



New Homes Customer Feedback Policy (Full Ownership)

What we do if customers are unhappy or chuffed with the service they had when buying a full ownership new home.

1. Policy Statement

This policy is for customers of full ownership, new build homes; currently sold under the Space Homes brand. It set out our approach to offering a simple and accessible way for customers to provide feedback, with processes that ensure that complaints are dealt with quickly, effectively, fairly and consistently.

We recognise that on occasion our service delivery can fall short of both our own and our customers' expectations. We promote a positive complaints culture where we'll proactively put things right and where feedback is used to continually provide learning to improve our services.

Yorkshire Housing (YH) colleagues should use this policy in conjunction with the Internal complaints guides.

2. Policy Aims

- Increase customer satisfaction by resolving complaints empathetically, quickly and fairly in a consistent manner and listening to all feedback.
- Continuously improve by understanding and reviewing areas of our service which cause dissatisfaction amongst customers and learn from trends and patterns of behaviour.
- To ensure continuous improvement by learning from compliments and other feedback.

We'll deliver this by:

- Having a consistent and impartial framework for dealing with complaints, compliments and feedback.
- Encouraging customer feedback both great and not so great.
- Resolving service failures at the first point of contact where possible.
- Giving colleagues and customers clear guidance, on how complaints, compliments and feedback will be dealt with.
- Using complaints as an opportunity to rebuild trust with our customers.
- Training colleagues to provide a top-notch customer experience, complaint handling and investigation service.
- Use insight and learning from complaints, compliments and feedback to shape customer obsessed services across YH.

3. Policy Details

What is a complaint?

We defines a complaint as, ***“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own colleagues or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents”***.

At YH we want to hear feedback about the services we provide and see a complaint as an opportunity to learn what we need to improve.

What is not a complaint?

- An initial request for a service or information including defects.
- Where a customer is taking legal action against YH on the same issue or YH is taking legal action against the customer on the same issue for which YH is not responsible.
- MP, Councillor and Citizen Advice enquiries that are not complaints (these are separate enquiries handled by the customer resolution team).
- Complaints about the actions of an organisation that is not working for or supported by YH.
- Where the complaint is alleged to be of a discriminatory nature and a potential breach of the Equality Act 2010. These will be dealt with through a legal route.
- Feedback about something in an existing YH or Space Homes policy, for example, policy timescales for defects. These are treated as suggestions.

Whilst we don't treat these issues as a complaint under this policy, we'll deal with them appropriately. We'll respond to the customer to let them know why it's not being picked up as part of the new homes customer feedback policy and explain what we can do to help.

Complaints about colleagues

Depending on the severity of a colleague complaint, we may need to complete an internal review using our people policies.

Complaints against colleagues will be reviewed and acknowledged by the customer resolution team and passed to the individual's manager to investigate and respond within 10 working days. In these circumstances, to protect colleague privacy, full details of any action taken against an individual colleague won't be disclosed to the customer.

What is a compliment

We define a compliment as ***“praise or say thanks for the service offered by a YH colleague or contractor”***.

Compliments make our day, who doesn't love getting great feedback! We'll pass on any compliments we receive **to** the colleague and their manager. We'll log these for sharing more widely and use them to identify areas of good practice that YH can learn from.

Passing on comments and suggestions

There may be time when customers don't want to make a complaint but want to comment and makes suggestions about how YH could do things differently or in a better way. Feedback will be recorded and reviewed by the customer resolution team so that we can learn and improve.

How a customer can give us feedback

Customers can make a complaint, pass on a compliment comment or suggestion by:

- **Email:** customerservices@yorkshirehousing.co.uk
- **Website:** www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk
- **Phone:** 0345 3664404
- **Letter:** The Place, 2 Central Place, Leeds, LS10 1FB
- Social Media, although complaints by this channel can be taken offline to maintain confidentiality
- Customer review sites
- In person
- Via a local Councillor or Member of Parliament

Having a representative or advocate act on your behalf

Customers can ask an advocate or representative to raise a complaint on their behalf. YH will ask for authority to speak to them beforehand. This could be a family member, friend, social worker or support worker. Advocates or representative of the customer can raise a complaint on behalf of the customer where the customer:

- Is unable to complain themselves because of physical incapacity or a lack of capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005;
- Has requested the representative to act on their behalf (proof must be provided); or
- Has passed away.

