

L&Q Complaints Policy



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1 Purpose and approach

- 1.1 We aim to provide our residents with good quality homes and services. We recognise that sometimes things don't go to plan, and where this happens we want to put things right as quickly as possible.
- 1.2 This policy has been written in line with the Housing Ombudsman's dispute resolution principles, and our commitment to our residents to deliver reliable, repeatable and consistent services. We aim to:
- Be fair – We will treat people fairly and follow fair process, keeping you updated with progress
 - Be objective – making sure that your complaint is dealt with impartially at every stage.
 - Put things right – we will try to get you back to the position you would have been in if the issue had not occurred. We will acknowledge and apologise if we made a mistake, or if our service failed. We will provide you with an explanation of what went wrong if we were at fault (including anyone working on our behalf).
 - Be consistent – We will reimburse or compensate residents in line with our approved policies and processes.
 - Learn from outcomes – we will analyse what we learn from complaints and use the information to keep improving our services.

2 Definitions and scope

- 2.1 In line with the Housing Ombudsman's definition, the definition of a complaint under this policy is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action, by anyone acting on behalf of L&Q, which affects one or more of our residents. The word 'complaint' does not have to be used for us to log and handle it in line with this policy.
- 2.2 Matters that can lead to a complaint include where:
- We fail to meet our legal or contractual duties, promises or standards we have set
 - We do something wrong, poorly, or fail to do something we should have done
 - We have been unhelpful or impolite
- 2.3 We are often able to resolve simple service recovery issues quickly outside of a formal complaint process. We encourage this approach as an early step to resolving an issue quickly, and achieving a positive outcome for you. For example, this can

include apologising to you and rebooking a missed appointment. We will, however, always record a complaint if you want us to do so, in line with the definitions of this policy.

2.4 We will never unreasonably refuse to accept, or escalate, a complaint in line with this policy. Occasionally even where the word complaint is used this may not meet the definition of a complaint under this policy (see 2.5 below). If we believe the matter is unsuitable for the complaints process, we will always provide you with a clear and valid reason for our decision, and the right to take the matter to the Housing Ombudsman. (For contact details see section 12). Where a matter is outside of the Housing Ombudsman's jurisdiction, we may instead suggest you use an alternative method of resolution, such as another Ombudsman or Regulator.

2.5 There are a few matters that we do not usually consider to be complaints. These include where:

- The same matter has already been considered under our complaints process (The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted for further escalation where our own process has already been followed to its end)
- The complaint is over 12 months old, unless there are exceptional circumstances (see 2.11)
- You are making a first request for a repair, service, action or information. Or where your request is still being dealt with in line with our stated standards and timescales. We do record these, but as a service request rather than a complaint, and will follow the relevant policy and procedure to resolve them. If you aren't happy with our response to your service request we can raise a complaint, and we'll continue to address your service request while the complaint is investigated.
- Dissatisfaction is recorded within a survey. We do not automatically record such feedback as a complaint, but we may follow it up.
- It is a complaint about another resident. For example, a report of anti-social behaviour. Instead, a member of our Neighbourhood Housing or ASB teams will be able to help you with this type of request. (We will accept complaints where you are unhappy with how we handled your ASB case).
- The matter you are complaining about is a service that L&Q do not provide or where another organisation has the responsibility. We may signpost you to another organisation where this forms all or a part of your complaint, but we'll assist you where we can – for example when dealing with a managing agent. We will cooperate with an investigation by the other party to resolve a complaint, for example, where an accountable person from another organisation needs our

input. (We will always deal with any matters that remain our responsibility by resolving a service issue or opening a complaint).

- Legal proceedings against us are in progress. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. (See 3.2 for information about Disrepair). Legal liability such as insurance claims are also excluded.
- It may be more appropriate for another agency to deal with a matter where they have the power to resolve it, such as a First Tier Tribunal. If so we may direct you to this alternative route. We can still record a complaint, but may close this where you indicate you wish to follow that route.
- A policy has a built-in appeal process, which would be more suitable to use. We will direct you to this process as an alternative way of resolving the matter, but we will still accept a complaint if you ask us to do so.

