

# Skinner's Almshouse Charity



Policy name:	<b>Complaints Policy</b>
Date of board approval:	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
Date of next board review:	November 2026

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This policy applies to the trustees of The Skinner's Almshouse Charity ('SAC') and seeks to ensure that the SAC's complaints process is flexible and responsive to the needs of individual complainants to enable residents to be heard and understood.

SAC complies with the Complaint Handling Code ('the Code') issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service. All complaints dealt with under this policy will be dealt with in a manner consistent with the Code and SAC will maintain all records as required by the Code.

1.2. A **complaint** is defined as: 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by SAC, its trustees, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.' Any complaints related to the provision of care should be raised with the care provider.

1.3. The word 'complaint' does not need to be used expressly for the matter to be considered a complaint. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction, SAC must give them the option to make a complaint. Complaints made by residents may be made by the resident's carer,

family members or a representative of a resident and these must be handled in line with SAC's complaints policy.

- 1.4. A request from a resident to act to put something right (e.g., to carry out routine maintenance etc.) is considered to be a **service request** and not a **complaint**. Service requests should be dealt with in accordance with the Residents' Handbook. Failure to deal appropriately with a service request may lead to the matter being dealt with as a complaint.
- 1.5. A complaint may be raised by a resident if they express dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. SAC will endeavour to resolve the issue causing the dissatisfaction. SAC must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident raises a complaint.
- 1.6. An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a resident's survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where SAC has asked for wider feedback about their services, it must also provide details of how residents can raise a complaint.
- 1.7. In dealing with complaints SAC will ensure that:
  - 1.7.1. individuals who raise a complaint are listened to and treated with courtesy and empathy;
  - 1.7.2. residents will never be disadvantaged as a result of raising a complaint;
  - 1.7.3. complaints will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly, and openly; and
  - 1.7.4. in dealing with complaints SAC will comply with

confidentiality and data protection policies.

## 2. Exclusions

2.1. SAC must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.

2.2. The following matters will not be considered as complaints:

2.2.1. The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.

2.2.2. Issues in respect of which legal proceedings have begun (meaning that details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at Court).

2.2.3. Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy, unless there has been a significant change of circumstances.

2.2.4. an anonymous complainant, unless there is sufficient documentary evidence to substantiate the complaint;

2.3. Unless excluded on other grounds, SAC must accept complaints referred to it within 12 months of issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue. Where there are good reasons to do so, SAC must also consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside the time limit.

2.4. SAC reserves the right to close the Complaint in the following circumstances:

2.4.1. If a complaint is pursued unreasonably or vexatiously where a Complainant's actions or behaviours are deemed to be unreasonable, SAC reserves the right to close the

complaint.

- 2.4.2. If a Complainant, in pursuing the Complaint, (i) displays threatening or abusive behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that causes staff or trustees to feel threatened or abused (ii) and/or continues to contact SAC with unreasonable demands during/following a complaint investigation, a complaint may be closed and, if the Complainant is a resident, this may be grounds for their licence to be terminated.
- 2.5. In cases where SAC brings the complaint to an end in accordance with para.2.4, it will inform the Complainant of their reasons and their right to take that decision to the Ombudsman (see details below). The Ombudsman may direct the Charity to reopen the complaint, in which case this policy will apply.
- 2.6. If a complaint is not accepted in accordance with para.2.2 or is closed in accordance with para.2.4 above, a detailed explanation will be provided to the Complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process or has been closed, and their right to take that decision to the Ombudsman (see details below). The Ombudsman may direct SAC to take on the complaint, in which case this policy will apply.

### **3. Accessibility and awareness**

- 3.1. Complaints will be dealt with in a manner that is consistent with SAC's Equality & Diversity Policy and SAC's duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2. If any individual making a complaint wishes SAC to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate that individual's particular needs, they, or their representative, should contact Caroline Hamilton the SAC

Director, by phone; 020 7213 0576 or by email; [almshousecharity@skidders.org.uk](mailto:almshousecharity@skidders.org.uk) or by arranging an appointment in person through their Estate Manager to discuss what adjustments may be possible.

