



Complaints Policy

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V1.0	CEC 20/04/23 (also approved by Exec Team)	05/04/23	05/04/24	New Complaints and Compensation Policy	Jane McKalroy
V1.1	Copy provided to CEC 20/07/23 for info	25/05/23	05/04/24	S6 wording updated following feedback from Housing Ombudsman	Jane McKalroy
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V1.3	Helen Jaggar, (Board Member responsible for Complaints on behalf of CEC) – approved by email 27/06/24	27/06/2024	27/06/25	Annual Review. Minor changes following self-assessment against HOS Complaint Handling Code. New policy template Inc. Exception section.	Jane McKalroy
V2.0	CEC	22/06/2026	22/06/2029	Complaints is now a stand-alone policy. A new compensation policy has been created. Added in sections on customer feedback & coproduction, reasonable adjustments, learning & improvement and data protection and privacy complaints.	Zain Janua

Purpose: This policy sets out Accent's approach to receiving, investigating and resolving complaints, in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Financial remedies are governed by Accent's Compensation Policy and associated procedures.

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1. Introduction

Accent is committed to treating all customers fairly and inclusively, approaching every complaint with curiosity, empathy and a genuine desire to understand the customer's experience, recognising each one as an opportunity to strengthen trust, learn why things have gone wrong, and continuously improve the services we provide.

This policy focuses on how we record, investigate, and resolve complaints. Where a resolution involves financial redress, decisions are made under the Compensation Policy and Compensation Procedure. Our approach is underpinned by the principles set out in the Customer Inclusion and Support Policy, ensuring accessibility and fairness for all customers.

More information can be found on our website: [Compliments and complaints](#)

2. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints about services provided by Accent or those acting on our behalf, across all customer groups (tenants, homeowners/shared owners, applicants), and is designed to be accessible to all, in line with Accent's Customer Inclusion and Support Policy.

3. Definitions

A complaint is "an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents". This is in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code which can be found at: (<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/complaints-handling-code/>).

A service request is a request for us to put something right. Service requests are **not** considered as complaints. However, if a customer becomes dissatisfied with how we handle a service request, whether due to delays, unresolved issues, or the quality of our response, we will record and manage this as a complaint, in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's distinction between service requests and complaints.

4. References

Accent Policies and Procedures can be found in the [Corporate Library](#) Copies are also available on request.

The Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment is completed each year to check how well we meet the Complaint Handling Code, with the outcome providing assurance on our performance, identifying where we need to improve, and setting actions to make services better. We commit to publishing a clear, easy to read summary so all customers can understand what we found and what we are doing to improve.

- Complaints procedure
- Compensation Policy
- Compensation Procedure

- Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- Customer Inclusion and Support Policy
- Decant Policy
- Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

External legislation

- Equality Act 2010
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Building Safety Act 2022
- The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (Statutory 2024)
- Land Compensation Act 1973
- Housing Act 1985, s.11 (Right to Repair)
- Planning and Compensation Act 1991
- The Home Loss Payments (Prescribed Amounts) (England) Regulations 2023

5. Requirements

Handling complaints effectively is a core professional responsibility. Colleagues are expected to maintain the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to manage complaints fairly, consistently and in line with regulatory expectations.

This creates a stronger connection between complaint handling and professional competence.

We comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. We train colleagues and review this policy at least annually or after Code changes. All staff are expected to understand and apply where appropriate the Customer Inclusion and Support Policy when handling complaints.

Handling complaints effectively is a core professional responsibility. Colleagues are expected to maintain the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to manage complaints fairly, consistently and in line with regulatory expectations.

This creates a stronger connection between complaint handling and professional competence.

Leaders are responsible for promoting a positive complaints culture, supporting colleagues to resolve complaints effectively, encouraging learning from customer feedback and ensuring improvements are implemented.

We support colleagues through training, coaching, guidance and continuous professional development to ensure they have the confidence, skills and judgement required to manage complaints effectively.

6. Complaints Process

Accent's complaints process is designed to be clear, fair, and accessible ensuring every customer receives a prompt response, support where needed, and a resolution that leads to real service improvement.