2.6 The following people can make complaints for handling under this policy:

- A person who is or who has been in a direct landlord/tenant relationship with us. This includes people who have a lease, tenancy, licence to occupy, service agreement or other arrangement to occupy premises we own or manage. If an ex-occupier makes the complaint, they must have had a legal relationship with L&Q at the time that the matter, which is the subject of the complaint, arose.
- An applicant for a property owned or managed by L&Q.
- A representative or advocate of any of the people above, who is authorised by them to make a complaint on their behalf. This may include a Councillor or MP, or third-party advocate. We will require written permission, following data protection measures when disclosing any information to a third party, and will ensure our resident is kept informed. **Note:** Our response timeframes may need to be adjusted to allow sufficient time for the authorisation to be verified.
- A representative of those listed above, where they are unable to authorise someone to act on their behalf. For example, where someone has been awarded power of attorney for a person lacking capacity. We will ensure we are satisfied that the representative has the legitimate authority to act on the person's behalf. We recognise a customer may also wish to be accompanied by such a representative at a meeting with us.
- A person with authority to make a complaint on behalf of any of the people above who are deceased.

- 2.7 There may be exceptions to those above that we will consider at our discretion. For example, where a neighbour to one of our properties or a tenant of our leaseholder raises a concern that could impact on the health, safety, or wellbeing of our residents, or has a concern regarding action/inaction by us.
- 2.8 For complaints about structural or fire building safety in higher risk buildings see section 5. (Note: the scope is wider for who can make such a complaint).
- 2.9 For complaints made by a group of people, see section 6.
- 2.10 We are unable to investigate anonymous complaints under this policy, as there will be insufficient information for us to follow our process. However, we may still be able to pass the information to the manager responsible for the day-to-day service for action. We would do so, for example, if it relates to safeguarding concerns or reports of tenancy fraud.
- 2.11 We ask you to report problems to us promptly for us to be able to investigate thoroughly and put things right. While most complaints will be made within a few days or weeks of a matter occurring, others may take a little longer, but usually by no more than 12 months of the issue. We understand there may be exceptional circumstances that stopped the complaint from being raised earlier, so each case will be considered on its own merit.

2.12 How you can make a complaint

A complaint does not need to be made in writing. It can be made to us in a number of ways which include:

By phone to our customer service centre:

- 0300 777 7777 for customers in the North-West
- 0300 456 9998 for all other customers

By email:

customerrelationsnw@lqgroup.org.uk for customers in the North-West
customercomplaints@lqgroup.or.uk for all other customers

By post:

Customer Relations
29-35 West Ham Lane
Stratford
London
E15 4PH

In person, directly to any of our colleagues

Online and Social Media:

Completing the on-line complaints form at www.lqgroup.org.uk.

Customers in the North-West should use My Account.

Via social media – L&Q Facebook or Twitter

- 2.13 Complaints received through our social media channels will be dealt with in the same way as any other complaint, but we carry out some additional checks to make sure we're speaking to the right person. To protect your privacy, we will only discuss personal information via private messages, and recommend that you send private information this way. For example, your address and telephone number.

2.14 Directly addressed requests

All correspondence and communications directed or addressed to an individual member of staff, our Executive Team, or Board member, will be logged and managed in line with our complaints process. This approach helps to ensure that information is properly recorded and that everyone receives a fair and consistent service.

3 Legislation, regulation and good practice

- 3.1 We regularly review this policy, and the processes that support it, to ensure it complies with relevant legislation and regulation. This list isn't exhaustive but includes:
- The Housing Ombudsman scheme including the Complaint Handling Code
 - The Social Housing Regulatory framework, including the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - Building Safety Act 2022
- 3.2 Disrepair - Our approach follows the Housing Ombudsman guidance on Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Condition Claims and Service Complaints (Disrepair). Before we accept a disrepair claim we will manage these cases through alternative dispute resolution avenues using the complaints process.

