

Scottish Social Housing Charter consultation



Respondent's information form

Please make sure you return this form with your response so that we can handle your response properly.

1. Name/organisation

Name of organisation (if any)

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr *Please tick as appropriate*

Surname

Forename

2. Postal address

4 Melville Street

Edinburgh

Postcode EH3 7NS

Phone 0131 240 2964

Email CSA@spsso.org.uk

3. Permissions – I am responding as...

Individual

/

Group/organisation

Please tick as appropriate

- (a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library or on the Scottish Government website or both)?

Please tick your choice Yes No

- (b) If yes, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

- (c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library or on the Scottish Government website or both).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick your choice Yes No

- (d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we need your permission to do so. Are you happy for the Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick your choice Yes No

Consultation questions

We listened to what you told us at the roadshow events, on our website, and in your responses to the discussion paper, and we think we have identified all the important areas that the Charter should cover.

1. Have we missed out any areas that the Charter should cover? If so, please tell us.

No.

The customer/landlord relationship

We want the outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of the customer/landlord relationship. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.

2a. Do you agree with the 'participation' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

2b. Is the 'participation' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

3a. Do you agree with the ‘communication and customer services’ outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

The SPSO welcomes the inclusion of outcomes relating to complaints handling in the ‘communication and customer services’ section. This highlights the importance of valuing complaints and puts customers at the heart of the process. These three outcomes will give tenants and other customers the assurance that housing providers are working to resolve their complaints as quickly as possible and learn from them in order to improve services. The SPSO is working towards these goals through the development of a streamlined, standardised complaints procedure for the housing sector.

The SPSO, through its Complaints Standards Authority (CSA), is working in consultation with housing providers and local authorities to develop a single model complaints handling procedure (CHP) for the housing sector and one for local authorities. These will help social housing providers to deliver efficient and effective procedures that enable them to identify problems and deliver service improvements. There is a legislative requirement for social housing providers to adopt the CSA’s model CHP for their sector, and the SSHC outcomes will provide a vital mechanism for monitoring the adoption and implementation of the model CHP for the housing sector. We therefore strongly support the inclusion of these outcomes that will reflect the delivery of best practice and facilitate benchmarking in complaints across the sector.

3b. Is the ‘communication and customer services’ outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

Looking in more detail at the three outcomes on complaints, the first outcome relating to access to efficient and effective complaints procedures shows tenants what they can expect from their landlord. Through implementing the model CHPs being developed by the SPSO (for the housing and local authority sectors), landlords will be able to show that they have achieved this outcome. It will, therefore, be a fairly straight forward step to develop a measure that is meaningful and easy for RSLs to report on.

In relation to the outcome on using complaints and experiences of performance failures to improve services, we welcome the focus on learning

from complaints. This will require landlords to implement systems which record all complaints and use these to identify and deliver service improvements. While we welcome the focus on ensuring this information is passed onto tenants, and indeed we see information sharing as an important means of communicating a culture of valuing complaints, we are also aware that this may be difficult to accurately measure. It may be more effective to ensure that that information that shows the way in which complaints have been used to identify service improvements is regularly published and disseminated to tenants..

The third 'complaints' outcome relates to satisfaction that complaints are dealt with simply, fairly, in a timely manner and as close to the frontline as possible. We welcome the focus on dealing with complaints in this way, but have some reservations about the use of satisfaction as part of the overall outcome. Although tenant satisfaction is of course an important measure of whether complaints are dealt with 'simply, fairly, in a timely manner and as close to the frontline as possible' it is only one measure. Whether complaints are dealt with in the desired way can also be assessed using a number of other measures, including, for example, assessing the time taken to resolve complaints or monitoring the proportion of complaints resolved by an organisation at early stages of the process.

The reliability of measuring complainant satisfaction is a complex area. The key question is who is consulted. If a landlord asks all their tenants for their feedback, many will not have direct experience of the complaints process. If they ask only those that have been involved in dealing with a complaint then their response could be influenced by the outcome of their complaint. Whilst there are ways to overcome this, care needs to be taken not to develop an outcome which proves difficult for most or all landlords to achieve a positive outcome.

Given this, it is our assessment that these three outcomes could be reduced to just two, by focusing on access to efficient and effective procedures that focus on early resolution and 'getting it right first time'; and the use of complaints to improve services and informing people of this. The measuring of tenant satisfaction in relation to complaints is very important as an indicator or measure but, in our view, could be built into the measures used to assess these two outcomes.

Quality of housing and the environment

We want the outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of the quality of housing and the environment. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.

4a. Do you agree with the 'housing quality' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

4b. Is the 'housing quality' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

5a. Do you agree with the 'repairs, maintenance and improvements' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

5b. Is the 'repairs, maintenance and improvements' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

6a. Do you agree with the 'estate management' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

6b. Is the 'estate management' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

Access to housing and support

We want the outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of access to housing and support. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.

7a. Do you agree with the 'housing options' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

7b. Is the 'housing options' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

8a. Do you agree with the 'access to social housing' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

8b. Is the 'access to social housing' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

9a. Do you agree with the 'homeless people' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

9b. Is the 'homeless people' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

10a. Do you agree with the 'tenancy sustainment' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

10b. Is the 'tenancy sustainment' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

11a. Do you agree with the ‘anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes’ outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

11b. Is the ‘anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes’ outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

Getting good value from rents and service charges

We want the outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of getting good value from rents and service charges. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.

12a. Do you agree with the ‘value for money’ outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

12b. Is the 'value for money' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

13a. Do you agree with the 'rents and service charges' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

13b. Is the 'rents and service charges' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

14a. Do you agree with the 'transparency' outcome?

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

Yes No

No comment.

14b. Is the 'transparency' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

Other customers

We want the outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of other customers. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.

15a. Do you agree with the 'services for Gypsies/Travellers' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

15b. Is the 'services for Gypsies/Travellers' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

16a. Do you agree with the 'other customers' outcome?

Yes No

If yes, please use the box to provide any comments. If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

16b. Is the 'other customers' outcome clear and understandable?

Yes No

If no, please tell us why.

No comment.

In conclusion

17. Do you think that a good landlord should be able to achieve these outcomes?

Yes No

Please explain your answer.

Our comments are restricted to the outcomes relevant to complaints and the work of the SPSO as outlined above.

We feel that these outcomes are achievable by all landlords. As outlined above the SPSO, through its Complaints Standards Authority, is currently

developing a model Complaints Handling Procedure (model CHP) for the RSL sector which landlords will be required to adopt in the near future. This CHP will help social housing providers to deliver efficient and effective procedures that enable them to identify problems and deliver service improvements. The emphasis is firmly on quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by empowered and well trained staff. We believe that adopting this procedures will help RSLs achieve the outcomes outlined.

18. Do you wish to add anything that is not covered by the questions above?

We strongly support the SSHC as a whole which we feel will benefit tenants by providing a coherent, tenant-focused framework for the future regulation of the RSL sector.

Key to the effective implementation of the SSHC will be the measures developed to assess RSLs against the charter outcomes. In relation to the outcomes relating to complaints we very much welcome future discussion with the Scottish Government, the Scottish Housing Regulator and all other stakeholders on how these measures can be aligned with the work of the Complaints Standards Authority in improving complaints handling in the housing sector through the development of a standardised, streamlined model complaints handling procedure.