

Somewhere Cooperative Housing Association Ltd

Complaints Policy

Last reviewed date: 28 October 2025

1. Welcoming complaints - Somewhere Cooperative Housing Association (SCHA) welcomes complaints from its members and encourages anyone using or directly affected by its services to make complaints. A member does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as a complaint.

2. SCHA will accept complaints from agencies and others representing complainants (although SCHA will need to have written evidence that anyone representing a complainant is authorised by the complainant to act on their behalf). SCHA will allow such representatives to attend meetings with the complainant if the complainant wishes them to.

3. A complainant could also be anyone who is affected by a decision or action taken by SCHA, including:

- any non-member service users and ex-service users;
- applicants for housing;
- partnership organisations and agencies;
- contractors or consultants;
- neighbours to co-operative properties;
- other members of the public.

4. What is a complaint? A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by SCHA, or by others acting on its behalf, affecting an individual member or group of members. A complaint, whether justified or not, may be about something that SCHA should or should not have done or has done badly or has done or not done in accordance with its policies. A complaint may also be about a complainant feeling that they have not been treated fairly or they have been discriminated against in the provision of a service.

5. SCHA will accept and act on complaints unless there is a valid reason not to do so. We will not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; we will always consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.

6. The following would not usually be considered through SCHA's complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to consider them:

- requests for a particular service (e.g. a complaint about a repair or something else that has not yet been requested);

- requests to deal with an Anti-Social Behaviour or harassment issue or Neighbour Nuisance or Neighbour Disputes which should be dealt with in accordance with relevant policies. If a complainant has asked SCHA to address an Anti Social Behaviour issue, neighbour nuisance or a neighbour dispute and is not happy with the way that SCHA has managed it, they may then make a complaint under the Complaints Policy;
- new issues that arise during a complaints investigation unless they are relevant to the complaint under investigation;
- anonymous complaints;
- matters that relate to legal proceedings that have started;
- complaints about something more than twelve months old;
- matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy;
- expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey (the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to)
- issues relating to how the co-operative is governed which need to be dealt with through SCHA's Code of Conduct.

7. If SCHA chooses not to receive a complaint for one of the above reasons, we will formally write to the complainant setting out its reasons why.

8. Receiving complaints – members can make a complaint to any other member of the Coop by phone, by letter, by email, through speaking to someone who represents SCHA, or by other means.

9. SCHA will always consider how we will maintain confidentiality in the handling of complaints to those managing them. Every appropriate effort will be made to resolve complaints straight away and without a formal process. Emphasis will be placed on correcting any service that has failed.

10. SCHA will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and recognise that we may need to adapt our normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual member's needs.

11. Complaints Officers – SCHA will designate at least one person to be a Complaints Officer. This could be a member of the co-operative's governing body or someone who works for the co-operative, but individual Complaints Officers managing complaints will be independent of the complaint being managed. Complaints Officers will be competent, empathetic and efficient; able to act sensitively and fairly; be able to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset members; will have access to individuals in SCHA at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints. Wherever possible, they should have the authority in SCHA to make decisions to resolve the complaint, although it is often the case that complaints are complex and refer to matters that are not covered by SCHA's policies and therefore may require consideration by the governing body.

SCHA's current Coop Complaints Officer is:
Trevor Houghton

Email: trevorbrycheiniog@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 07501614256

The Coop's mailing address:

Somewhere Cooperative Housing Assoc. Ltd
c/o Upper House, Skenfrith, Abergavenny, NP7 8UF

The Housing Ombudsman Service's contact details:

PO Box 1484

Unit D

Preston

PR2 0ET

Tel: 0300 111 3000 Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Online complaint form:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/>

13. Complaints Officers will take responsibility for ensuring that receipt of the complaint is acknowledged; that an investigation of the complaint takes place; and that there is communication with the complainant throughout and regarding outcomes.

