Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative

Complaints Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 This policy applies to **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** and seeks to ensure that **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative's** complaints process is flexible and responsive to the needs of individual members to enable them to be heard and understood.

Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative complies with the Complaint Handling Code (the **Code**) issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service. All complaints dealt with under this policy will be dealt with in a manner consistent with the Code and the Co-Operative will maintain all records as required by the Code.

1.2 A **complaint** is defined as: "an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative, it's Officers,** or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual member or group of members.

1.3 The word "complaint" does not need to be used expressly for the matter to be considered a complaint. Whenever a member expresses dissatisfaction **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will give them the option to make a complaint. Complaints made by members may be made by the member's carer, family members or a representative of a member and these must be handled in line with **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** complaints policy.

1.4 Complaints can be made to the Complaints Officer or Complaints Team member of **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative**. This can be done in a number of ways which include:

- Telephone
- Letter
- Email
- Face to Face

1.5 A service request is a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right. **Service requests** are not a **complaint**. Service requests should be dealt with in accordance with the Residents' Handbook. Failure to deal appropriately with a service request may lead to the matter being dealt with as a complaint.

1.6 Service requests will be recorded, tracked, and monitored to completion.

1.7 A complaint must be raised when the member expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will not stop our efforts to address the service request if the member raises a complaint.

1.8 An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a member's survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to.

1.9 In dealing with complaints **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will ensure that:

(a) individuals who raise a complaint are listened to and treated with courtesy and empathy;

(b) members will never be disadvantaged as a result of raising a complaint;

(c) complaints will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly, and openly; and

(d) in dealing with complaints **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will comply with confidentiality and data protection policies.

2 Exclusions

2.1 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do and will ensure we consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.

2.2 The following matters will not be considered as complaints:

(a) the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.

(b) legal proceedings have begun as defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at Court.

(c) matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.

2.3 Unless excluded on other grounds, **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of issue occurring or the member becoming aware of the issue. Where there are good reasons to do so, **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will also consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside the time limit.

2.4 If a complaint is not accepted a detailed explanation will be provided to the member setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and their right to take that decision to the Ombudsman (see details below). The Ombudsman may direct **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** to take on the complaint.

3 Unreasonable behaviour

We understand that members can get upset and frustrated when things have gone wrong.

3.1 If **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** feels a complaint is pursued unreasonably, including any actions or behaviours of the member/representative, these complaints will be reviewed in line with **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** unreasonable behaviour policy.

3.2 All complaints will be reviewed on an individual basis

3.3 If any restrictions are put in place, these will proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

3.4 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will ensure any restrictions will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly and the complainant updated following the review.

3.5 Any restrictions in place will not prevent **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** from ensuring the complaint can be taken through the full complaints process.

4 Accessibility and awareness

4.1 Complaints will be dealt with in a manner that is consistent with **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** Equality & Diversity Policy and the Co-Operative's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

4.2 If any individual making a complaint wishes **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate an individual's particular needs, they, or their representative, can contact **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** by phone, email or in person to discuss what adjustments may be possible.

4.3 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** acknowledges that a high volume of complaints must not be seen as negative, as this can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints procedure. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that members are unable to complain.

4.4 The complaints handling policy will be listed in the Residents Handbook, published on **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative's** website. **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will consider all requests to provide the complaints policy in other accessible formats.

4.5 Residents will have the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting. We will always follow data protection measures when disclosing any information to a third party.

5 Complaint handling team

5.1 Complaints will be investigated by the Complaints Officer at Stage One.

5.2 Complaints will be investigated by another appointed Officer at Stage Two.

5.3 If the Complaints Officer and/or the other appointed Officer are conflicted, or the complaint relates to the Complaints Officer and/or the other appointed

Officer, the complaint should be directed to a member of the Management Committee.

5.4 Members will be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling.

6 Complaints process

6.1 At each stage of the complaints process, **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will:

(a) deal with complaints on their merits;

(b) act independently and have an open mind but may consider reports of previous complaints that relate to the same issue being complained about;

(c) give the member a fair chance to set out their position;

(d) take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; (which may include asking another trustee to investigate the complaint);

(e) consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

(f) keep the details of the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only being disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.

7 Stage One of the Complaints Process

7.1 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will acknowledge the complaint and make a record, within 5 working days. The acknowledgement will:

(a) summarise **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative's** understanding of the complaint (The complaint definition);

(b) make clear which aspects of the complaint **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** is, and is not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear;

(c) summarise **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative's** understanding of what the Complainant is seeking as an outcome;

(d) raise any questions that require clarification from the Complainant; and

(e) set out the next course of action and anticipated timescale.

