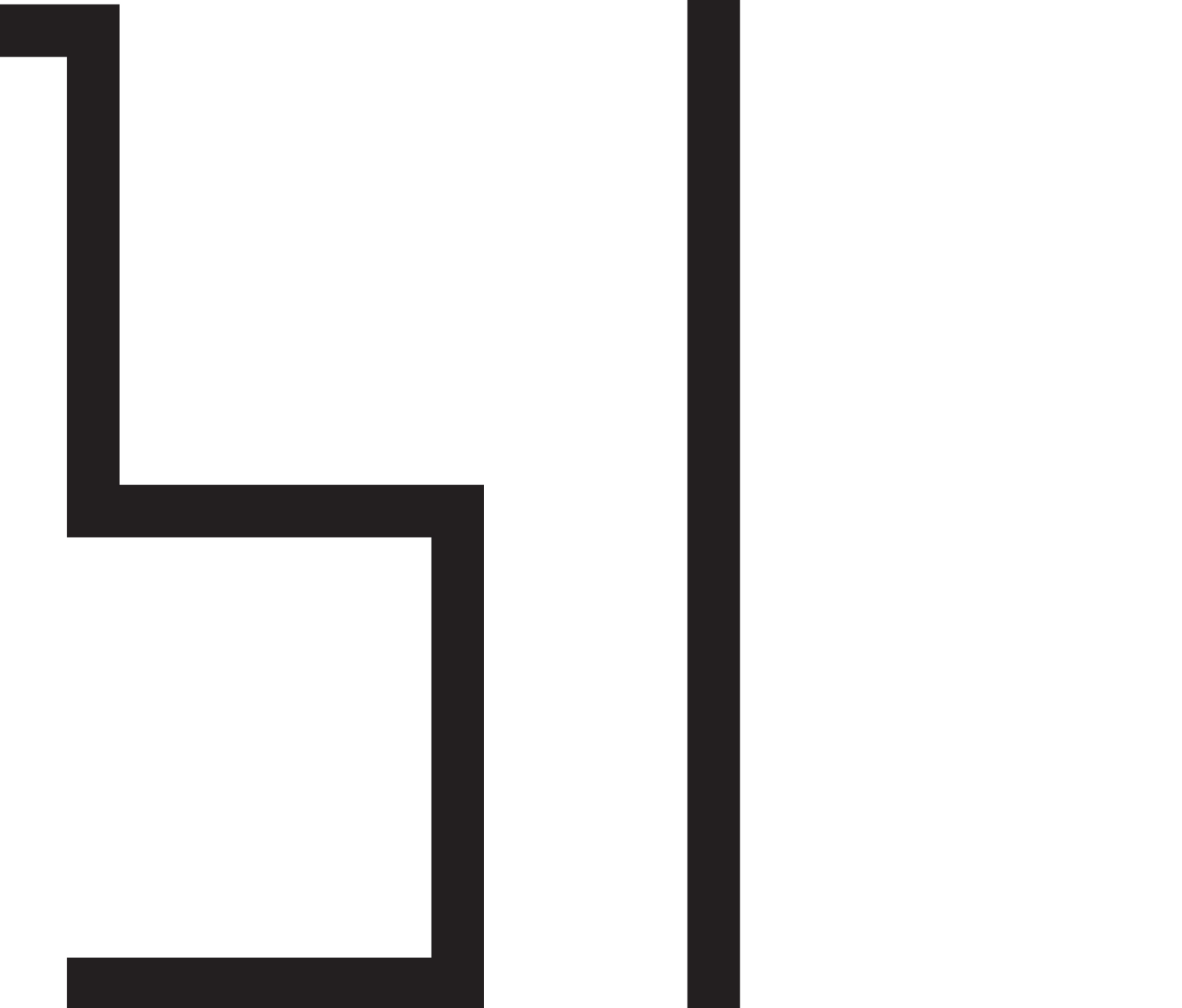


thirteen

Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy

May 2024



Company	Thirteen
Lead Manager	Director of Customer Experience
Date of final draft and version number	
Review Date	May 2027
Officer responsible for review	Director of Customer Experience