3.3. SAC acknowledges that a high volume of complaints must not be seen as negative, as this can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints procedure. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.

3.4. This complaints handling policy will be listed in the Residents Handbook and available on the SAC's website.

#### **4. Complaint handling staff**

4.1. Complaints will be investigated by the Estate Manager (the Complaints Officer) at Stage One (see Paragraph 5).

4.2. Appeals will be investigated by the SAC Director (the Appeal Officer) at Stage Two (see Paragraph 6).

4.3. If the Complaints Officer and/or the Appeals Officer are conflicted, or the complaint relates to the Complaints Officer and/or the Appeals Officer, the complaint should be directed to the Chairman of the trustees who can be contacted by writing to them at; Skidders' Hall, 8 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2SP.

#### **5. Stage One of the Complaints Process**

5.1. Complaints should be made either in writing or by email to the Estate Manager/Complaints Officer.

5.2. The initial complaint should include sufficient detail, and where appropriate supporting documentation, to enable the SAC to investigate the matter.

- 5.3. The Estate Manager/Complaints Officer will acknowledge the complaint and make a record, within 5 working days. The acknowledgement will:
  - 5.3.1. summarise SAC's understanding of the complaint;
  - 5.3.2. summarise the SAC's understanding of what the Complainant is seeking as an outcome;
  - 5.3.3. raise any questions that require clarification from the Complainant; and
  - 5.3.4. set out the next course of action and anticipated timescale.
- 5.4. In most cases SAC will aim to issue a full response within 10 working days from the complaint being acknowledged. In exceptional cases, if the Estate Manager/Complaints Officer anticipates that the particular complaint will take longer to resolve, this should be explained and a clear timeframe set out for the resolution of the complaint which should not exceed a further 10 working days, without good reason. Any such explanation will include the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.
- 5.5. The Estate Manager/Complaints Officer will investigate the complaint in an impartial manner permitting all relevant parties to provide information. The Complainant and any third parties involved in the complaint should be given the opportunity to set out their position before any final decision is made. The Estate Manager/Complaints Officer may delegate the management and investigation of the complaint to another individual.
- 5.6. If the Estate Manager/Complaints Officer is conflicted, or the complaint relates to the Estate Manager/Complaints Officer, the complaint should be directed to Caroline Hamilton, SAC Director, who can be

contacted by email: [almshousecharity@skidders.org.uk](mailto:almshousecharity@skidders.org.uk) or by telephone; 0207 213 0576.

5.7. If a complainant is not satisfied with the response from the SAC Director, then a complaint can be made to an Alternative Appeals Officer (SAC Chairman) by email: [almshousecharity@skidders.org.uk](mailto:almshousecharity@skidders.org.uk)

5.8. The Estate Manager/Complaints Officer will:

5.8.1. deal with all complaints on their merits;

5.8.2. act independently and have an open mind but may consider reports of previous complaints that relate to the same issue being complained about;

5.8.3. take appropriate measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest (which may include asking another staff member or trustee to investigate the complaint);

5.8.4. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully; and

5.8.5. keep the details of the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only being disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.

5.9. If the complaint involves questions relating to SAC's or the Complainant's legal obligations, the Estate Manager will set out clearly their understanding of the respective legal obligations and SAC may seek legal advice before doing so.

5.10. The Estate Manager/Complaints Officer will provide the Complainant with a response to the complaint at the earliest opportunity, which will be copied to the SAC Director.

5.11. If the Estate Manager/Complaints Officer identifies that further actions are required to address the complaint these may be carried out after the response has been given and should not delay the Complainant receiving a response to the complaint.

