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**Title:** **Customer Contact, Complaints Handling and Compensation - Scotland Policy**

**Business Function:** **Sanctuary Scotland  
Sanctuary Homes (Scotland) Limited**

**Authors:** **Service Development Officer  
Policy and Equalities Manager**

**Authorised by:** **Sanctuary Scotland Board of Management**

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**Sanctuary in Scotland:**  
Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association Limited is a subsidiary of  
Sanctuary Housing Association, an exempt charity.

**Sanctuary Homes (Scotland) Limited is a subsidiary of Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association.**

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## 1. Policy statement

- 1.1 Sanctuary Scotland (Sanctuary) aims to provide a high quality service and values complaints and customer feedback, Despite the high standards of service, there may be times when the experience is less than satisfactory. Sanctuary offers a variety of means to respond to and learn from expressions of dissatisfaction and actively encourages customer feedback, acknowledges this contact and uses it to inform and influence service delivery.
- 1.2 This policy and associated procedures outline how Sanctuary aims to deliver high standards of customer service; including how we handle communications with customers, how we deal with complaints, and how we deal with compensation requests. It details how Sanctuary seeks to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the first point of contact and treat residents and stakeholders as valued customers. Where feedback has been positive, it seeks to ensure that best practice is shared and encouraged.
- 1.3 The procedure covers a broad range of subjects, including how Sanctuary:
- treats customers;
  - expects third parties working on its behalf to treat customers;
  - deals with telephone calls, letters, emails and other forms of communication;
  - responds to different language and communication needs; and
  - respects confidentiality.
- 1.4 The management of complaints and compensation requests is detailed within the Customer Contact, Complaints Handling and Compensation procedure – Scotland. The Complaints Handling section is based on the model Complaints Handling Procedure (model CHP) written by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman which all Registered Social Landlords in Scotland must comply with. The forward for the model CHP is shown in Appendix 1.

## 2. Aims and purpose

- 2.1 The objective of the policy is to ensure that customers receive a high standard of service, that feedback is listened to and acted upon and that in turn, Sanctuary can improve satisfaction with customer's views being taken into account. Below is a summary of Sanctuary's commitments it seeks to achieve in relation to complaints, compensation and overall standards of customer service:
- to ensure equal and fair access to all areas of service;
  - to create a corporate ethos that will reflect excellent customer service;
  - to understand its customer profile and deliver services in ways which promote equality and inclusiveness;
  - ensure customers know about Sanctuary's services and how to access them;
  - set standards in relation to customer contact and monitor progress;
  - ensure customers can contact Sanctuary, and it can contact them, by their preferred method of communication;

- ensure staff are approachable, respectful, professional and welcoming;
- welcome all customer feedback and report the lessons learnt back to customers and wider customers;
- develop a greater awareness among staff at all levels about what good customer care looks like; training staff in customer service skills to enable us to meet and exceed customer expectations;
- be easy to contact, resolving enquiries quickly and knowledgeably; and
- resolve issues the first time a customer contacts us, and keep customers updated with progress so they do not have to chase us.

### 3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Director of Sanctuary Scotland has responsibility to ensure this policy is followed within Sanctuary Scotland and managed appropriately.

3.2 Housing Managers have day to day responsibility for the implementation of this policy in practice.

3.3 To assist Sanctuary in carrying out its obligations, all employees must:

- Be aware of, understand and comply with this policy and any related operational guidance;
- Participate in any training which Sanctuary makes available; and
- Communicate any issues with implementing this policy to their line manager or the Policy and Equalities Team and identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

### 4. References and sources

4.1 The following legislation, references and sources are relevant to the development and delivery of this policy and associated procedure:

- The [Model Complaints Handling Procedure for Registered Social Landlords](#), Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (2012) sets out statutory guidance on complaints handling.
- The **SPSO Act 2002** (as amended by the **Public Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2010**), Ombudsman has notified all Registered Social Landlords in Scotland to inform them that the relevant model CHP applies to them.
- The **Scottish Secure Tenants (Right to Repair) Regulations 2002** sets out rules on compensation for when social landlords do not complete qualifying repairs within target timescales.
- The **Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1973** and the **Home Loss Payment (Specification of Amount) (Scotland) Regulations 1989** set out rules on compensation amounts for tenants and owners if they are to be displaced due to demolition or other redevelopment proposals affecting their home.
- The **Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** sets out rules in relation to compensation for tenants who have carried out improvements to their home.

## 5. Impact on diversity

- 5.1 Sanctuary Group demonstrates its commitment to diversity and promoting equality by ensuring that this policy is applied in a manner that is fair to all sections of the community, with due regard to the protected characteristics identified under the Equality Act 2010 and in accordance with its 'Fairness for All' Single Equality Scheme.

## 6. Monitoring and compliance

### 6.1 Period of review

- 6.1.1 Until a new policy is formally adopted this document will remain in force and operational.
- 6.1.2 This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the policy review programme agreed by relevant governing bodies.
- 6.1.3 If there are significant changes to legislation or regulation or there are found to be deficiencies or failures in this policy, as a result of complaints or findings from any independent organisations, Director - Sanctuary Scotland will initiate an immediate review.
- 6.1.4 Where appropriate, key stakeholders, customers and interested parties will be consulted as part of any review of this policy.

## 7. Approval

- 7.1 This policy is approved by the Sanctuary Scotland Board of Management.

## 8. Operational arrangements

- 8.1 Relevant procedures and guidance associated with this policy include:

- [Customer Contact, Complaints Handling and Compensation – Scotland](#)
- [Safeguarding Adults policy and procedure - Scotland](#)
- [Telephone Answering – Group Procedure](#)
- [Communications – Group Policy](#)
- [Social Media – Group Procedure](#)

## **Appendix 1 – Foreword for Model Complaints Handling Procedure – Scottish Public Services Ombudsman 2012**

### **Foreword**

Our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) reflects our commitment to valuing complaints. It seeks to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.

The procedure has been developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), with significant input from housing complaints handling professionals. We have tried to produce a standard approach to handling complaints across the housing sector, which complies with the SPSO's guidance on a model complaints handling procedure. This procedure aims to help us 'get it right first time'. We want quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by capable, well-trained staff.

Complaints give us valuable information we can use to improve customer satisfaction. Our complaints handling procedure will enable us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and may also prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from happening again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the service user's views and experience, and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our customers a form of redress when things go wrong, and can also help us continuously improve our services.

Resolving complaints early saves money and creates better customer relations. Sorting them out as close to the point of service delivery as possible means we can deal with them locally and quickly, so they are less likely to escalate to the next stage of the procedure. Complaints that we do not resolve swiftly can greatly add to our workload.

The complaints handling procedure will help us do our job better, improve relationships with our service users and enhance our public perception. It will help us keep the customer at the heart of the process, while enabling us to better understand how to improve our services by learning from complaints.