



Amended Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy 2026

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Housing Scrutiny Committee –
24th July 2026

Report to: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet Portfolio/Lead Member: Cllr Steve Smith

Report of Gary Kirsop, Director of Community Operations

Subject: Amended Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy 2026

Date: 24th July 2026

Wards affected: All wards

Council ambitions: Part of strong communities plus Targeting support to make things fairer

Does the report and any appendices contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?

- No, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.

For Executive Decisions only:

Is the decision a Key Decision? No

Is it included in the Forward Plan? Yes

If not in the Forward Plan is the report: N/A

Relevant Scrutiny Chair: Cllr Michael Oughton

Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? No

(If the decision is anything other than any executive decision made by the Cabinet or a Key Decision made by an officer under delegated powers, call-in is not applicable. This should be explained in the report).

Purpose of Report

1. To present the revised Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy 2026 to the Housing Scrutiny Committee for approval, prior to its publication on South Tyneside Council Housing Services' website and submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service as part of the annual statutory reporting process.

Background Information

2. The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code was first introduced in April 2022. All member landlords were asked to comply with the requirements set out in the Code as part of their membership obligations in the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.
3. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced major changes in how social housing landlords are held accountable. Under this new framework, local authority landlords like South Tyneside Council are now subject to stronger oversight by both the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing.
4. In response, the Housing Ombudsman service consulted with residents and landlords to revise the 2022 Complaint Handling Code. The new Code was released in February 2024 and became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that member landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements.

The Act also placed a legal duty on the Housing Ombudsman Service to monitor a member's compliance with the Code – regardless of whether a resident brings a complaint to the service.

5. As part of these reforms, we are required to maintain a complaints policy that complies with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.
6. The Housing Ombudsman Service reviewed our Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy to assess its compliance with the Complaint Handling Code. Following the review, they made 11 recommendations to ensure full compliance. The attached Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy has been updated to reflect these recommendations and is now fully aligned with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.

Implications

7. **Financial and Resources** – Housing Ombudsman determinations can include compensation payments to customers. Compensation can also be made in recognition of loss, damage, unreasonable delay, major disruption or inconvenience.

8. **Legal and Governance** – The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1st April 2024, meaning Landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements.
9. **Risk** – If there is evidence of ongoing or repeated failures, the Housing Ombudsman have various powers including the issue of a Complaint Handling Failure Order, which is shared with relevant regulatory bodies. This can lead to reputational damage, and risk of failure when inspected by the RSH.
10. **Equality and Diversity and Community** – Our complaints process is accessible to all of our customers. For those customers who require assistance with complaints, an advocate can be used to assist during the complaints process.
11. **Environmental and Sustainability** - There are no significant environmental and sustainability implications arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.
12. **Council Ambitions, Policies, Strategies and Plans** – Our complaints process is an opportunity to hear the customer's voice and correct our failings, supporting the corporate ambitions of targeting support to make things fairer, and being part of strong communities.
13. **Consultation and Engagement** – Check and Challenge (our involved tenant group) engaged with and consulted on the Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy. The amended policy has been reviewed by our Member Responsible for Complaints and Housing Strategy Group.

Recommendations

14. Note and comment on the amended Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy 2026.
15. Approve publication of the policy on our website and submission of the policy to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Reasons for Recommendations

16. To ensure that South Tyneside Council Housing Services meet the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code which is a statutory requirement under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman Service

Appendix B – Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy 2026

Background Papers

The following is a list of the background papers (excluding exempt papers) relied upon in the preparation of the above report:

Background Paper	File Ref:	File Location