Our approach to complaints reflects our values of being Caring, Inclusive, Smart and Driven. We listen with empathy, seek to understand different perspectives, use feedback to improve services and take ownership for putting things right.

When managing complaints, colleagues are expected to:

- Listen actively and respectfully.
- Demonstrate empathy and understanding.
- Take ownership of issues raised.
- Communicate clearly and honestly.
- Focus on achieving customer outcomes.
- Remain professional and solution focused.
- Seek learning rather than blame.

How to make a complaint: We accept complaints via multiple accessible routes including online, phone, email, in person, and in writing. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure all customers can access the complaints process, as set out in the Customer Inclusion and Support Policy. A customer does not have to use the word "complaint" for it to be treated as such.

Online: www.accentgroup.org/contact-us/comments-complaints/

Telephone: 0345 678 0555.

E-mail: CustomerServices@AccentGroup.org.

Tell a member of Accent staff.

Write to us: 3rd Floor, Scorex House | 1 Bolton Road | Bradford, BD1 4AS.

We acknowledge complaints made via social media and move them into our formal process.

Who can complain: Anyone in receipt of our services, we also accept authorised representatives acting for customers.

Exclusions: We consider every complaint on its merit, we may not accept complaints where clear exclusion grounds apply (See appendix 1).

Complaint Handling Principles:

To support a timely and fair resolution, customers are expected to provide all relevant information and clearly outline the outcome they are seeking. This enables us to fully investigate the issues raised and respond effectively.

We will seek to understand the reasons why a complaint has been raised or escalated and address all aspects of the complaint to achieve a full and effective resolution.

We will accept complaints from third parties where appropriate authority has been provided by the customer.

We will aim to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity and keep customers informed throughout the process. We are committed to acting impartially and maintaining clear and accurate records of all decisions.

Where a complaint relates to an ongoing service request, we will continue to progress the complaint and service request alongside each other. Raising a complaint will not delay service delivery, and we will work to resolve both the service request and the complaint promptly and effectively.

Stages, Acknowledgements, and Response times:

We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and aim to provide an initial (Stage 1) response within 10 working days. Where a complaint is escalated (to stage two of our process), we will acknowledge the Stage 2 complaint within 5 working days and aim to provide a Stage 2 response within 20 working days, in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

In exceptional circumstances, an extension may be required. Where this applies, we will clearly explain the reason for the delay and agree to a revised timescale with the customer.

The process is set out in Appendix 1 of this policy.

Closing a complaint: A complaint will be closed when the resolution is agreed with the complainant and our commitment to deliver the action has been made and accepted by the complainant and the response to the complaint is issued. On occasions where a customer remains dissatisfied, or we are unable to agree a resolution, we will clearly explain our final decision, close the complaint, and provide the customer with the opportunity to escalate their complaint to the next stage of our process or to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

External review: We will make every effort to resolve our customers' complaints within our complaints process, however customers can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point for advice and, after our process concludes, for investigation.

Shared Owners and Leaseholders have the right to approach the Housing Ombudsman Service to seek an independent review of the complaint handling undertaken by Accent.

Please note that the Housing Ombudsman Service does not have jurisdiction to determine whether service charges are reasonable or payable.

Freeholders do not have the right to refer matters to either the Housing Ombudsman Service or the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber). However, subject to the terms of their transfer, freeholders may have the option to seek a determination on service charges through the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

Complaint Timescales are Commitments

Our complaint timescales are commitments, not aspirations. If we are unable to meet a deadline, we will inform customers promptly, explain the reason for the delay, and provide a new expected response date. Customers will be kept informed throughout the process, and actions agreed at the end of a complaint will be tracked until full resolution. The policy also mentions that we use a “promised actions” tracker to monitor agreed actions following a closed complaint. We will work to deliver responses within the timescales set out in the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code and section six of this policy. In some exceptional circumstances, additional time may be required to complete a thorough investigation.

Where this applies, we will inform the customer as soon as possible, clearly explain the reason for the delay, and provide a revised response date. We will seek to agree any extension with the customer, which will not exceed a maximum of 10 additional working days at Stage 1 and 20 additional working days at Stage 2.