7.2 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will issue a full response within 10 working days from the complaint being acknowledged. In exceptional cases, if we anticipate that the complaint will take longer to resolve, this will be explained to the member with a clear timeframe set out for the resolution of the complaint which will not exceed a further 10 working days, without good reason. If any further extensions are required, this will be in agreement with member who will be updated at regular intervals. Such explanation should also include the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

7.3 A complaint response will be provided to the member when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the member.

7.4 We will investigate the complaint in an impartial manner permitting all relevant parties to provide information. The member and any third parties involved in the complaint should be given the opportunity to set out their position before any final decision is made. We may delegate the management and investigation of the complaint to another individual.

7.5 If the member dealing with the complaint is conflicted, or the complaint relates to that member, the complaint should be directed initially to the Complaints Team.

7.6 If the complaint involves questions relating to the **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** or the member's legal obligations, **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will set out clearly our understanding of the respective legal obligations and may seek legal advice before doing so.

7.7 If new issues are raised by the member during the stage one process, these should be dealt with as part of the process if they are relevant. However, if the issues relate to a different issue and/or are raised after the Stage 1 response has already been issued, a new complaint will be logged.

7.8 In responding to the complaint, we will confirm in writing:

(a) the complaint stage

(b) the complaint definition

(c) the decision on the complaint

(d) the reasons for any decisions made

(e) the details of any remedy offered to put things right

(f) details of any outstanding actions; and

(g) details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the individual is not satisfied with the result.

8 Stage Two of the Complaints Process

8.1 If the member is not satisfied with all or part of the stage 1 response, they can escalate their complaint to stage 2. This can be done in writing by email, via telephone call or in person. The person dealing with the complaint at stage 2 will not be the same person that responded at stage 1.

8.2 The member does not need to provide reasons for requesting the complaint to be escalated

8.3 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will acknowledge the complaint at stage 2 within 5 working days of receipt and will

(a) Summarise **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative's** understanding of the complaint (the complaint definition);

(b) summarise **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative's** understanding of what the member is seeking as an outcome;

(c) raise any questions that require clarification from the member; but acknowledge that reasons do not need to be given for the complaint to be escalated to stage 2;

(d) set out the next course of action and anticipated timescale.

8.4 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will respond in writing to the member within 20 working days of the stage 2 complaint being acknowledged, informing them of the outcome of the investigation. This will be the Co-Operative's final response.

8.5 If **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** believes that the appeal will take longer than 20 working days, this will be explained to the member with a clear timeframe set out for the resolution of the complaint which will not exceed a further 20 working days. If any further extensions are required, this will be in agreement with member who will be updated at regular intervals. Such explanation should also include the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

8.6 A complaint response will be provided to the member when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the member.

8.7 In responding to the stage 2 complaint, we will confirm in writing:

(a) the complaint stage

(b) the complaint definition

(c) the decision on the complaint

(d) the reasons for any decisions made

(e) the details of any remedy offered to put things right

(f) details of any outstanding actions; and

(g) details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman will be provided if the member is not satisfied with the response.

9 Putting things right where something has gone wrong

9.1 Where something has gone wrong **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:

- Apologising;
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
- Taking action if there has been delay;
- Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
- Providing a financial remedy;
- Changing policies, procedures, or practices.

9.2 Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the member as a result of any fault identified.

9.3 The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the member where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.

9.4 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will take account of the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.

10 Scrutiny & oversight

10.1 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** has a senior lead person who is accountable for our complaint handling. This person will assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.

10.2 A member of the **Management Committee** has been appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is known as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

11 Annual Review

11.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

11.2 **Southsea Self Help Housing Co-Operative** will carry out an annual self-assessment in accordance with the Code.

11.3 The **Management Committee** at the **Annual General Meeting** will consider any findings or recommendations of the annual self-assessment and the annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

12 For the purposes of this policy:

12.1.1 Contact for Stage 1:

Name:	Ian Parry
Telephone number:	023 9287 0050
Address:	57 Lucknow Street
	Portsmouth
	PO1 1PD
Email address:	sshhcoop.@outlook.com

12.1.2 Contact for Stage 2

Name:	Chris Collier or Alison Chester
Telephone number:	023 9287 0050
Address:	57 Lucknow Street
	Portsmouth
	PO1 1PD
Email address:	sshhcoop.@outlook.com

If a conflict of interest arises regarding complaints, and its members, The Co-Op may approach CCH to oversee the complaints process. If this occurs, the resident will be provided with details of who will be investigating the complaint and providing the state 1 or stage 2 complaint responses in line with this complaints policy.

13 Housing Ombudsman Service

The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service,

PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET

This policy has been approved for issue by:

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Position: .....

Date: .....