5.12. If new issues are raised by the Complainant during the stage one process, these should be dealt with as part of the process if they are relevant. However, if the issues relate to a different issue and/or are raised after the response has already been issued, the issues will be dealt with as a separate complaint.

5.13. In responding to the complaint, the Estate Manager/Complaints Officer will confirm in writing:

5.13.1. The complaint stage

5.13.2. The complaint definition

5.13.3. The decision on the complaint

5.13.4. The reasons for any decisions made

5.13.5. The details of any remedy offered to put things right

5.13.6. Details of any outstanding actions; and

5.13.7. Details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the individual is not satisfied with the result.

## **6. Stage Two**

6.1. If the Complainant is not satisfied with the response from the Estate Manager/Complaints Officer, they have 5 working days to submit an appeal in writing or by email to the SAC Director/Appeals Officer.

6.2. The SAC Director/Appeals Officer will acknowledge the appeal within

5 working days of receipt of the appeal. The acknowledgment may include any requests for clarification that relate to the appeal.

- 6.3. The SAC Director/Appeals Officer will arrange a meeting with the Complainant to be held within 10 working days of the appeal being submitted. The Appeals Officer will be assisted by a member of staff with no knowledge of the complaint at the meeting.
- 6.4. The SAC Director/Appeals Officer will respond in writing to the complainant within 20 working days of the appeal being acknowledged, informing them of the outcome of the appeal process and the decision of the appeals process.
- 6.5. If the Appeals Officer/SAC Director believes that the appeal will take longer than 20 working days, then any extension should be notified and clearly explained to and agreed with the Complainant. Any such extension should be no more than 20 working days without good reason. Such explanation will also include the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.
- 6.6. In responding to the appeal, the SAC Director/Appeals Officer will confirm in writing:
  - 6.6.1. The complaint stage
  - 6.6.2. The complaint definition
  - 6.6.3. The decision on the complaint
  - 6.6.4. The reasons for any decisions made
  - 6.6.5. The details of any remedy offered to put things right
  - 6.6.6. Details of any outstanding actions; and
  - 6.6.7. Details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing

Ombudsman if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the appeal.

## **7. Putting things right where something has gone wrong**

7.1. Where something has gone wrong SAC must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:

- 7.1.1. Apologising;
- 7.1.2. Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- 7.1.3. Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
- 7.1.4. Taking action if there has been delay;
- 7.1.5. Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- 7.1.6. Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
- 7.1.7. Providing a financial remedy;
- 7.1.8. Changing policies, procedures, or practices.

7.2. Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.

7.3. The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.

7.4. SAC will take into account of the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.

## **8. Annual Review**

8.1. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

8.2. SAC will carry out an annual self-assessment in accordance with the Code.

8.3. The Trustees of the Charity as a whole will consider any findings or recommendations of the annual self-assessment.

**9. For the purposes of this policy:**

(a) The Estate Officer/Complaints Officer for **Skidders Court** is:

Name: Abiola Bello

Telephone: 020 8886 4562

Address: Skidders Court, 1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane, Enfield, London  
N13 4AE

Email: scem@skidders.org.uk

(b) The Estate Officer/Complaints Officer for **Percy Bilton Court** is:

Name: Catherine Lehane

Telephone: 020 8572 0333

Address: Percy Bilton Court, Skidders' Lane, Hounslow TW5 0QE

Email: sempbc@skidders.org.uk

(c) The SAC Director/Appeals Officer is:

Name: Caroline Hamilton

Telephone: 020 7213 0576

Address: Skidders' Hall, 8 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2SP

Email: almshousecharity@skidders.org.uk

(d) The SAC Chairman/Alternative Appeals Officer is:

Name: James Cohen

Telephone: 020 7213 0576

Address: c/o Skinners' Hall, 8 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2SP

Email: [almshousecharity@skinners.org.uk](mailto:almshousecharity@skinners.org.uk)

## **10.Housing Ombudsman Service**

The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

Telephone: 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)

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33  
7WQ.