Customers will be kept informed throughout the process, and any actions agreed at the conclusion of a complaint will be monitored and progressed through to full resolution.

We will provide clear information about the Housing Ombudsman Service at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints process. Following the final response at Stage 2, customers will also be given clear guidance on next steps, including how to access the Housing Ombudsman Service for an independent review.

Assessing Against the Complaint Handling Code

Accent is committed to ensuring that all complaints are handled in line with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code. Each year, we will assess our complaints process and outcomes against the Code and publish the results in our annual self-assessment. Where improvements are identified, we will update our processes and provide training to staff to ensure continued compliance and best practice.

7. Accessible Service, Advocacy, and Reasonable Adjustments.

Accent is committed to providing an accessible complaints service that meets the needs of all customers. If you need support to raise or progress a complaint, we will make reasonable adjustments so you can engage with us in a way that works for you.

Customers may ask an advocate, support worker, family member, friend, or another trusted person to help communicate with us. With your permission, we can share relevant information with this person and communicate with them directly about your complaint. We may ask you to confirm your consent before discussing your complaint with a third party, to protect your privacy and personal information.

If you require additional assistance, such as translation, interpretation, alternative formats, or other communication support, please let us know. We will work with you to understand what adjustments may help and will make every reasonable effort to accommodate your needs.

Accent provides information in alternative formats upon request, including large print, audio, Braille, and translated documents. Customers can expect to receive accessible formats promptly, without needing to chase. Complaints can be raised by post, phone, email, or online, digital access is not required. If you need correspondences or information on our complaint handling service hard copies or accessible versions can be provided, please let us know and we will ensure it is provided quickly.

Our approach aligns with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code, which requires landlords to make reasonable adjustments and ensure customers can access support when making a complaint.

Adjustment needs will be recorded, agreed with the customer, and reviewed regularly. We will only collect and use personal data for stated purposes and in line with our privacy notices. Guidance on making and recording reasonable adjustments is set out in the Customer Inclusion and Support Policy.

8. Building Safety Complaints

At Accent, we encourage customers to report any concerns relating to building safety. In line with our duties under the Building Safety Act 2022, complaints that relate to building safety risks will be managed through this policy. These provisions apply to higher-risk buildings, defined as those that are at least 18 metres in height or have seven or more storeys, and contain two or more residential homes.

A building safety complaint is any expression of concern relating to risks to the safety of a higher-risk building, including structural failure or the spread of fire, or the management of those risks.

Examples of building safety concerns that may be raised include:

- Issues relating to the actions or responsibilities of the Principal Accountable Person, who has legal responsibility for maintaining the safety of the building's shared areas;
- Risks affecting the safety of the building or its structure;
- Concerns about structural integrity or potential failure;
- Fire safety risks, including the potential spread of fire;
- External wall systems, such as cladding and materials attached to the building exterior;
- Fire protection measures, for example fire doors or smoke control systems;
- Situations where there has been a failure to respond appropriately to safety concerns;
- The overall management and control of building safety risks; and
- The quality and accuracy of communication provided about building safety.

Accent Housing recognises that building safety concerns may be identified by a wide range of individuals, not only our customers.

Building safety complaints relating to potential risk to life, structural integrity, or fire safety will be prioritised and responded to as a matter of urgency.

Feedback from building safety complaints will inform our Resident Engagement Strategy and ongoing management of building safety risks.

Where a customer remains dissatisfied with the handling of a building safety concern, or where there is a serious or imminent safety risk, customers have the right to refer concerns to the Building Safety Regulator.

We encourage customers to raise concerns with us in the first instance. However, this does not prevent customers from contacting the Building Safety Regulator at any time

Contact details:

Online: <https://www.contact-building-safety-regulator.service.gov.uk/>

Customers can use this service to raise concerns about building safety risks, including fire and structural safety, or the performance of the Accountable Person or Principal Accountable Person.

9. The Housing Ombudsman

Customers can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point during the complaints process. Although the Housing ombudsman may not be able to investigate a complaint whilst it is still going through Accents internal process, it may be able to help a customer reach a resolution with us.

