

Challenge for Change

Recommendations



What is the C4C Judgement?	What evidence do we have to support that judgement?	What impact is this having on customers?	What is our recommendation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SH customers and partners do not agree about what a complaint should be Customers are not always clear who will deal with their complaint and how their complaint will be dealt with 	<p>Staff survey Reality checking Customer Survey Customer focus group Mystery shopping</p> <p>Viewpoint call backs Customer Survey</p>	<p>Customers are not clear about how their problem will be dealt with.</p> <p>Lack of clarity about 'complaints' means that customers receive an inconsistent service.</p> <p>This creates poor satisfaction for customers. Creates more work for staff</p> <p>Lack of trust from customers. Potential for repeat work. Lack of reassurance for customers</p>	<p>R1. Sheffield Homes should draft a 'Complaints Expectations Charter' to give customers more information about how their complaint will be handled</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SH are missing opportunities to deal with low level 'grumbles' before they get bigger 	<p>Customer Satisfaction scores Viewpoint call backs Customer surveys Staff survey Staff focus group</p>	<p>Customers have to wait longer for complaints to be resolved. It creates more work for staff. SH is missing out on learning from grumbles and opportunity to fix them</p>	<p>R2. Sheffield Homes should focus on resolving informal grumbles and complaints quickly when they are reported. This will be better for customers and prevent complaints escalating into more formal stages.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complaint process becomes too formal, too quickly There are too many levels in the complaints process 	<p>Reality checks Customer Survey Customer Focus Group Staff survey</p> <p>Benchmarking Reality checks Customer Focus Group</p>	<p>Confused tenants</p> <p>Increased workload for staff</p> <p>Poor customer satisfaction</p> <p>Takes longer to resolve complaints</p> <p>Confused tenants</p> <p>Increased workload for staff</p>	<p>R3. Sheffield Homes should introduce a 3 stage complaints process: Stage 1 – 'Informal' complaints and 'grumbles' reported by customers that should be dealt with by staff wherever possible at point of contact Stage 2 – Formal complaints – those which require a detailed investigation or ones that have not been resolved at Stage 1 – that should be dealt with by dedicated complaints staff Stage 3 – Complaints not resolved at Stage 2 should be referred to an independent Tenants Panel to review.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SH does not always communicate effectively in-house 	Staff survey Viewpoint call backs Customer survey Reality checks	Increases staff time spent trying to resolve complaints Increases stress for staff Takes staff away from day job Reputational issues for SH and partners	R4. The IT systems used for managing complaints should be streamlined so that they work together more efficiently and make it easier for staff to deal with complaints.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SH does not always communicate clearly with the customer 	Customer survey Viewpoint call backs Reality checks Letters review	Poor customer satisfaction Repeat complaints Frustration from customers	R5. Sheffield Homes should promote access to complaints reporting via the website and e-mail. This will be more efficient for the organisation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complaint process becomes too formal, too quickly 	Reality checks Customer Survey Customer Focus Group Staff survey	Confused tenants Increased workload for staff Poor customer satisfaction Takes longer to resolve complaints	R6. Staff dealing with Stage 2 complaints should have the authority to work with customers to resolve their complaints.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication internally and externally is poor – particularly Kier There is inconsistency in communications between SH staff and customers, SH staff and Kier and Kier and customers 	Reality checks Customer Survey Customer Focus Group Staff survey Viewpoint call backs Letter reality checks Staff survey Customer survey	Unhappy customers More and repeat complaints Potential Ombudsman and legal action Lack of trust from customers. Frustration from customers. Low satisfaction scores. Poor reputation.	R7. Communication between customers, Kier and Sheffield Homes must be improved.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints are sometimes closed without involving the customer 	Viewpoint Call backs Letter reality checks	Lack of trust Repeat complaints Poor value for money Increased workload for staff Poor satisfaction	R8. Sheffield Homes should reach a joint agreement with the customer to close a complaint (or refer to the next stage).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SH don't routinely produce a 'learning report' about what they have learnt from complaints Learning from complaints is not fed back to customers 	Benchmarking Reality checks Reality checks	Learning from complaints is not captured Opportunities for improving services and reducing further complaints are missed Staff are not able to learn and share good practice Customers do not get reassurance that views count. SH miss out on opportunities to improve reputation and celebrate success	R9. A 'Learning from complaints' report should be produced regularly and the findings shared with staff and customers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SH don't benefit from listening to the call backs made by Viewpoint 	Viewpoint call backs	Staff are not able to learn and share good practice Good opportunity to understand customer expectations is missed	R10. Sheffield Homes' staff handling complaints should have access to recorded complaint call-backs made by Viewpoint to assist with their training and development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repairs are the biggest area of complaints for SH 	Performance information Customer Survey Staff Survey	Opportunities to improve the repairs service are missed This generates repeat complaints Poor value for money Potential Ombudsman challenges	R11. The process for sharing learning from complaints between Kier and Sheffield Homes should be improved.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letters sent to customers are inconsistent in their quality, tone, grammar and spelling 	Reality checks Customer survey Mystery Shopping	Customers can receive a poor service from Sheffield Homes Low satisfaction Poor reputation	R12. The quality of written communication with customers should be improved and letters be of a consistently high standard.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of dedicated staff managing a complaint through the process is a weakness 	Benchmarking Reality checks Customer Focus Group Customer Survey	Can result in lack of personal responsibility Poor communication Less speedy attention to complaint	R13. Dedicated staff should be identified whose main role is to deal with Stage 2 complaints. These staff could be brought together in one Complaints Team or they could be based in teams around the organisation where the biggest numbers of complaints are received. The staff would need sufficient authority to require co-operation from other teams in order to respond to complaints and be empowered to discuss a resolution with the customer. The staff would need to be managed as a team or 'virtual team' to realise all the advantages listed.

We believe that the advantages of having dedicated complaints staff are:

- There would be more consistency in how complaints are dealt with as fewer staff would be involved in the process
- Specialist staff could be recruited with the right skills to deal with customers who may be frustrated and dissatisfied
- Staff would be focussed on resolving rather than formalising complaints and would be able to prevent complaints escalating by filtering out and resolving less serious complaints more quickly
- Serious complaints could be dealt with more effectively
- Staff could act as a semi-independent reviewers of complaints
- The resolution of the complaint can be jointly agreed with the customer
- There should be a reduction in complaints through improved complaint handling and the overall quality of customer care
- The response to the customer can be co-ordinated where different sections are involved
- The management of persistent complainants would be more co-ordinated
- There may be a reduction in the number of referrals to the Ombudsman as the quality of complaint handling would be improved. Where the customer did refer to the Ombudsman, the case file would be more immediately available and quality assured.
- A named contact would encourage accountability
- Staff would be focused on meeting smarter targets
- It would be easier to share good practice and implement improvements
- Training costs would be reduced as fewer staff would need to be trained
- Responses to customers would not be delayed because of staff holidays, sickness etc.
- The overall quality of complaints handling would improve

There are also some disadvantages:

- There will be some initial costs in setting up the process
 - Recruitment and set-up
 - Training for staff
 - Budget
- Staff would need to move from their current roles into the dedicated complaints role. This may reduce the resources in some existing teams.