The Complaints Resolution Process

YH acknowledges that sometimes we get things wrong or don't meet the high levels of service that our customers expect. When this happens, we want to resolve these issues or complaints as quickly as possible and have simple and clear processes for doing so.

We'll always try to resolve things quickly for the customer. But if we can't do this within 5 days of customers telling us that they're unhappy with something or if they request that a formal complaint is raised.

Stage one formal complaint

A stage one complaint must be made within two years from the date of reservation or legal completion, whichever is later.

We'll log and acknowledge a complaint within **5 calendar days**. Once a complaint has been logged, we'll send the customer a "path to resolution letter" within **10 calendar days**, outlining how their complaint will be investigated. This will include notifying the customer if the complaint may be subject to a resolution service.

No later than **30 calendar days** from the date of logging, we'll provide the customer with a response letter.

The complaint will be investigated by a complaints officer from within the relevant service area who'll:

- Investigate the complaint thoroughly.
- Provide a full response within the agreed timescales.
- Keep the customer fully up to date with the progress of their complaint.

The complaints officer dealing with the complaint will contact the customer before completing their investigations to give them a fair opportunity to set out their position and comment on any findings before a decision is made.

The "complaint assessment and response" letter will include the following information:

- Details of each complaint and a separate response for each point
- What action has been taken to resolve the complaint.
- If not resolved but further time is needed to investigate the matter, the estimated time within which a decision will be reached together with a brief explanation about what further steps are required and why.
- If not resolved but remediation work is accepted, what that work will be and an estimated time within which required work will be completed.
- Where further investigations or remediation has been set out in the letter, when the next update will be provided. This will not be more than 28 calendar days.
- Where a complaint is not accepted, it will be set out clearly with a clear explanation for the decision.
- Information about any recommended engagement with any applicable resolution service. Information about how to refer matters to the New Homes Ombudsman Service.

Eight-week (56 day) Letter

Where the complaint is not closed and no later than **56 calendar days** from the complaint being logged, the customer will be sent an eight-week letter which will include the following information:

- A clear summary of what action has been taken to date.
- Clear details of what is still outstanding, a reason and the actions to be taken.
- An indicative timescale for resolution.
- The frequency that updates will be provided to the customer until resolution, which will not be more than 30 days.

New Homes Ombudsman Service

If defects complained of or snags reported are not resolved in accordance with the timelines in this policy, then a customer may refer a dispute to the New Homes Ombudsman Service.

It is within the New Homes Ombudsman Service's discretion to decide when or if to accept a referral to it, in accordance with the New Homes Ombudsman Service's scheme rules. In line with established consumer best practice, a customer can refer a complaint that arose within the first two years to the New Homes Ombudsman Service after 56 calendar days of the complaint being logged, whether the date which the customer refers the complaint to a New Homes Ombudsman Service is within the first two years after legal completion.

Any complaint should always be made promptly by a customer. It's within a New Homes Ombudsman Service's discretion to decide when or if to accept a referral to it, in accordance with the New Homes Ombudsman Service's scheme rules YH and Space Homes will co-operate with any request from a New Homes Ombudsman Service to provide all relevant information.

The customer can contact the New Homes Ombudsman Service via the following methods:

Email: customer.services@nhos.org.uk

Phone: [03308084286](tel:03308084286) (9.00am to 5pm Monday to Friday)

Post: West Wing, First Floor, Maylands Building, 200 Maylands Avenue, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7TG.

Statutory and Regulatory Responsibility

This policy ensures that YH meets the requirements in the New Homes Quality Code.