Contact Details

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

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Online: [Contact us | Housing Ombudsman Service](#)

Information on accessing the service below is taken directly from the Housing Ombudsman, is not determined by Accent, and is set out below to support customers in accessing this service where required:

Lines are closed for staff training every Thursday from 3.30pm to 5pm

Please note: We strongly encourage you to use the [online complaint form](#) rather than sending post to us as there will be delays. Do not send original documents by post as we are unable to post them back to you. Also note that we will not be able to deal with large bundles of documents by post.

10. Customer Scrutiny, Involvement & Codesign

Accent Housing believes that customers should have a real say in how complaints are handled and how services are improved.

Customer Involvement in Complaints Handling

- **Scrutiny Activities:** We will invite customers to review a selection of complaints, spot common themes, and make recommendations for improvement. This helps us learn from your experiences and make real changes.
- **Feedback Forums:** You can share your views and suggestions through regular feedback sessions, surveys, or by joining our National Customer Group.
- **Annual Self-Assessment:** Each year, we work with customers to review our complaints policy and check how well we are following the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- **"You Said, We Did" Updates:** We publish updates showing what customers have told us, what we have learned, and what we have changed as a result.
- **Open and Fair Process:** We explain how customers are chosen to take part in scrutiny and make sure everyone has a fair chance to be involved.
- **Clear Feedback:** After any scrutiny activity, we tell customers what recommendations were made, what Accent has agreed to do, and why.

If you would like to get involved or have ideas for improving our complaints process, please let us know. Your voice matters and helps us deliver better services for everyone.

How We Use Your Feedback

- Customer scrutiny is a core part of our complaints process. We invite customers to review complaints, identify themes, and make recommendations for improvement through forums such as the Service Improvement Group and National Customer Group.
- The process is open and fair, with clear information about how customers are selected and involved.
- Feedback from scrutiny activities is provided to all participants, explaining what recommendations have been made, what Accent has agreed to do, and the rationale for any decisions not to implement changes.
- Customer codesign is embedded early in our policy review and self-assessment processes.

After Your Complaint Is Closed

- We invite feedback after every closed complaint and use insights to improve our service.

Annual Self-Assessment (Complaint Handling Code)

- We will co-produce the annual self-assessment with customers by:
 - Engaging with Customers or Champions to review our self-assessment
 - Publishing the final self-assessment which is simple and clear.
 - Inviting customers to comment and propose improvements.
 - Reporting “you said / we did” actions publicly.

11. Capturing Learning & Driving Continuous improvement

Accent has committed to providing an annual “You said, we did” update, clearly showing how learning from complaints is driving meaningful improvements to services and helping to strengthen a customer focused culture and behaviours. The policy also sets out how we systematically capture and act on learning from complaints to prevent issues from happening again and to improve customer experience. This includes root cause analysis for upheld and partly upheld complaints, a live Service Improvement Log, and regular reporting of themes and progress to the Senior Leadership Team, Executive Team, and Customer Experience Committee.

Updates will be shared on our website and with customer groups, and will be available in alternative formats upon request, ensuring transparency and accountability for service improvements.

Accent promotes a learning culture where complaints are used as opportunities to improve services, processes and customer outcomes. Learning from complaints focuses on understanding root causes and preventing recurrence rather than assigning blame.

Learning will be shared with colleagues through team discussions, coaching, communications and development activities to strengthen organisational capability.

We systematically capture learning from complaints to prevent recurrence and improve customer experience:

- Root cause analysis on upheld / part upheld complaints (themes, drivers, process gaps)
- A live Service Improvement Log with owners, milestones, and due dates
- Governance reporting of themes and progress to Senior Leadership Team, Executive Team, and the Customer Experience Committee
- Policy/Procedure updates triggered by learning (including the Compensation Policy/Procedure where relevant)
- Training & coaching updates for frontline teams

12. Monitoring & Reporting

We monitor complaint performance and service improvements and report regularly to the Senior Leadership Team, Executive Team, Customer Experience Committee, and the Board Member responsible for Complaints. We publish our annual Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment and an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, and we also publish complaint handling performance through our online performance hub to ensure transparency and accessibility for customers.”

