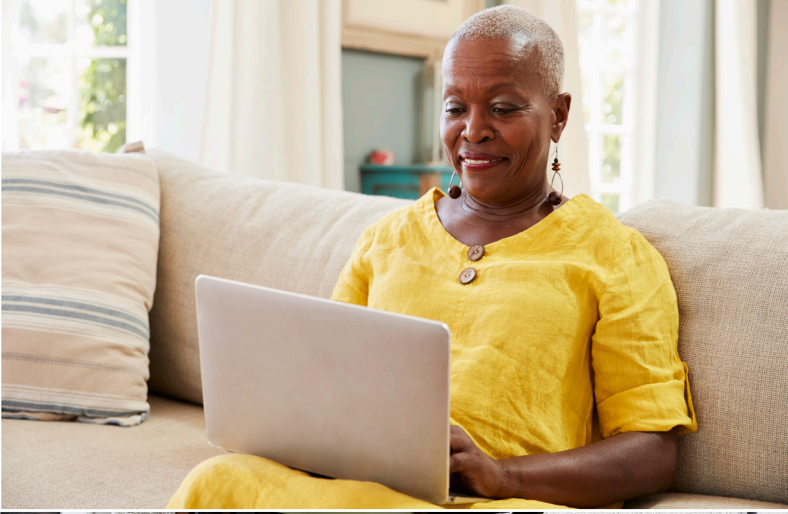


Onward



## COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICY

JUNE 2024

# COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICY

## 1. Introduction

- We are committed to providing a high-quality service to the customers and communities we serve. However, we recognise that from time-to-time things can go wrong and this policy outlines what we will do to put things right.
- Our aim is to: continuously improve the quality of the services we provide; improve our relationships with customers; and operate within the regulatory and statutory framework.
- We believe that it is important that complaints are dealt with in a prompt, polite and fair way and we are committed to working with all complainants to find a satisfactory resolution as quickly as possible.
- We recognise the diversity of our communities and so we aim to ensure everyone has equal access to our complaints service. We do this by promoting our complaint service in various ways, such as via our newsletters and other correspondence. We have also created an 'easy read' guide which you can read [here](#)
- A customer does not have to say they want to make a complaint for their feedback to be dealt with in line with this policy.
- We have integrated the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code into our complaint handling procedures and this policy has been developed in conjunction with our customers to ensure that the Ombudsman's recommendations and good practice are embedded in the way we manage complaints.
- As some of our customers receive services from us that includes the provision of energy supplies, Onward has signed up to the Energy Ombudsman Heat Networks Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Scheme. As a member of the scheme, we have adopted the principles and requirements detailed in the schemes terms of reference and incorporated them within this policy and our complaint handling procedures.

## 2. What is a complaint?

- We have adopted the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint: "A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents."
- Examples of issues that complainants may complain about include:
  - Not delivering a service in line with our agreed standards.
  - We have done something that we should not have done.
  - There are concerns about the way something has been dealt with.
  - There have been delays in responding to enquiries or requests.
  - The conduct, treatment, or attitude of one of our staff members, contractors, or representatives has caused concern.
- We have not complied with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- Expressions of dissatisfaction received from someone who is not an Onward customer or tenant (for example, a neighbour of one of our tenants) will be registered and treated as a complaint in accordance with this policy.

### 3. What is not a complaint?

- Examples of issues we do not consider to be complaints are:
  - An initial request for a service or information about one of our services.
  - An initial request for us to intervene or address the behaviour of others e.g., a first-time report of anti-social behaviour.
  - Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal.
  - A request for information under the Data Protection Act.
  - Disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector.

The following scenarios are intended to provide more clarity on what may constitute a service request or complaint. It is important to note that all complaints are assessed on their individual merits.

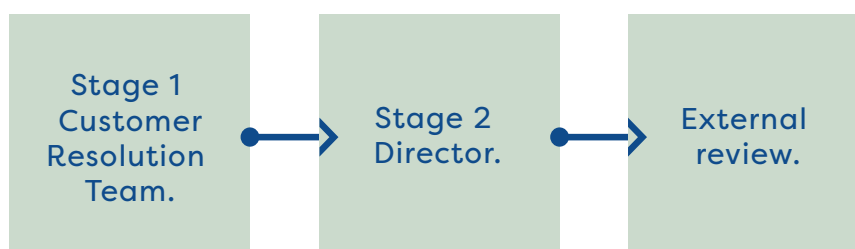
- A complainant reports that a leak has occurred within their home and a repair is required. This is a service request but could become a complaint if we failed to fix the leak within a timely manner.
- A complainant contacting us about their neighbour playing loud music into the early hours is a service request. This could become a complaint if after the complainant raised the issue with us, they were unhappy about the way we handled the case.
- A first-time request for information or an explanation about one of our policies or practices is a service request. This may become a complaint if we did not respond to the request in a timely manner, or if we give incorrect or inaccurate information.

