

Governance Information

Applicable Legislation	- Equality Act 2010 - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018
Policy owner	Director of Operations
Approved by	CMT
Regulatory reference	Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard
Date approved	July 2025
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Stakeholders consulted	IDS resident via CX feedback

Version	Date	Author	Change
V.1	August 2024	Consultant review	New IDS policy format Following latest self-assessment of Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (June 2024) timescale for raising a complaint amended; publication of the policy added; support from 3rd parties added; and section on remedies added.
V.2	July 2025	Kim Ward, Head of Housing	Updated wording following review completed by the Ombudsman in July 2025.
V.3	October 2025	Kim Ward, Head of Housing	Inclusion of Otto Schiff Housing Association as within the scope of this policy.

Contents

Governance Information	1
1. Policy	2
2. Purpose	2
3. Scope	2
4. Exclusions	2
5. How to make a complaint	3
6. How we manage complaints	3
7. Putting Things Right	4
8. Housing Ombudsman Service	5
9. Definitions	5
10. Roles & Responsibilities	6
11. Equality Impact Assessment	6
12. Policy Review, Learning & Monitoring	6

1. Policy

- 1.1 At the Industrial Dwellings Society (herein known as IDS) we are committed to providing an excellent customer experience. However, we understand that sometimes things can go wrong, and our customers may have cause to complain. When we get it wrong, we will apologise and put things right. This policy sets out our approach to complaints handling and resolution, and what our customers can expect from us throughout the process.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 We adhere to the following principles to deliver on our commitment to resolving complaints:
- **Fairness** - We will treat all complaints fairly and without bias. Each complaint will be considered on its own merits.
 - **Accessibility** - Our complaints process is accessible to everyone. We will make it easy to raise a complaint by providing a wide range of ways to do so, and we will provide support and reasonable adjustments to anyone who needs it to make a complaint.
 - **Communication** - We will communicate with our customers regularly throughout the complaint process and keep them informed of our actions, agreeing timescales for doing so in line with this policy.
 - **Transparency** - We will publicise our Complaints policy and process, and information about the Housing Ombudsman service to our residents, on our website and via newsletters and leaflets. We will make our Policy available in a clear and accessible format to everyone.
 - **Continuous improvement** - We take complaints seriously and use them as an opportunity to learn and do things better. We will seek feedback on how we have handled complaints and use that feedback to improve our services.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all existing, potential, and former IDS tenants, shared owners, leaseholders, and residents of Otto Schiff Housing Association (herein known as IDS customers).
- 3.2 We will also accept complaints from members of the public who have been affected by our services, although there is no access to the Housing Ombudsman Service for these customers or former IDS customers (see section 8).
- 3.3 This policy applies to all IDS employees and contractors who deliver services on our behalf.
- 3.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Compensation, Unacceptable Behaviour, Anti-social Behaviour and Data Management Policies.

4. Exclusions

- 4.1 We will always accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to, in which case we will clearly set out why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and explain the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.
- 4.2 We will clearly differentiate between a service request and a complaint (see section 9) and communicate to our customers how their enquiry will be managed.

- 4.3 Here are some examples of when we would not accept as a complaint. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and we will treat each complaint on a case-by-case basis and apply discretion where reasonable to do so:
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurring or the resident being aware of the issue over twelve months ago.
 - Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.
 - Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.

5. How to make a complaint

- 5.1 We will make it easy for all IDS customers to make a complaint by providing various ways to do so as follows:
- In writing either by post or email;
 - Online form via our website or resident portal;
 - By telephone;
 - In person.
- 5.2 An IDS customer does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a customer expresses dissatisfaction, we will give them the choice to make complaint.
- 5.3 If a resident expresses dissatisfaction with a response to their service request the subsequent complaint raised will not prevent or impact on any actions required to resolve any immediate issues and or service requests.
- 5.4 We will provide support to anyone who requires it to help them make a complaint. This includes verbally raising a complaint with any IDS employee who will then record it on the customers' behalf.
- 5.5 We will accept complaints from 3rd party representatives on behalf of IDS customers, and we will give IDS customers the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with us. In dealing with any 3rd party representatives, we will remain GDPR compliant.