13. Putting Things Right (non-financial remedies)

When we resolve a complaint, we may:

- Acknowledge when things have gone wrong
- Explain what happened
- Apologise
- Take action to put things right
- Review how we do things to prevent similar issues in future
- Use a promised actions tracker to monitor agreed actions following a closed complaint.

Where a financial remedy is considered appropriate, such as discretionary or ex-gratia payments, compensation for quantifiable loss, or statutory payments including Home Loss, Disturbance, or Right to Repair, these will be managed in accordance with our Compensation Policy and Compensation Procedure.

We will clearly explain any remedies being offered within our complaint responses, including what is being provided and the reasons for our decision. This ensures customers understand how we are putting things right and promotes transparency throughout the process.

14. Exceptions

We may apply exceptions in extenuating circumstances, considering customer vulnerability, to ensure customers are treated fairly, compassionately, and with respect. Any exceptions will be recorded with rationale, and we will explain to customers when an exception is made and the reasons for our decision. The reasons why we may not accept a complaint are set out in Appendix 2.

15. Data Protection and Privacy Complaints

A data protection complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction regarding how we collect, use, store, share, or respond to requests about personal data. This includes concerns about breaches, delays in responding to subject access requests, or perceived misuse of personal information.

Data protection and privacy complaints are managed under a **separate process** and are **not** handled through Accent's standard complaint procedure which is set out in this policy. All data protection complaints will be dealt with by the Data Protection Team.

Complaints must be made in writing by the complainant. We provide accessible channels for individuals to submit complaints, including:

- Online: www.accentgroup.org/contact-us/comments-complaints/
- E-mail: dataprotection@accentgroup.org
- Write to us: 3rd Floor, Scorex House | 1 Bolton Road | Bradford, BD1 4AS.

We will acknowledge data protection complaints within **30 days** of receipt (via email unless requested otherwise). We will investigate and respond without undue delay, keeping the complainant informed of progress and expected timelines.

Under Section 103 of the Data Use Access Act (DUAA), individuals must first raise their complaint with us before escalating to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). If a complainant remains dissatisfied after our final response, they may contact the Information Commissioners' Office (ICO) directly.