### 4. How to make a complaint

- The standard of our service, the quality of the homes we provide, and the satisfaction of our customers is our priority. We encourage customers to let us know as soon as possible if they are unhappy with any part of our service.
- We want to make it easy for our customers to tell us they are not happy with our services, so there are lots of ways to make a complaint.
  - Phone: **0300 555 0600**
  - Online chat via our [website](#)
  - SMS and WhatsApp
  - Write: Renaissance Court, 2 Christie Way, Didsbury, Manchester, M21 7QY
- Any dissatisfaction raised directly to the Chief Executive or Chair of the Board will be referred to our Customer Resolutions Team and will follow our Complaints Resolution Policy.
- A full list of exclusions are available in section 14

### 5. Our complaints procedure

- Onward has adopted a two-stage approach to its Complaint Resolution Policy.



Stage 1  
Customer  
Resolution  
Team.

## 6. Response Time: up to 10 working days

- We will assign customer complaints to our dedicated Customer Resolutions Team. Upon receipt of a complaint, a Resolutions Specialist will contact the complainant within five days. They will:
  - Introduce themselves and acknowledge receipt of the complaint.
  - Explain the complaint resolution process.
  - Gather further information to help their understanding of the complaint and seek to agree a suitable resolution with the complainant.
  - Agree with the complainant how and when they will provide updates on their progress.
  - Respond to the complainant in writing within 10 working days following acknowledgement of the complaint outlining the outcome of their investigation and what actions we will take to resolve the complaint.
  - If we need a little more time, we will contact the complainant in good time to explain the reason for the delay and agree a contact regime until the complaint has been fully resolved. In the event of a delayed resolution at Stage 1, complainants may contact the Housing Ombudsman for help and advice.
  - Sometimes it is necessary for us arrange for specific actions to take place after the written response has been issued e.g., if complex repairs are required to resolve an issue. Where this is the case, the Resolution Specialist will maintain regular contact and check that all works have been completed to the complete satisfaction of the complainant.
- The outcome of all complaints will be confirmed in writing and will clearly set out our understanding of the complaint, our findings, and details of how we intend to put things right. This is when we consider the complaint 'resolved'. However, the complaint will not be 'closed' until all agreed actions have been completed to the complainants satisfaction.

## 7. If you remain dissatisfied

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied after our response at stage 1, they may ask for a review of the case. This is stage 2 of our complaint handling process, and the review will be conducted by a director.



Stage 2  
Director.

## 8. Response Time: up to 20 working days

- Upon receipt of a request for a review, our Resolutions Team will acknowledge receipt within five days following acknowledgement and confirm the name of the director who will be reviewing the complaint case. The director investigating the complaint (or a nominated representative) at stage 2 will:
  - Introduce themselves and acknowledge receipt of the complaint.
  - Explain the complaints resolution process at stage 2.
  - Gather further information to help their understanding of the complaint.
  - Agree with the complainant, how and when they will provide updates on their progress.
  - Respond to the complainant outlining the actions we will take to resolve the complaint within 20 working days.
  - If we need a little more time, we will contact the complainant in good time to explain the reason for the delay and agree a contact regime until the complaint has been fully resolved.
  - The outcome of all complaints will be confirmed in writing and will clearly set out our understanding of the complaint, our findings, and details of how we intend to put things right. This is when we consider the complaint 'resolved' However, the complaint will not be 'closed' until all agreed actions have been completed to the complainants satisfaction.

## 9. If you remain dissatisfied

- Although we will make every effort to resolve complaints, if a complainant is still unhappy at the end of our two-stage process, they can ask the Housing Ombudsman to review the complaint.
- If you remain dissatisfied with the way in which we have dealt with your complaint regarding the gas and electricity services we provide to you, you may refer your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman.



External  
review.

## 10. External Review – The Housing Ombudsman

To contact the Housing Ombudsman Service, complainants can:

- The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent organisation that investigates complaints. They are not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).
- You may contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage during our complaints procedure if you require help or support
- You can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to look at your complaint if:
  - You have fully exhausted our complaint handling procedure;
  - It is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and
  - The matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.
- The Housing Ombudsman Service will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint.
- You can refer your complaint online at: [Make a complaint - Housing Ombudsman](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) (housing-ombudsman.org.uk) or call them on freephone at 0300 111 3000

### Contact Details

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

Tel: 0300 111 3000  
Email : [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)  
Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

## 11. The Energy Ombudsman

- The Energy Ombudsman is approved by Ofgem as an independent dispute resolution service which aims to impartially and independently resolve disputes between energy suppliers and their customers.
- You can ask the Energy Ombudsman to investigate your complaint if:
  - You have fully exhausted our complaint handling procedure.
  - We notify you that we have been unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction within 8 weeks and/or have issued you with a deadlock letter.
  - You feel that you have encountered sustained difficulty in raising your complaint with us.
- Complaints can be referred to the Energy Ombudsman via their website, post, email or telephone.