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Thirteen aims to deliver the best services possible; however, we appreciate that sometimes things can go wrong. This policy recognises that feedback in the form of complaints, suggestions and compliments is a valuable source of information about how well we are doing and how we can improve our services.
- 1.2 As well as meeting legal and regulatory requirements and the expectations of our customers, this policy provides a clear framework that reflects our company values:
- Considerate
 - Smart
 - Progressive
- 1.3 This policy is publicised on Thirteen's website within the compliments and complaints section. Other supporting information, including details about the Housing Ombudsman, Complaints Handling Code, Self-Assessment, Complaints and Improvement information is also available in this section of the website.
- 1.4 The policy and associated procedures are underpinned by a number of principles. Specifically, but not limited to ensuring:
- The process of making a complaint is as simple and straightforward as possible to ensure that it is accessible and open to all customers or their representatives.
 - Procedures and processes reflect good practice, legislative and regulatory requirements.
 - That complaints are dealt with in an equitable manner with an appropriate explanation for decisions reached.
 - All complaints are dealt with promptly and in a courteous, efficient manner and will be dealt with confidentially.
 - All complaints, feedback and compliments are treated seriously, and customers' concerns are listened to.
 - All complaints, feedback and compliments are recorded and monitored.
 - A reference number is provided along with a contact name where a complaint is reported.
 - Where service delivery has failed, we apologise and put things right.
 - We learn from complaints and make use of feedback to improve our services.
 - We involve customers in reviewing complaints, and services and report on how we are performing.
 - All complaints are dealt with in line with the Equality & Diversity Act 2010.

2. REFERENCE MATERIAL

- 2.1 The following were used as reference material and to guide the development of this policy:
- Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code
 - The Charter for Social Housing Residents
 - Localism Act 2011
 - Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards
 - Insurance policies and agreements in operation
 - Thirteen Information Governance Framework

- Thirteen Equality & Diversity Policy

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 A **customer complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Company or its staff (including anyone acting on its behalf e.g. sub-contractors) affecting an individual customer or group of customers.
- 3.2 A **customer** can be a tenant, leaseholder or any person, group or organisation who has a legitimate reason to make a complaint or wishes to make a suggestion or give a compliment.
- 3.3 **Feedback** refers to comments, compliments or suggestions made about how we have delivered or can improve a service or standards.

4. POLICY CONTENTS

4.1 Complaints

- 4.1.1 Thirteen's aim is that all issues are dealt with at the first point of contact, therefore when we have got something wrong, customer-facing staff will work with customers to seek a positive resolution and offer an apology. All cases are considered on an individual basis and we will attempt to deal a service request within 5 working days should it not be logged formally. If requested the customer would be given the opportunity to utilise the formal complaints process.
- 4.1.2 Should a resolution not be found, or the customer remain unsatisfied, or the complaint require further investigation, and a customer wishes for their issue to be deemed as a formal complaint, this will be accepted by telephone, email, online, in writing or in person, or by any person or agency legitimately acting on behalf of the customer.
- 4.1.3 Customers will be asked to provide authority to deal with a third party on their behalf, in accordance with data protection and at no stage will a colleague be involved in the investigation, should there be a conflict of interest.
- 4.1.4 The formal **complaints** procedure has two stages;

Stage 1 – Complaints will be investigated and a response provided to the complainant in their preferred method of contact detailing what policy, legislation or best practice have been referred to in determining the outcome and the proposed resolution within the agreed timescale. When reviewing a complaint consideration will be given to Thirteen's liability for any loss or damage incurred.

Stage 1 complaints are acknowledged within one working day of being received by telephone, email, online, in writing or in person and we aim to respond to these complaints within five working days. If the investigation takes longer than the initial 5 working days then we would aim to respond in a further 5 working days or at an agreed timeframe that the customer agrees to being acceptable. The customer has 28 days from the outcome letter being sent to escalate

their complaint to the next stage of the process, discretion will be used in extenuating circumstances.

Stage 2 – If the complainant feels the matter has not been resolved, a senior manager will review the investigation and complaint decision and any additional information provided to support the request for review to ensure that the initial investigation was carried out appropriately. A further full response will be provided in the preferred method of contact within in the agreed timescale.