16. Policy Reviews

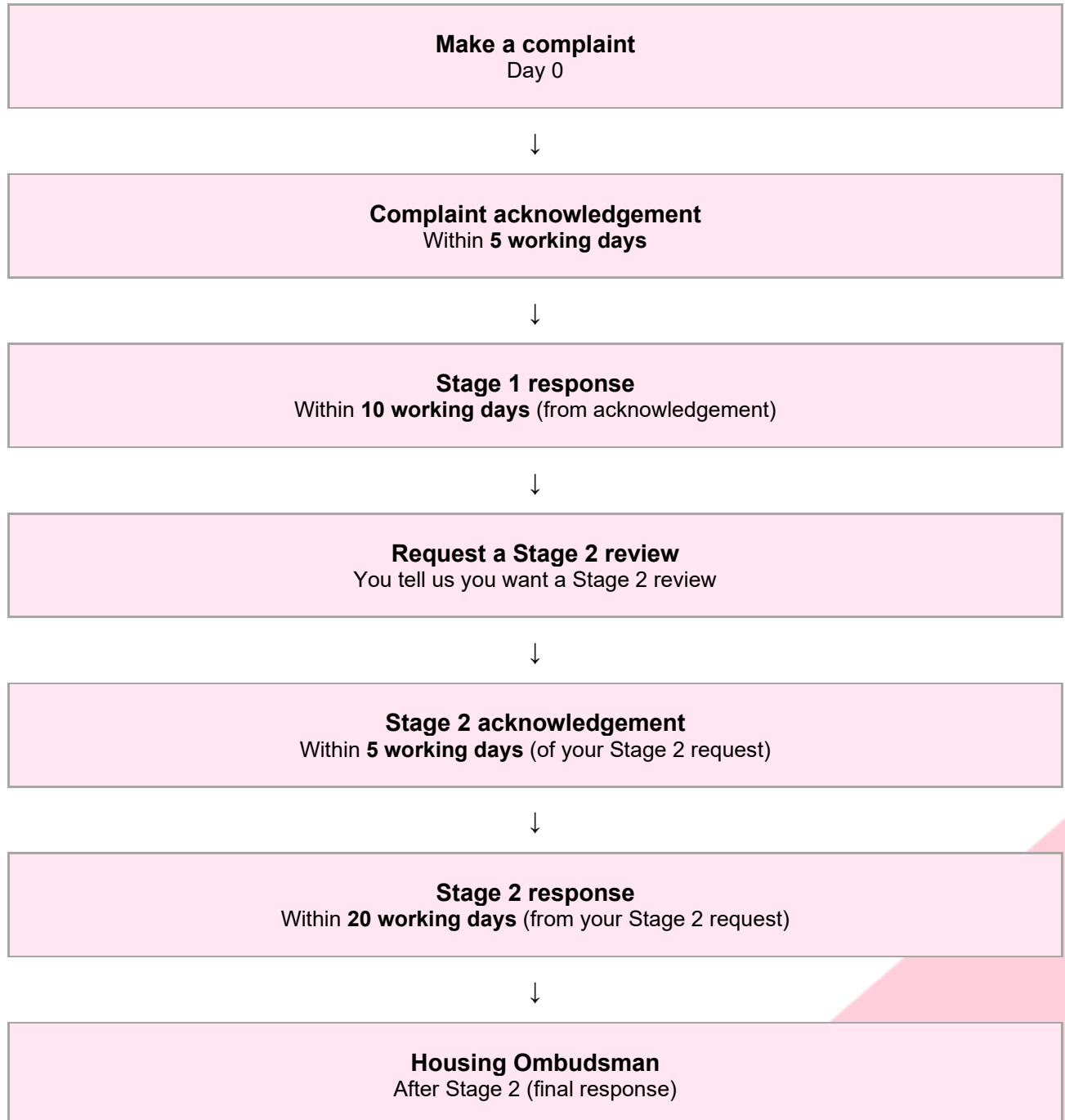
This policy will be reviewed on a three-year cycle. In addition, we will complete an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Where this assessment identifies any required changes, a review of the policy will be undertaken to ensure continued compliance and effectiveness.

Any amendments will be communicated to all colleagues and relevant stakeholders, and associated training and e-learning will be updated to reflect these changes.

The implementation of this policy will be monitored through annual reporting to the Customer Experience Committee and the Board.

Appendix 1 Complaint Steps

This is a simple guide to our complaint steps and timescales.



If we need more time: if we cannot meet a deadline, we will tell you why and agree a new response date.

Appendix 2 Exclusions

We treat complaints fairly and look at each one on its own facts. We will usually accept your complaint.

If we decide we cannot accept a complaint, we will explain why and tell you how to ask the Housing Ombudsman to look at that decision. If the Ombudsman says we should accept it, we will.

The following reasons are examples of why we may decline your complaint.

- It happened more than 12 months ago (unless there is a good reason for the delay).
- It is only about the annual rent or service charge increase (unless a service has not been delivered, or there may be an error in the calculation).
- It is only about anti-social behaviour (unless we have not followed our anti-social behaviour policy when dealing with the report).
- It is not something we are responsible for (for example, a service provided by someone else, repairs that are not our responsibility under your tenancy/lease, or damage to your belongings that we did not cause).
- It is raised by someone who is not our customer (we may still look at it, but only at our discretion, the Housing Ombudsman cannot consider these cases), please note that this does not include Building Safety complaints, where these will be accepted from anyone.
- There is a legal process under way or about to start that the complaint is directly linked to. We will usually keep trying to resolve issues during the pre-action stage, but we will close the complaint once court proceedings begin.
- Mediation is in progress. We will pause the complaint until mediation has finished, then decide what to do next.
- We have already given you our final response through this complaints process. We will tell you how to take it to the Housing Ombudsman for an independent review.
- Your behaviour is unacceptable, as set out in our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.