

Quartz Housing: Complaints Policy

Version:	v.2.1	Date Adopted:	September 2024
Policy Owner:	Board	Date Reviewed:	September 2024
Approved by:	Board	Next Review Due:	September 2026

1 | Introduction

- 1.1. At Quartz Housing (“Quartz”), we are committed to high standards of customer service. However, there may be occasions when we do not meet those high standards which we set for ourselves. We welcome feedback and we also take any form of complaint seriously. We will try wherever possible to resolve a complaint to the customer’s satisfaction.
- 1.2. This policy explains how residents can make a complaint if they are not satisfied with our services.

2 | Legal and Regulatory Requirements

- 2.1. This policy has been developed in line with the 2024 Housing Ombudsman Service’s Complaint Handling Code.
- 2.2. We will operate our Complaints Policy in compliance with the Housing Regulator’s Standards as set out in “The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012” as updated in 2015 and 2018 and associated guidance documents.

3 | Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all residents of Quartz and to any sub-contractors working with or on our behalf.

4 | Definitions

- 4.1. **Complainant:** any customer (i.e., applicant, tenant, leaseholder, or licensee), or a person acting on their behalf, who makes a ‘complaint’ about the service provided by us or anyone working for us (including e.g., contractors). Your written permission will be required before corresponding with any third party.
- 4.2. **Complaint:** we use the Housing Ombudsman definition and define a complaint as 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. Our complaints procedure includes two kinds of complaints:

- **Informal (Quick Resolution) complaint:** Negative feedback where our response is much quicker than in the case of a formal complaint. These complaints do not normally require an investigation or sending of formal letters but will involve ensuring the problem is resolved as quickly as possible. Informal (Quick Resolution) complaints are dealt with through a response within 2 working days of the complaint being lodged.
- **Formal complaint:** complaints which require some degree of investigation and / or follow-up.

4.3. **Service Request:** A request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests will be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly. A complaint will be raised when a resident raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request.

4.4. **Complaints Officer:** The person responsible for complaints at Quartz.

4.5. **Housing Ombudsman Service:** a service provided to all residents of registered providers of social housing which can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint and also be used if complaints should be escalated.

5 | Exclusions

5.1. We will not consider a matter a complaint if:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months before the complaint was lodged. Where the problem is a recurring issue, we will consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident;
- Where legal proceedings have been started, we will take steps to keep the complainant informed (e.g. by letter) but will not consider a new complaint;
- Where matters have already been dealt with as part of the policy; or
- Where provided as feedback about our policies and procedures in response to surveys. We will record this and use it for the purposes of continuous improvement when the policy or procedure is next reviewed.

6 | **Accessibility and Awareness**

- 6.1. We allow complaints to be made via e-mail or by phone and in person to any member of our staff.
- 6.2. We do not currently operate social media channels or accept complaints through social media. This may be reviewed in the future.
- 6.3. We comply with the Equality Act 2010 and have a process in place to accommodate an individual's needs regarding access to an appropriate channel raising a complaint.
- 6.4. Quartz website will (once established) include information on how to raise a complaint. This Complaints Policy and process shall be easily found and be downloadable.

7 | **Complaints Officer**

- 7.1. We will have a dedicated "Complaints Officer", whose role may or may not be dedicated to complaints handling. The Complaints Officer will:
 - Act sensitively and fairly;
 - Be trained to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents;
 - Have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints; and
 - Have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

8 | **Complaints Procedure**

- 8.1. Our complaints procedure is designed to be fair and transparent and aims to resolve the complaint quickly by putting things right. It comprises of two complaints resolution stages. This ensures that residents can challenge any decision we make by correcting errors or sharing concerns via an appeal process.
- 8.2. **Stage One**
 - 8.2.1. If you are unhappy with a service, we have provided you can raise a formal complaint. We will acknowledge and log the complaint within 5 working days.
 - 8.2.2. We will investigate the complaint, considering individual circumstances, and aim to provide a written response within 10 working days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint.

- 8.2.3. Our response will explain the outcome of our investigation together with any actions that we agree with you to resolve the complaint. If our investigation takes longer, we will let you know and agree update intervals to ensure you are regularly informed of progress.
- 8.2.4. We aim to fully resolve the complaint within a further 10 working days where it is the responsibility of Quartz or one of our contractors. If longer is required where there is good reason, we will contact the resident to agree a new timescale.

8.3. **Stage Two**

- 8.3.1. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint review at stage one, you can make a request for your complaint to be escalated to stage 2 (appeal panel).
- 8.3.2. If the complaint is escalated to the appeal panel the customer or those acting on their behalf will be given the opportunity to provide additional written information to the panel.
- 8.3.3. The appeal panel will consist of an independent board member, and a senior staff member acting on behalf of Quartz who were not involved previously with the case. The appeal panel will review the case and provide a written response to the resident within 20 working days of the request to escalate. If longer is required where there is good reason, we will contact the resident to agree a new timescale. This is the final stage of our complaints process.

8.4. **Reporting a Complaint**

- 8.4.1. If a complainant has escalated their complaint through the two-stage process and the issue has still not been resolved to their satisfaction, they can contact the following:
- **Designated Person** – A Designated Person can be a Councillor or an MP. The Designated Person will help resolve the complaint themselves or refer the complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
 - **Housing Ombudsman Service** – If a complaint has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction eight weeks after the completion of our two-stage process, the complainant can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service directly, or can be referred to the service by a Designated Person. We will cooperate with The Housing Ombudsman's requests for information (including providing evidence within 15 working days of it being requested if possible). The Housing Ombudsman Service can be accessed here: <http://www.housingombudsman.org.uk/home/>

9 | Making a Complaint

- 9.1. We allow complaints to be made via e-mail, by phone or via the “Contact Us” section of our website when the website is operational.
- 9.2. Our website will include information on how to raise a complaint. This complaints policy and process shall be easily found and be downloadable.

10 | Guidance for Contractors

- 10.1. This policy requires any contractor providing services on our behalf to:
- Record and respond to customer complaints within the timescales detailed in our internal complaints process;
 - Provide us with any information relating to a complaint upon request; and
 - Assist us with investigating complaints where appropriate.

11 | Learning from complaints

- 11.1. We aim to learn from complaints and use this information to improve how we work. Quartz will record and monitor every complaint, including details such as the subject of the complaint, resolution time and any learning points.
- 11.2. Quartz will regularly review this register of complaints received in order to identify recurring subjects and continuously improve how the organisation handles complaints. Where possible, Quartz will share with residents how learnings are being applied.
- 11.3. The board will receive regular reports about the volumes of complaints received, at which stage they were resolved, and any trends or themes within the complaints.
- 11.4. In addition, Quartz will proactively monitor the effects of its complaint’s procedure. Areas to be monitored will include:
- Total number of Informal (Quick Resolution) and Formal complaints;
 - Nature of complaints (e.g. ASB, repairs issues, contractor issues);
 - Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage of the internal process;
 - Percentage of complaints resolved at the second stage of the internal process; and

- Percentage of complaints escalated beyond the internal process.

12 | Training and Promotion

12.1. We will publicise this policy to our staff, managing agents and tenants through:

- Our website when available; and
- Policy briefings and training.

13 | Policy Management

13.1. The board is responsible for ensuring this policy is kept up to date, implemented within the organisation and monitored and evaluated.

13.2. The board is responsible for appointing a Complaints Officer.

13.3. This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently when there is a change in circumstances, in work practices or the introduction of new legislation.

14 | Background Documents

14.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the regulatory documents listed below:

- The Regulator of Social Housing's Regulatory Standards
- The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (2024)