local Supporting People team at the local council can be contacted.

www.gov.uk (local authority)

15 Persistent complainants

We recognise that sometimes a complainant may not accept the outcome at the end of this process and may continue to hold strong views about the level of service provided by Crown Simmons Housing. However, where someone makes a high number of complaints and the complaints are similar or have not been upheld, we will write and inform the person that we consider them to be a persistent complainant. Such a decision will only be taken by a director with the association.

Where a persistent complainant continues to communicate with us about their concerns or dissatisfaction with our service, we will acknowledge their correspondence or call but will not investigate further or take action unless there is new and tangible information provided. A director will decide whether there is new or tangible information provided.

In certain cases of persistent complaining, especially if the persistent complainant makes derogatory, offensive or personal comments about a member of staff or other person, Crown Simmons Housing may consider legal action against the persistent complainant.

16 Responsibility for this policy

The Customer Services Director has overall responsibility for this policy and for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to meet the service commitments set out in this policy. The Customer Services Director is also responsible for ensuring that the policy is reviewed and updated inline with published timescales.

17 Date of review

This policy will be reviewed by no later than October 2018.

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved by
1	Oct 2015	Reviewed number of stages in process Included an annual report to board	1.12.15	ES	Board