4 The Complaints process

- 4.1 Our complaints process has two stages:
- Stage One involves an investigation by the relevant person/department best placed to resolve your complaint. They are responsible for discussing and understanding the complaint with you and agreeing an action plan with you to resolve it.

- If you are unhappy with our response, you can ask us to escalate to Stage Two, where a review will be conducted by someone who wasn't involved at Stage One.

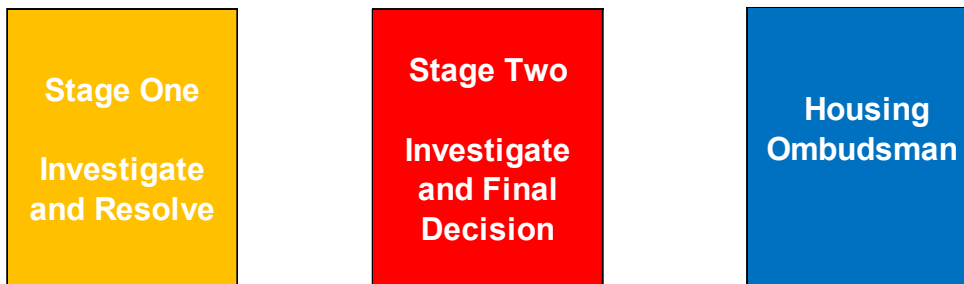
- 4.2 We will provide a named complaint handler who you can contact to send information, make comments, or discuss your complaint at any stage. You will be given a complaint reference which you can use in any communications.
- 4.3 If at any stage you have any additional needs or circumstances which you want to make us aware of, please let us know. That way when we investigate your complaint, we'll try to make suitable adjustments, where we can, so you can use our complaints service fairly. For example, if you have a visual or hearing impairment you may need us to use large print or use an interpreter. Or if you are unwell you may want to give us your permission to contact someone else in your behalf (See section 10).

Stage One – Complaint investigation and resolution

- 4.4 When we receive your complaint, we'll acknowledge, define and log it. The complaint handler may need to contact you to talk through your complaint to make sure we've understood the issues, the impact they've had on you, and agree how you would like your complaint resolved.
- 4.5 Where possible we aim to resolve a complaint there and then. If we can't, we'll pass it to the person or department best placed to help. They will make contact and acknowledge your complaint. This will take no longer than 5 working days.
- 4.6 We will investigate all elements of your complaint. Where you raise additional points early enough in our investigation, we'll try to incorporate these into our stage one response. If the new points are a separate issue which would delay the response, we will agree with you whether to log as a new complaint, or to extend the time (see 4.8). If the response has already been issued we will log any new issues you raise as a new complaint.
- 4.7 We will send you our written decision within 10 working days of your complaint being acknowledged (see 4.5). This means you'll receive a response within a maximum of 15 working days of your complaint being received. Our response will contain the outcome of our investigation, how we intend to resolve your complaint, and timescales.
- 4.8 If we need more time to reach a decision, we will explain why and write to you again before we send the response above. The extension should be no more than 10 working days. If there are exceptional circumstances where we realise we will need longer than usual, we will ask if you agree to this. If you aren't happy with an extension, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.9 After confirming our decision in writing, we will monitor progress until all outstanding actions are complete. This may be by a different team to the one providing the complaint decision, but your complaint reference remains the same.

