

IronOak Homes



IRON OAK

COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK POLICY

Control Sheet

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy sets out how the IronOak Homes (IronOak) will manage complaints and compliments from residents, other stakeholders and members of the public.
- 1.2. The organisation is committed to:
 - delivering high quality housing and support services
 - ensuring residents can easily raise concerns when services fall short
 - resolving complaints fairly, quickly, and transparently
 - learning from complaints to improve services
 - recognising and sharing positive feedback about staff and services
- 1.3. The policy supports a culture of openness, accountability, and continuous improvement.
- 1.4. This policy is applicable to all schemes including those with delegated housing management services.
- 1.5. For delegated services, appointed third parties are expected to adopt this policy as their own, and escalate to IronOak at stage 1.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to:
 - All residents
 - leaseholders
 - shared owners
 - applicants for housing
 - former residents
 - members of the public affected by our services
 - representatives acting on behalf of residents
 - a representative may act for a resident where appropriate consent has been provided.

3. Policy Principles

- 3.1. Our complaints process will be:
 - Accessible
 - Residents can raise complaints through multiple channels.
 - Fair
 - Complaints will be investigated objectively and without bias.
 - Timely
- 3.2. Complaints will be resolved within timescales set by the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- 3.3. Residents will be listened to and treated with respect.

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3.4. Residents will receive clear explanations and outcomes.

3.5. Complaints will be used to identify improvements to services.

4. Definitions

4.1. A complaint is defined as:

- An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its staff, or contractors.

4.2. A complaint may relate to:

- service failure
- delays
- poor communication
- quality of repairs
- staff behaviour
- policy decisions
- contractor performance
- tenancy management actions

4.3. A complaint may be made verbally or in writing.

4.4. A resident does not need to use the word “complaint” for an issue to be treated as a complaint. Where an expression of dissatisfaction is received, staff will recognise and record this as a complaint in line with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code.

4.5. A service request is when a resident asks for a service to be provided, such as:

- reporting a repair
- requesting a tenancy service
- reporting anti-social behaviour
- If the resident remains dissatisfied after the issue has been addressed, the matter may then become a complaint.

4.6. Feedback is:

- Positive feedback recognising good service, staff behaviour, or service delivery.

4.7. Feedback helps the organisation recognise good practice and staff performance.

5. Policy Statement

This policy is fully aligned with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and will be reviewed regularly to ensure continued compliance.

5.1. IronOak will:

- provide a two-stage complaints process

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- investigate complaints thoroughly and fairly
- provide clear written responses
- offer remedies where appropriate
- monitor complaint trends
- share learning across the organisation
- comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

5.2. Any third-party delivering services on behalf of IronOak will adopt this policy, and escalate stage one complaints directly to IronOak for investigation and resolution.

5.3. Residents will be clearly informed at every stage of their right to refer complaints to the Housing Ombudsman.

6. How to Make a Complaint

6.1. Complaints can be made through:

- telephone
- email
- online forms
- in writing
- in person
- through a representative
- through elected representatives (MPs or councillors)

6.2. Staff receiving complaints must record them promptly.

6.3. An issue raised by a resident will be treated as a complaint where it meets the definition above, regardless of whether the resident explicitly labels it as a complaint

7. Reasonable Adjustments

7.1. We will make reasonable adjustments for residents who may need additional support due to:

- disability
- language barriers
- literacy needs
- vulnerability
- digital exclusion

7.2. Support may include:

- translation services
- large print documents
- advocacy support
- alternative communication methods

7.3. These requirements are consistent with duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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8. Complaints Process

8.1. IronOak operates a two-stage complaint process.

8.2. Stage 1 – Initial Investigation

8.2.1. Acknowledgement

- Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days.

8.2.2. Investigation

- A full investigation will be undertaken by an appropriate officer.

8.2.3. Response

- A written response will be provided within 10 working days.
- If additional time is required, residents will be informed and updated.