## Contact Details

Energy Ombudsman  
PO Box 966  
Warrington WA4 9DF

Tel: 0330 440 1624  
Email: [enquiry@energyombudsman.org](mailto:enquiry@energyombudsman.org)  
Website: [www.energyombudsman.org](http://www.energyombudsman.org)

## 12. Complaint remedies

- Compensation and/or goodwill gesture payments may be considered where appropriate as part of a resolution to your complaint.
- Where a request for compensation relates to loss or damage to goods, we reserve the right to request evidence of the proof of purchase and condition of the items in question. We may also use fair depreciation guidance to calculate any compensation offered.
- For more information and guidance regarding our remedies and financial redress, please refer to appendix A for our compensation policy.

## 13. Exclusions to this policy

- **Complaints relating to services we do not provide.** We do not accept complaints about other landlords, local authorities, government policies or companies that do not provide services on our behalf.
- **Complaints that relate to issues which occurred more than 12 months ago.** Under normal circumstances you must make your complaint within 12 months of the event you want to complain about. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint outside of these timescales, but you must provide justification as to why this is the case within your complaint.
- **Complaints relating to personal property.** We cannot accept complaints about damage to personal property unless it has been caused by something we have done. We advise you take out Home Contents Insurance to protect against any unforeseen incidents.
- **Legal and/or insurance proceedings.** Where a complainant has started court action or an insurance claim against us in respect of the specific issue(s) covered by their complaint, the complaint may be excluded from our complaints process. This does not affect your right to raise a complaint about any unrelated matters, and we continue to provide all other services in line with our policies and procedures.

- **Mediation.** If a referral for mediation is in progress or has been made, a complaint will be put on hold until the outcome of mediation is known. Subject to the outcome of mediation, the case owner of the complaint will assess whether it is appropriate to resume the complaints process.
- **Repeat complainants.** If a complaint has previously been reviewed under our Complaint Resolution policy, unless new and/or additional information has been provided, we reserve the right to terminate the investigation and close the complaint. We will always notify the complainant if this is the case.
- **Unacceptable behaviour.** Whilst we accept that complaints may be a cause of frustration, we reserve the right to stop engagement with anyone who exhibits behaviour which is abusive or threatening.
- **Rejected complaints.** If we decide not to accept a complaint, we will issue a detailed explanation in writing which sets out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and we will also explain the complainants rights in relation to referring our decision to the Ombudsman.

#### 14. Responsibility and Monitoring

- The Director of Customer Experience and Digital Services is responsible for ensuring this policy is complied with and is reviewed annually to ensure we are meeting our regulatory requirements and that we adopt best practice.
- Compliance with this policy is reported to our Board, Committees, and our Operational Management Teams.

#### If you want to speak to us about anything else you can:



Call **0300 555 0600**. We are available from 8am - 7pm Monday - Friday.



Send an email to [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk)



Use the [My Onward Portal](#) or our Live Chat or WhatsApp (**07793 795882**) services



If need you help communicating with us,  
please get in touch – 0300 555 0600

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy w komunikowaniu się z nami, daj znać - 0300 555 0600

Si vous avez besoin d'aide pour communiquer avec nous, contactez-nous au 0300 555 0600

Ha beszélni szeretne velünk, kérjük hívja a 0300 555 0600-as telefonszámot

与我们沟通方面如需帮助 · 请致电 : 0300 555 0600

اگر برای ارتباط با ما به کمک نیاز دارید، لطفاً با شماره 0300 555 0600 تماس بگیرید

لو حایي تتواصل معنا اتصل علی - 03005550600

إذا احتجت إلى المساعدة والتواصل معنا، يرجى الاتصال علی - 0300 555 0600

Ikiwa unahitaji msaada wa kuwasiliana nasi, tafadhali wasiliana nasi kupitia nambari ya simu –  
0300 555 0600

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আমাদের সাথে বার্তা বিনিময় করার জন্য সাহায্য লাগলে, অনুগ্রহ করে এই নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন –  
0300 555 0600

ਜੇਕਰ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ - 0300 555 0600

اگر آپ کو ہم سے مواصلت کرنے میں مدد درکار ہے تو، براہ کرم رابطہ کریں – 0300 555 0600