Stage Two – review and resolution

- 4.10 If you do not agree with the outcome of your complaint, or the actions proposed to resolve it, you may decide to escalate it to Stage 2 of our complaints process for our final response. We'll ask why you are dissatisfied and what will resolve the complaint, though we can still escalate your case without this information. We may check with you if we can reach a resolution without escalation, but where you still want us to escalate it we will. We will acknowledge your escalation within 5 working days.
- 4.11 We won't escalate a complaint until the Stage One decision has been provided. We ask that you try to let us know promptly if you are unhappy so that we have an opportunity to put things right for you. We expect you to be able to escalate your complaint within 12 months of either the Stage One decision or of any follow-up actions we took as part of the resolution.
- 4.12 The Stage 2 is not usually a reinvestigation, but rather a review of actions and decisions taken at Stage 1 to check they were thorough, reasonable and fair. The Customer Relations Team, or someone who wasn't involved at Stage One, will carry out a review of the complaint. This will involve carefully considering all the relevant information, and contacting you to give you the opportunity to explain your viewpoint.
- 4.13 We will send you our written decision within 20 working days of your complaint escalation being acknowledged (see 4.10). This means you will receive a response within a maximum of 25 working days of your complaint being received.
- 4.14 If we need more time to reach a decision, we will explain why and write to you again before we send the response above. The extension should be no more than 20 working days. If there are exceptional circumstances where we realise we will need longer, we will ask if you agree to this. If you aren't happy with an extension, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.15 After confirming our decision in writing, we will monitor progress until all outstanding actions are complete. This may be done by a different team to the one providing the complaint decision, but your complaint reference remains the same.
- 4.16 If your complaint cannot be resolved at Stage Two, you can approach the Housing Ombudsman. (For escalation of Building Safety complaints see 5.7).



5 Building Safety complaints

- 5.1 This section is limited in scope to buildings owned and managed by L&Q to which building safety cases currently apply, and to the matters defined below.
- 5.2 A complaint will be accepted as a building safety complaint, under Section 93 of the Building Safety Act 2022, if the issue raised in the complaint is about:
- structural failure and spread of fire (building safety risks)
 - the performance of an accountable person with regard to their duties
- 5.3 Anyone can make a complaint about how we manage fire and structural safety in a higher-risk building (under this section of the Act). This includes a resident or anyone visiting or working in the building (e.g. contractors, postman).
- 5.4 These complaints will be managed under our usual complaint process.
- 5.5 Prioritisation**

The Building Safety legislation requires that: *“there is an effective process for the prioritisation of relevant complaints taking account of the level of risk involved”*.

While we are confident that applying and meeting our existing timescales for complaints will usually be appropriate for building safety complaints, we acknowledge that some matters need to be dealt with more quickly than the usual complaint timescale. This is already the case, for urgent matters of health and safety, for example where a repair may need to be urgently undertaken before the complaint response is complete. For the avoidance of doubt, we are clarifying here that if we assess there’s a risk, we may respond/partially respond to a complaint/ element of a building safety complaint more quickly.

5.6 Additional representations and comments

The Building Safety legislation requires us to state *‘how a complainant can make representations and comments on any findings during an investigation’*. However, it also requires responses to be dealt with in a timely way.

This complaints policy explains that we may contact a complainant to confirm that we understand the issues being raised. It allows for additional complaints or information to be raised before a response has been issued, and where this would unreasonably delay the response that we may open an additional complaint, or agree a time extension. We can confirm we also use this approach for Building Safety complaints.

5.7 Escalation

If you are not satisfied with our final response, as well as referring the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service, you may also approach the Building Safety Regulator. (See contact details in section 12). With your consent, we may also refer the complaint to the regulator ourselves.