8.2.4. The response will include:

- findings of the investigation
- whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld
- actions to resolve the issue
- any service improvements identified
- information about escalation rights

8.3. Stage 2 - If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request escalation to Stage 2.

8.3.1. Complainants should request escalation within a reasonable timeframe.

8.3.2. A member of Staff not involved in Stage 1 will conduct the review.

8.3.3. A Stage 2 response will be provided within 20 working days.

8.3.4. The response will include:

- the final decision
- reasons for the decision
- actions or remedies
- confirmation of the right to approach the Housing Ombudsman

9. Housing Ombudsman

9.1. Residents and landlords can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time while a complaint is going through the landlord's complaints process for advice on complaint handling.

9.2. Complainants can refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service

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9.3. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about social landlords and can make orders or recommendations.

9.4. Complainants may approach the Ombudsman:

- after completing the organisation's complaint process, or
- if the landlord fails to respond within appropriate timescales.

10. Complaints Exclusions

10.1. Some issues may not be considered under this policy, including:

- issues already subject to legal proceedings
- insurance claims
- complaints solely concerning the behaviour of another resident where there is no service failure by the landlord
- matters previously fully investigated
- complaints raised more than **12 months after the issue occurred**

10.2. Where issues fall outside the complaints process, complainants will be informed and directed to the appropriate route.

11. Remedies and Redress

11.1. Where complaints are upheld, the organisation may offer remedies such as:

- apologies
- service improvements
- corrective actions
- financial compensation
- goodwill gestures

11.2. Compensation will be proportionate and aligned with internal guidance and Ombudsman expectations.

12. Feedback

12.1. Residents may provide feedback through any service channel. Feedback will be:

- recorded
- shared with staff and managers
- used to recognise good performance
- reported within service monitoring reports
- Celebrating positive feedback supports service quality and staff morale.

13. Learning from Complaints

13.1. The organisation will analyse complaints to identify:

- service failures
- recurring issues
- policy improvements
- training needs

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13.2.Learning will be shared through:

- management reporting
- service improvement plans
- board reporting
- staff training

13.3.This approach supports transparency and accountability under the standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing.

14. Unreasonable Behaviour

14.1.In rare circumstances where behaviour becomes unreasonable or abusive, the organisation may apply restrictions on communication while still ensuring access to the complaints process.

14.2.Any restrictions will be proportionate and reviewed regularly.

15. Data Protection

15.1.Complaint information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018

15.2.Personal data will only be used for the purpose of investigating and resolving complaints.

16. Monitoring and Governance

16.1.The organisation will monitor:

- number of complaints received
- response times
- complaint outcomes
- compensation paid
- recurring issues
- Ombudsman decisions

16.2.Regular reports will be provided to:

- senior management
- the board or governing body
- resident scrutiny groups where appropriate

16.3.IronOak will comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, including:

- Completing an **annual self-assessment** against the Complaint Handling Code
- Publishing the results of this self-assessment in a transparent and accessible format
- Preparing and publishing a **complaints performance and service improvement report** annually

16.4.The Board will have **overall responsibility for complaints governance**, including:

- Receiving regular reports on complaint performance, trends, and learning

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- Ensuring that learning from complaints is embedded into service improvements
- Maintaining oversight of compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

16.5. A **designated member of the Board** will be appointed to:

- Have lead responsibility for complaints
- Provide assurance on complaint handling performance
- Support a positive complaint handling culture across the organisation

17. Equality and Diversity

17.1. IronOak Homes is committed to ensuring the complaints process is fair and inclusive.

17.2. The policy complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010

17.3. We will monitor complaints data to ensure no group is disadvantaged.

18. Policy Review

18.1. This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually, or
- sooner where legislative or regulatory changes require updates.

18.2. Reviews will reflect current legislative and regulatory requirements, including those introduced through the Renters Reform legislation and associated regulatory updates.