14. Complaints procedure – SCHA will manage complaints as follows:

- Acknowledgement and logging - complaints will be acknowledged and logged when received;
- Confirmation of the complaint - SCHA should confirm in writing to the complainant what the complainant is complaining about. SCHA should encourage complainants to be specific about what they are complaining about and what outcomes they are seeking from SCHA. SCHA will be clear regarding which aspects of the complaint we are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear;
- Investigation - Complaints Officers independent to the complaint should investigate the complaint – giving the complainant and any other parties to the complaint the opportunity to state their views on the subject matter of the complaint. Matters that are easily resolvable in the complaint should be addressed as soon as possible;
- Decision-making – Complaints Officers (or the governing body of SCHA in some cases) need to decide their approach to resolution of the complaint and this should be communicated to the complainant. A complaint response will be provided to the complainant when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.;
- Review – if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, they may request a review and this should be heard by someone independent of the complaint so far – offering the complainant and other parties to the complaint the opportunity to put forward their views. The complainant does not have to give a reason why they are dissatisfied with the response they received at the first stage of the procedure. The outcome of the review should be communicated to the complainant and this concludes SCHA's complaints procedure;

- Further stages – SCHA does not have further stages to the complaint procedure.

Where SCHA's complaint response may be handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of this complaints process. Complainants will not be expected to go through two complaints processes. Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Where complainants raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the complaint response if they are related and the complaint response has not been issued. Where the complaint response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.

15. SCHA will abide by the following maximum target times for the complaints procedure:

Acknowledgement of the complaint - One week or 5 working days

Results of the investigation of a complaint - Two weeks or 10 working days from receipt of the complaint

Results of a subsequent review of a complaint - Four weeks or 20 working days from the request for a review

16. If it is not possible for SCHA to achieve these timescales, we will communicate how much extra time is needed to the complainant and the reasons why there will be a delay. The target times for the investigation and review stages should not be exceeded by more than two weeks or 10 working days without good reason. We will also provide the complainant with the contact details of the Ombudsman.

17. If SCHA chooses not to either investigate a complaint or to hold a review when asked, we will be clear about our reasons why, and these reasons will be communicated to the complainant.

18. Communications – SCHA will make this complaints policy available in a clear and accessible format for members. The policy will be publicised online, easily found and downloadable, and as part of regular correspondence with our members. SCHA will provide copies of the complaints policy to members on request.

19. SCHA will provide members with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of their regular correspondence with members. SCHA will tell their members that they can access the Housing Ombudsman Service when they wish to and not just when they have exhausted SCHA's complaints process, and that the Housing Ombudsman Service can assist members throughout the life of a complaint.

20. When communicating with members about complaints, SCHA will use plain language. SCHA will address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour will be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

21. At the end of the complaint investigation and at the end of the review (if there is one) SCHA will write to the member to say:

- what the outcome of their complaint is;
- the reasons why decisions have been made;
- what offers SCHA is making to put things right;
- clearly set out what will happen and by when, which will be followed through to completion;
- what actions remain outstanding;
- how the complainant can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or what SCHA is offering;
- that the complainant may refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

22. During the complaint investigation and in any review, members will be given a fair opportunity to set out their views, and comment on any findings before a final decision is made.

23. Communication with the complainant should not generally identify individuals involved in delivering the service (volunteers, staff, service provider or contractors) because all are acting on behalf of SCHA. Whilst SCHA should seek to put right any problems and learn from mistakes, we will not seek to blame the SCHA's members or service provider to the complainant.

24. SCHA will keep complainants regularly updated and informed even where there is no new information to provide.

25. The Housing Ombudsman Service – if the member remains dissatisfied at the end of SCHA's complaints procedure, they may bring their complaint to the Ombudsman. SCHA will co-operate with the Ombudsman's requests for evidence and provide this within 3 weeks or 15 working days. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, SCHA will provide the Ombudsman with an explanation for the delay. If the explanation is reasonable, the Ombudsman will agree a revised date with SCHA.

26. Keeping records – SCHA will document all informal and formal complaints and their follow through and will keep copies of all complaint correspondence to and from the complainant. The Complaints Officer will be responsible for ensuring that outcomes to complaints are implemented. A full record will be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage, including the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the complainant, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.

27. Learning from complaints – SCHA's governing body will consider all complaints it has received and what could be improved as a result of the complaint. We will prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. We pledge to report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to all members. All relevant members/staff will be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. Complaints are seen as a core service and SCHA will be resourced to handle complaints effectively. High volumes of complaints will not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.