



Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

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**Owner: Director of Contracting and
Compliance**

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	<p>COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS and COMPLAINTS POLICY</p>
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COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS and COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

At Grŵp Gwalia we recognise the important role that *customer feedback* – complaints, concerns, comments and compliments - plays in ensuring that our services meet the needs of all of our customers and can be continually improved.

We value and encourage all feedback, including comments, concerns, compliments and complaints as a way to effectively identify:

- where we are meeting or exceeding customer expectations
- where we may have failed to meet our own standards, follow our policies or procedures or meet customer expectations
- areas where service quality or customer satisfaction can be further improved

We believe it is in the best interest of our tenants, clients and customers to resolve complaints efficiently and effectively. Therefore, where possible and appropriate, **front line staff will be empowered to resolve complaints.**

This policy and procedure has been revised in line with the Complaints Wales Model, led by the Public Services Ombudsman and approved by the Welsh Government, which has been adopted by Grŵp Gwalia's Board of Management.

Where we need to consider a formal complaint our emphasis will be to **"Investigate once and investigate well"** so that the work is undertaken thoroughly and promptly.

If we have been unable to resolve a complaint to the customer's satisfaction, we will signpost them to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.



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2. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure
- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Policies & Procedures
- Data protection policies
- Other relevant policies

3. APPLICATION OF POLICY

The complaint policy and procedure should normally only be used where the customer has complained to the organisation within 6 months of the issue or incident occurring, except in certain exceptional cases.

There are rare occasions when a complainant's actions may be unacceptable and make it impossible to deal with their complaint within our normal procedures. In these circumstances, we will apply our policy and procedures on **Unacceptable Actions by Complainants** [please see Appendix 3 of the procedure document]

4. OBJECTIVES OF POLICY

- To ensure all Grŵp Gwalia services and schemes respond to feedback and complaints in a consistent and fair manner and within the stated timelines.
- To highlight the importance of front line staff being empowered to deal with feedback and complaints at a local level, finding immediate solutions wherever possible and appropriate.
- To ensure that our feedback and complaints procedure is accessible, well publicised, simple to understand and regularly monitored and evaluated.



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- To highlight the importance of using information obtained through feedback and complaints to inform continuous service improvement.

5. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

a) The Delivery Outcomes for the new Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations in Wales (2011) state that:-

“We place the people who want to use our services at the heart of our work – putting the citizen first.”

“We make it easy for people to tell us when things go wrong, or to make a complaint, so we can quickly put things right. We learn from complaints, using them to improve our services.”

b) The National Minimum Standards for registered care services in Wales state that “Service users and their relatives or representatives are confident that their complaints will be listened to, taken seriously and acted upon...there is an easily understood, well publicised and accessible procedure to enable service users and their relatives or representatives to make a complaint or compliment and for complaints to be investigated.”

c) Our Board of Management has approved the adoption of the Complaints Wales model (2011) led by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales as the basis for this revised policy.

6. DEFINITIONS

A Request for Service

We define a request for service as when a customer makes a reasonable request to receive a service Grŵp Gwalia should be providing. A request for service is not considered a complaint.



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An informal complaint

We define an informal complaint as **an Expression of Dissatisfaction (EOD)** about any aspect of our service; whether it is something we have failed to do or not done to their satisfaction which can be resolved quickly.

A formal complaint

A formal complaint is when a customer remains dissatisfied at attempts to resolve an expression of dissatisfaction about our service. OR a customer can request a complaint to be treated formally at any stage.

In addition, complaints will be treated formally if it is about a member of staff or a serious allegation.

Compliments and suggestions

This type of feedback is where customers wish to make a comment about any aspect of our services, which may include ideas for improvement, or positive comments or compliments about the way in which we have dealt with something. We will record and monitor all such feedback received.

Terminology

For the purposes of this Policy and Procedure, the term 'the organisation' refers to Grŵp Gwalia, including group companies.

The term 'staff' refers to any person carrying out work or providing a service on behalf of Grŵp Gwalia.

A customer is an individual or organisation to whom Grŵp Gwalia provides a service. This may include tenants, clients who receive a support service from us, funding bodies, partner agencies and members of the community.

Feedback includes comments, compliments, complaints, concerns and suggestions.



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7. DETERMINING THE MOST APPROPRIATE POLICY

Grŵp Gwalia's complaints policy was originally developed with customers and takes into account their views on how complaints should be handled and feedback on the implementation of the policy.

The policy has been revised to reflect the Complaints Wales model.

This policy also reflects the spirit of standards set out for providers of Health, Social Care, and Registered Services in Wales, and our duties and obligations to report concerns.

Where applicable, the policy will be read in conjunction with specific contractual requirements for the delivery of services.

In relation to our portfolio of Student Accommodation:

- Our **non-directly managed schemes** are subject to Contractual Agreements with each of Swansea, Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities. Any service or performance failures are dealt with under the terms of these Agreements.
- At our **directly managed schemes**:
 - The students are tenants of Grŵp Gwalia and therefore fall within the remit of this Policy.
 - We have a contractual Agreement with our partner College in respect of one of our directly managed schemes. This Agreement contains a Dispute Resolution procedure for any service or financial disputes.

Where the complaint concerns data protection, the group's Data Protection policies will be applied.

Where the complaint involves the safeguarding of vulnerable adults or the protection of children, the group's Safeguarding, POVA and Child Protection policies will be applied immediately.



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8. PROCEDURES

The organisation's procedures for handling complaints are set out in an associated document. Where any department needs to adopt specific procedures for operational reasons or to comply with regulatory or contracting obligations, they will be approved by agreement between the relevant Executive Director and the Executive Director for Governance and Legal Services.

Please see Appendix 5 of the procedure document for the specific Policy and Procedure for formal complaints in all regulated provision i.e. Domiciliary Care, Nursing Care and Residential Care.

9. EQUALITIES CONSIDERATIONS

We aim to make our feedback and complaints procedures as accessible and as easy as possible for customers.

The Comments, Compliments and Complaints leaflets are available in English and Welsh language version.

Translation of information and correspondence into other languages or arranging an interpreter is available on request if possible.

Correspondence and feedback will be given to customers in accessible formats.

10. MONITORING PERFORMANCE

Our performance in managing complaints will be monitored in a number of ways. We will monitor complaints through:

- Senior Management Teams
- relevant committees
- Feedback to customers
- Internal audit



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- Self-assessment
- Ombudsman Feedback
- Staff Training

11. COMPLAINTS CATEGORIES

In line with Complaints Wales guidelines the following top-level categories of complaints will be recorded and reported:

- Lettings
- Care or support services
- Estate management and environment
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Tenancy Management
- Ownership services including the right to buy
- Financial matters, including rent arrears and service charges
- Staff
- Property development

We will record the number of complaints that have been resolved within or outside the set timescales, whether or not the process was satisfactory to the complainant and the outcome of any Ombudsman referrals.

We will also record whether complaints were upheld, partly upheld or not upheld and any compensation paid.

The organisation will also monitor and report on whether the cause of upheld complaints are identified as individual error or systematic, to assist in improving the organisation's procedures and administration.

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Compliments, comments and suggestions will also be recorded and the lessons learned from all customer feedback will be shared within the organisation and help inform continuous improvement of our services.