Stage 2 complaints are acknowledged within one working day of being received and we aim to respond to these complaints within ten working days or at an agreed timeframe that the customer agrees to being acceptable. If the investigation takes longer than the initial 10 working days then we would aim to respond in a further 10 working days or at an agreed timeframe that the customer agrees to being acceptable. We will not keep a complaint open if the answer to the complaint is known, any outstanding actions will be actioned and worked through after the complaints.

4.1.5 If the complaint cannot be responded to within the agreed timescale the complainant will be informed, and a revised date agreed with the person making the complaint.

4.1.6 As Stage 2 is the final stage of the internal process if the customer feels that their complaint has still not been resolved they have the opportunity to contact the commissioning organisation or regulatory body. For the majority of issues this will be the Housing Ombudsman and more information can be found at <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Housing Ombudsman contact details:

Telephone 0300 111 3000
9.15am-5.15pm: Monday to Friday

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET

4.1.7 Tenants and leaseholders are also able to contact the Housing Ombudsman direct at any stage of the complaints process.

4.2 Feedback

4.2.1 From time-to-time customers may wish to provide feedback in the form of a comment, suggestion or compliment, all of which can be used to share good practice, and aid learning and service improvement. These are monitored by management.

4.2.2 It is essential that Thirteen uses complaints as a learning tool to make sure the same mistake does not happen again. The Customer Relations Team will analyse complaints and feedback to identify trends, ensuring that when complaints identify the need for improvements to existing services, policies or procedures, these are

put into effect as soon as possible. This is done through the Customer Feedback Log which is a database of learnings and actions.

4.3 Avoidable contact

- 4.3.1 Analysing the demands on the service and understanding the reasons for contact from customers enables us to identify calls being received as a result of something going wrong or dissatisfaction with the service.
- 4.3.2 Through trend analysis this data can be used to inform service improvements and to address emerging issues.

4.4 Exclusions

- 4.4.1 There may be occasions when the complaint cannot be investigated by the Company. For instance:
 - a) In exceptional circumstances – in such cases the customer will be informed why we feel that there are exceptional circumstances. Examples include:
 - a. the complaint is vexatious,
 - b. is subject to on-going legal action or
 - c. where the case may be the subject of on-going criminal investigation and the details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, have been filed at court.
 - b) If the complaint has not been made in a reasonable time – for instance the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago or if the customer waited for more than twenty-eight days after receiving a response to say that they wanted to progress the complaint.
 - c) Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.
- 4.4.2 If the complaint does not fall within the remit of this policy, where possible customers will be advised where to direct their complaints (e.g. the police, the Ombudsman, etc.).

4.5 Anonymous Complaints

- 4.5.1 From time to time we may receive anonymous complaints. Whilst accepting there will be limitations on the action we can take and the feedback that we can offer, such complaints will be investigated in line with the policy and associated procedures, including our whistleblowing arrangements where appropriate.

4.6 Compensation Requests

- 4.6.1 Where a complainant requests compensation as part of the resolution to a complaint, or where a senior manager feels compensation should be paid as a resolution, this will be offered in accordance with Thirteen's Compensation Policy.

4.7 Performance monitoring and reporting

- 4.7.1 Operational performance will be monitored monthly with high level KPIs reported to Board and detailed analysis reported to the Board twice a year.

- 4.7.2 The Performance and Complaints Customer Group will monitor performance and trends to identify and recommend service improvements and organisational learning.
- 4.7.3 The policy, including details of each stage, details of the Housing Ombudsman Service and our self-assessment against their Complaints Handling Code is published on the Thirteen website.

4.8 Learning

- 4.8.1 Complaints analysis will be shared with senior managers to identify trends and inform changes to improve services.
- 4.8.2 Complaints performance and service improvements will be presented to the board twice a year.

Equality and Diversity	Initial Screening has identified no adverse impact on the protected characteristics to accessing the complaints process
Customer Involvement and Consultation	The Performance and Complaints Customer Group reviewed the policy against the Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code and amendments were made as a result. The policy was shared with the policy consultation database who gave positive feedback and found the policy clear and easy to read
Monitoring and Review	This is now the responsibility of the Director of Experience who will monitor and review the policy when due for review or on change of regulation or legislation
Responsibility	Director of Experience