Complaints Policy and Safeguarding
VERSION 2 | JULY 2024

1. Aims, objectives and scope of this policy

SidLife Limited is committed to providing a high-quality service to all our residents. We understand, however that sometimes the service may not meet your expectations and if this is the case, we want to know about it. We believe that if a resident wishes to make a complaint or register a concern then they should find it easy to do so.

It is our policy to welcome complaints, concerns or dissatisfaction and look upon them as opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that the failure to listen to or acknowledge complaints will lead to an aggravation of the problem, residents dissatisfaction and possible litigation.

We support the precept that most complaints, if dealt with early, openly and honestly can be resolved at local level between just the complainant and the Society.

This policy is essentially for the benefit of residents, but the process described may be used for any complaints received, excepting those which are covered under the Staff Disciplinary and Grievance policy. This policy also applies to any complaints raised or submitted via a third party or representative and as such, will be handled in line with our complaints policy.

All complaints will be kept confidential. We will only divulge your name with your permission and in situations where the investigation requires this to proceed.

This policy ensures that we consistently record, investigate, and respond to resident feedback and maintain compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

2. What to do if you have a concern or a complaint?

How to raise your concern

1. If you have a concern or complaint about the service you receive from us, in the first instance, please speak to the House Manager, or someone from the management team. They will listen and talk with you about the problem and try to resolve it immediately.

2. If the issue or particular complaint needs some time to investigate, we will advise next steps and keep you updated on our findings and the outcome.

3. If you feel unable to raise the matter with someone in the management team, for whatever reason, please speak to the Chief Operating Officer.

4. If once the investigation has taken place, findings revealed and any actions taken (where deemed necessary), you are not satisfied, then you have the right to appeal to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees (who will investigate)

To note, this policy distinguishes a concern or complaint from a day to day service request, defined as a request from a resident that requires action to be taken to put something right. In this instance the Repair and Maintenance log and/or House Manager should be notified in order to action the request. If a resident is dissatisfied at any time with our response or actions being taken, we will raise the concerns as a complaint and continue to work to resolve the issue being reported.

3. **What Happens Next**?

When an issue is raised by a resident with us, we will take the time to listen to their concerns. We will provide advice and support to the residents and identify if the issue raised falls within the scope of the complaints policy. We recognise that sometimes we make mistakes, and that great service is about putting things right as soon as we hear about them. Where we have made a mistake, we will say sorry and take the opportunity to quickly try and put things right.

Our focus is on timely and local resolution. When a complaint is received, we will:

- Aim to resolve it at the first point of contact. If we are not able to resolve it immediately, the complaint will be handed over to the complaints officer.
- Respond quickly, in a positive, understanding way.
- Listen and treat all residents with respect and courtesy.
- Investigate fully and ensure we address all aspects of the complaint.
- Ask the residents for their preferred resolution.
- Be clear about what we can and cannot do, managing expectations.
- Learn from it and use it to improve our services.

All complaints, comments, and feedback where a Health and Safety risk is identified will be formally recorded and immediately referred to the Facilities manager.

In accordance with the requirements set by the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code SidLife operates a two stage complaints process.

At both stages of our complaints process we will:

- Provide the resident with an opportunity to set out their concerns and outcomes being sought.
- Confirm our understanding of the resident's complaint.
- Consider all relevant information and evidence in investigating the resident's concerns.
- Consider remedies at any point within the complaints process to resolve the complaint as early as possible.

- Provide a complaint response to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed

Stage 1: Investigation by the Complaints Officer
The Complaints Officer will be someone who has not had previous involvement with (nor is the subject of) the complaint. The person looking into the complaint will try to resolve it within five working days. They will also aim to send a full written response to the complaint within 10 working days but will let you know sooner if this is not possible.

Stage 2: Review by the Chairman
If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, you can contact our Chairman to ask for a review, within 10 working days of receiving the outcome/response of stage 1.

When we receive a request for a complaint to progress to stage 2, we will formally acknowledge, define and escalate the complaint within five working days of the request being received. Someone else will be appointed to undertake the review if the Chairman was involved at an earlier stage (up to 3 alternative Board members to review). A full written response will be issued within 10 working days, but we will let you know sooner if this is not possible. We hope that by this stage you will be satisfied with how your complaint has been dealt with.

The timescales to respond to a complaint at stage 2 will normally be no more than 20 working days from the date of stage 2 formal acknowledgement. In exceptional circumstances a stage 2 review may take longer than 20 working days, in these instances we will agree this in advance with the resident and provide a full explanation.

Following your complaint and after a reasonable interval we will write to you to find out whether you are happy with the way we have dealt with it.

In cases where the preferred outcome is not permissible due to regulatory, statutory, or legal reasons, and there are no concerns about our actual handling of the complaint at stage 1, the complaint will not progress to stage 2. The Resident may then consider other options, including referring the complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman if they choose without additional delays

Housing Ombudsman
Our Society subscribes to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
Their requirements involve a two-step process, the first of which is that the complainant must have completed the complaint process of the landlord, i.e. the steps listed above.
Having done so, if you are still dissatisfied with the outcome you can find out more about how to proceed at - www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk .

Further points and information

Our Company Secretary will normally be the person who acts as Complaints Officer. If the complaint relates to our Secretary, write instead to the Treasurer. Complaints addressed to him should be marked “Private & Confidential.” You can get the full contact details from the House Manager

We accept all complaints (case by case basis), unless there is a valid reason not to do so. Where we are unable to consider either an overall complaint, or any points being raised within it (exclusions may be due to more than twelve months having passed since the issue occurred or the issue has already been dealt with previously through the complaints procedure), we will explain our reasoning and offer advice or support to try and help resolve the issue.

We cannot deal with a complaint if it raises issues that are already the subject of legal proceedings, including insurance claims. If this happens, we will write to you to explain the situation.

If there is anything above which you don’t understand or if you have any questions or comments about how the complaints procedure works, the House Manager, Company Secretary or a member of the Board of Trustees will be happy to answer your questions.

SidLife is committed to providing the highest standards of support for older people and we welcome any comments, suggestions or feedback you may have either about our complaints procedure or anything else which helps us to improve our services for residents.

4. Legal and regulatory considerations

This policy meets the Regulator for Social Housing’s Regulatory Framework requirement to have a clear, simple, and accessible complaints process, which ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely, and fairly. The policy will be published on our website together with details of the Housing Ombudsman Service and the Complaint Handling Code. We will also include signposting within our complaint acknowledgment letters.

This policy meets the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 and Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, including the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. This policy also meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010

5. Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting people’s rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risk and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the

persons wellbeing is promoted. This includes, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action.

SidLife recognises the importance of keeping people safe, which is paramount to our society. All our staff have undertaken safeguarding training, which is renewed annually. Raising safeguarding concerns is everyone's responsibility. The concern may result from something that you have seen, been told or heard.

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to report to the House Manager or someone from the management team.

Your Complaint
Please complete this form and hand to House Manager or Complaints Officer

Name	
Address for reply	
Phone number	
Address of your home (if different from above)	
Please tell us about the service or event you are commenting on or complaining about, when the incident happened, who was involved and so on. Please provide as much information as possible to help us consider all of the facts and respond quickly. (continue overleaf if required)	
Signature Date	