We're committed to ensuring that all personal data is managed in-line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and any associated regulations and codes of conduct. Where a complaint involves a third party, it might necessary for YH to share the details of the complaint for them to investigate. If the information is sensitive, we'll discuss this with the customer before we share any information. Our Data Protection and Privacy Policy is available upon request.

Compensation

Where financial compensation is requested or is being considered, each case will be reviewed on its own merits. When awarding compensation, we'll consider whether any statutory payments or quantifiable losses have been incurred. We'll also take into account time and trouble and any distress and inconvenience caused.

Unreasonable, persistent and vexatious complainants

YH is committed to providing a customer feedback service that is accessible to all customers, however, on the rare occasion that a customer's actions are found to be unreasonable, we reserve the right to restrict or change this access.

Some customers may make what we consider unreasonable demands if they impact on our services due to the amount of information they seek or provide, the nature and scale of service they expect, or the regularity or number of approaches they make. Examples of this behaviour include:

- asking for responses within an unreasonable timescale.
- insisting on communicating with a particular colleague.
- continual phone calls, emails, or letters.
- repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
- refusal to co-operate with the complaint investigation process while still requesting their complaint be resolved.
- persistent refusal to accept a decision.
- persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what YH can or cannot do.
- continuing to pursue a complaint case without presenting any new information.

Customers who pursue complaints in such a way will be managed using the unreasonable customer behaviour policy.

Learning from Complaints

YH are committed to learning from customer feedback that we receive and will ensure that feedback is provide at an operational level to service teams across YH to ensure immediate learning on Individual cases.

The customer resolution team will produce regular reports that are shared with managers, senior leadership teams, Homes and Places Committee and YHL Board. Lessons learned and satisfaction with complaints handling is reviewed and monitored by the customer complaints forum and quarterly reports provide to the Customer Voice and Review Committee.

Reports will highlight themes and trends which will allow senior management to review and identify any systemic issues, serious risks or areas for organisational improvement. Annual reporting to Board will include the Housing Ombudsman's annual landlord performance report.

Training

YH promotes a positive complaint handling culture and the embedding of learning opportunities from feedback. We'll give service-related training to all colleagues, which includes induction and refresher training as appropriate. Additionally, providing specific skills and knowledge training for stage two complaint officers.

Customer Satisfaction

When a complaint is closed, we ask the customer to tell us about their experience of the complaints process. A short customer satisfaction questionnaire will be sent to customers by text or email.

All customer satisfaction results are reported to the Customer Complaints Forum for review and analysis, with recommendations for improvement reported to the relevant service area and to the Customer Voice and Review Committee.

4. Diversity and Inclusion Implications

Fairness and accessibility is a key aim of this policy. There are no parts of this policy that have equality and diversity implications on any demographic of customer.

5. Reporting and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect current legislation and any changes to the New Homes Quality Code. Compliance is monitored through customer feedback and internal key performance indicators (KPI's).

We have an established methods of reporting and regularly report on the following to customers, management teams, YHL Board, Homes and Places Committee and Customer Voice and Review Committee:

- Number of complaints, feedback and compliments by stage, type and service area.
- Number and details of any New Homes Ombudsman referrals.
- Performance against internal KPI's.
- Lessons learned by service area, type and theme.
- Customer satisfaction with complaints.

Date approved	30 October 2023
Approved by	Homes and Places Committee
Recommended / scrutinised by	Heads of Service
Summary of changes	New policy
Frequency of review	Every 3 years or in-line with legislative changes
Next review date	October 2026
Policy owner	Susan Godbold, Customer Insight and Engagement Manager

Policy author	Susan Godbold, Customer Insight and Engagement Manager
Associated policies or guidelines	New Homes Quality Code Customer Feedback Policy Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy Access to Services Policy YH internal Complaints and Feedback Guides
Associated procedure	Feedback handling procedure (new homes, full ownership)