6. How we manage complaints

- 6.1 We have a two stage complaints process that is in line with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code as follows:
- 6.2 **Stage 1**
- 6.2.1 We will acknowledge all stage 1 complaints within 5 working days as per the Ombudsman guidelines, although we will always try to do it sooner. We will clearly set out which aspects of the complaint we are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear. We will also assign a lead officer to respond to the complaint.
- 6.2.2 We will clearly set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the customer is seeking.
- 6.2.3 We will provide a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. Our response will include all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions. We will reference the relevant policy, law, and good practice when appropriate. We will outline any remedy offered to put it right. We will also advise our customers how to escalate the matter to Stage 2 if they are not satisfied with our response.

6.2.4 If we require more time to complete our investigations, we will agree with the customer a new timescale for our response which will be no more than a further 10 working days without good reason, and this will be clearly explained with agreed suitable updates on the progress. At this time, we will also provide our customer with the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.

6.2.5 If additional complaints are raised during the investigation, we will incorporate these into the Stage 1 response if they are related and the Stage 1 response hasn't been issued. If the Stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, we will log the new issues as a separate complaint.

6.3 Stage 2

6.3.1 If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to our customer's satisfaction at stage 1, it will be progressed to stage 2 at their request. This is the final stage of our complaints process. We will not ask our customers to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 review.

6.3.2 We will acknowledge and log all stage 2 escalation requests within 5 working days. We will clearly define the complaint escalation by explaining our understanding of why the customer remains dissatisfied and the outcomes they are seeking. A member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) will be assigned to lead the complaint at this stage, or a member of the Corporate Management Team (CMT) if an SMT member provided the stage 1 response. He or she will not have been previously involved in the complaint at Stage 1.

6.3.3 We will provide a full response within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. Our response will include all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions. We will reference the relevant policy, law, and good practice when appropriate. We will outline any remedy offered to put it right. At this time, we will also provide our customer with the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.

6.3.4 If we require more time to complete our investigations, we will agree with the customer of a new timescale for our response which will be no more than a further 20 working days without good reason, and this will be clearly explained with agreed suitable updates on the progress. At this time we will also provide our customer with the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.

6.4 At each stage in the complaints process our complaints handlers will:

- deal with all complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;
- give the resident a fair chance to set out their position;
- take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- consider all relevant information and evidence carefully, and provide a written response within the timescales set out by the Ombudsman's Code when the answer is known, not when all outstanding issues are completed. Any outstanding actions will be monitored and updates provided to the customer until all outstanding actions are agreed.

7. Putting Things Right

7.1 Where something has gone wrong IDS will always acknowledge this and strive to put things right. We will set out the actions we have already taken, or intend to take, to resolve the situation for our customers and put things right. These can include:

- Apologising;
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- Providing an explanation or assistance;

- Taking action if there has been delay;
 - Reconsidering or changing a decision we have made;
 - Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
 - Providing financial remedy;
 - Changing our policies, procedures, or practices.
- 7.2 Any remedy we offer will clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with our customer where appropriate, and will be followed through to completion.
- 7.3 We will take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies, as set out in our Compensation Policy.

8. Housing Ombudsman Service

- 8.1 Existing IDS customers can appeal to the Housing Ombudsman service if they remain unhappy at the end of the complaints process. The Housing Ombudsman's contact details are on our website and in our complaint response letters, and are as follows:

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET
Tel: 0300 111 3000
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

- 8.2 This policy will be made available on our website along with our annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code. We will also periodically share information about this policy through resident newsletters and publications.

9. Definitions

Complaint	We follow the Housing Ombudsman guidance and definition of a complaint which is: An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.
Service Request	We follow the Housing Ombudsman guidance and definition of a service request which is: A request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation – A legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals.

10. Roles & Responsibilities

All staff	Record and log complaints.
Housing Assistants	Act as complaints administrators.
Managers and Heads of Service	Act as complaint handlers, monitor and report on performance.
Director of Operations	Overall responsibility for this policy.

11. Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy.

12. Policy Review, Learning & Monitoring

- 12.1 We will review this policy every 2 years, or following legislative change, to ensure the Policy remains effective and complies with current legislation and good practice.
- 12.2 All relevant KPI's (key performance indicators) aligned to the management of complaints are regularly monitored and reviewed. We will routinely monitor our performance in implementing this policy.
- 12.3 Complaints are reported monthly to CMT and quarterly to the Operations Committee.
- 12.4 We will produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report which will be reported to our CMT, Operations Committee and Board.