6 Group complaints and petitions

- 6.1 This section sets out how residents and their community can submit a complaint or petition as a group about the same issue, and how we will respond. We welcome feedback which helps us to highlight concerns within a local area.
- 6.2 Group complaints/petitions can be submitted by anyone but there should be a lead person identified, and it will be the lead contact's responsibility to ensure that any submission is completed under the principle of good faith, decency, honesty, and respect.
- 6.3 Group complaints/petitions need to include the following:
- a minimum of 2 signatures from 2 separate households
 - a clear and concise statement covering the subject; the issues which led to the creation of the complaint; the actions we are requested to take
 - contact details for the lead contact
 - the name, address, postcode, and signature of every individual supporting the complaint to confirm that everyone has given their permission to be part of the complaint, and
 - the date the complaint is submitted.
- 6.4 If it appears that individuals are raising different issues or they have specific concerns that it would be more appropriate to address with an individual privately, we may record and manage these as separate complaints. We will check with you and let you know if so.
- 6.5 The group complaint should be submitted by email or post, to the Customer Relations team. (For contact information please see 2.12).

- 6.6 We will send an acknowledgement to the lead contact within five working days, with a complaint reference number and the name of the investigating officer.
- 6.7 If the lead is not identified in the letter or petition, we will contact the first signatory, to identify the lead contact.
- 6.8 The complaint will be referred to an investigating officer who will:
- co-ordinate the process
 - carry out the investigation
 - conduct research
 - prepare the response
 - discuss findings with the lead contact (where necessary)
 - arrange for the response to be sent to the lead contact on behalf of the group
- 6.9 Group complaints will follow the same escalation for complaints stages, as detailed earlier.

6.10 Conditions and Exceptions

- We will in normal circumstances, accept any group complaint on face value but we reserve the right to verify the signatures or investigate further if we believe it is necessary.
- If we consider the complaint to be discriminatory, abusive or otherwise inappropriate, or unreasonable, it will be rejected, and the lead contact advised in writing.
- If a group complaint is about something that relates to the responsibilities of another organisation, for example a local authority, we will you know if we cannot deal with it and will signpost you to the relevant organisation to deal with through their processes. We will advise the lead contact of this in writing. (See 2.5)

7 Unreasonable behaviour

- 7.1 Occasionally, we may be contacted by someone who is abusive to us, or who is unreasonable. For example:
- Making repeated complaints about the same issue which has already gone through all stages of our complaints process
 - Keep changing what their complaint is about.

- Be unwilling to accept documented evidence.
- Threaten to be/are physically violent or verbally abuse towards staff or those working in our behalf.
- Continual phone calls, emails, or letters without allowing reasonable time for response.

7.2 Everyone should expect to be treated with courtesy and respect, including our colleagues. We understand that people may act out of character when they are distressed, upset or unwell. However, aggressive and abusive behaviour or verbal abuse directed at our colleagues or those that represent us will not be tolerated.

7.3 We reserve the right to refuse to deal with complaints, or to deal with them differently, if the complainant acts unreasonably, or where multiple requests require us to deal with these in a more effective way. This may include but is not limited to contact restrictions. We will always let you know when we will be dealing with a request differently, and the reason why. Where a restriction is put in place, we will keep this under regular review. Once a complaint has already been through both stages of our complaints process we will remind you of your right to approach the Housing Ombudsman.

8 Confidentiality

8.1 We are committed to protecting your right to confidentiality and privacy. We have a duty of care towards keeping your information safe and secure in line with data protection legislation and our data protection policy.

8.2 We treat all complaints confidentially. Even where someone is advocating for you, we will check we have your permission before sharing information. (See 2.6)

8.3 We will always anonymise complaints before reporting.

9 Monitoring and learning

9.1 This policy will be implemented through our internal procedures, which includes systems for recording and monitoring complaints.

9.2 We will send you a survey after closing your complaint and welcome your feedback. We treat complaints as an opportunity to learn from our mistakes and improve our service.

9.3 We monitor complaint numbers, outcomes, satisfaction, and try to identify trends and root causes so we can address weaknesses and opportunities to do things better. As well as our own complaints analysis we also use opportunities to compare ourselves with other organisations. For example where the Housing Ombudsman produce case

studies, spotlight reports, and highlight examples of good practice. All of this information can help us to make improvements to our policies and processes.

- 9.4 We monitor and report extensively, from individual and team meetings, to reports for senior management and our Board. Complaints are also a key feature of our annual Residents report.
- 9.5 We complete an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, and publish the outcome on our website.

10 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 10.1 As a responsible landlord, L&Q take our duties seriously in line with the Equality Act 2010. This includes trying to make reasonable adjustments for people using our services.
- 10.2 When we receive your complaint, we'll check if you have any additional needs or circumstances which we'll need to consider as we investigate your complaint. We understand that things change, so we appreciate you keeping us up to date so that we can respond effectively, and make adjustments where possible, to make sure you can use our complaints service fairly.
- 10.3 Some examples, of what we are able to do include providing accessible formats such as large print, using an interpreter, communicating with an advocate where you request it, and being flexible around response timeframes. Further guidance is available in our policy: Supporting Residents with Additional Needs.

11 Communication

- 11.1 We will publish our Complaints Policy and information about the Housing Ombudsman Service on L&Q's website, and periodically in our resident newsletters. We also publish our annual self-assessment of our Complaints policy and processes on our website.
- 11.2 We include contact details for the Ombudsman in this policy and in our complaint correspondence.
- 11.3 We aim to ensure that everyone in L&Q understands the importance of resolving complaints. All L&Q colleagues receive complaint awareness training as part of their induction and then have regular refreshers. Our complaints policy and related materials are also published internally and accessible to all colleagues. Complaints handlers receive specific and regular training as part of their role, including access to a learning hub for updates and good practice information.

12 Housing Ombudsman and other options

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman Service can be approached by residents throughout the life of a complaint. If the complaint remains unresolved at the end of Stage Two, customers can contact them to request a review.

PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET
Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Complaints about care services

Complaints about care services can be taken to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Any customer receiving care services may choose to access their local council's complaints process instead of ours before approaching the Ombudsman.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
PO Box 47771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Web: www.lgo.org.uk

Consumer Credit Regulated Activity

Complaints about welfare benefits advice can be taken to the Financial Ombudsman Service if you are not satisfied with our response.

The Financial Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square
London
E14 9GE

Telephone: 0800 023 4567

Email: complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Web: www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk/

First-Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber – Residential Property)

Customers can apply if they are a landlord, tenant, freeholder, or leaseholder. The cases that can be considered include:

- Rent increases for fair or market rates
- Leasehold disputes e.g. variable service charges
- Leasehold enfranchisement e.g. extending a lease

Contact details: <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-property-chamber>

Home owners

Those who have bought their home outright can access the Consumer Code, and their contact details are as follows:

The Consumer Code for Home Builders Limited c/o Chartered Trading Standards Institute

1 Sylvan Court, Sylvan Way

Southfields Business Park

Basildon

Essex

SS15 6TH

Email - enquiries@consumercode.co.uk

Website - <https://consumercode.co.uk/contact>

Tel: 0345 608 9797

Building Safety Regulator

Complaints about structural or fire building safety in higher-risk buildings. At any point through the complaint process, the Building Safety Regulator can be contacted using the details below to discuss options available.

Tel - 0300 790 6787

Health and Safety Executive Redgrave Court

Merton Road

Bootle

Merseyside

L20 7HS

Web: www.contact-building-safety-regulator.service.gov.uk

13 Policy controls sheet

Date of approval: 12/04/2025

Approved by: Customer group

Effective date: 01/04/2025

Next Review date: 31/03/26

Policy owned by: Customer Service and Revenue Director

Associated documents: Complaints process, Compensation policy

Main change	Key points
Annual review of Complaints policy and checks against the Housing Ombudsman code.	Further explanation of what's in and out of scope
Change of contact information following office building changes.	More information about building safety complaints to confirm the existing process.
Timeframes to acknowledge, define and respond to complaints	Clarified our approach to anonymous complaints and directly addressed complaints
Reviewed by: Policy team, Head of Strategic Housing and Operations	