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## 1. Introduction

This document outlines our commitment to dealing with complaints regarding the services provided by Sustainable Business Services. It also provides information about how we manage, respond to and learn from any complaints we receive about our service.

Sustainable Business Services will treat complaints seriously and ensure that complaints, concerns, and issues raised by customers are properly investigated in an unbiased, transparent, timely, and appropriate manner. Each complaint will be allocated to a dedicated complaints handler. The outcome of any investigation, along with any resulting actions will be explained to the complainant by the allocated complaints handler.

Sustainable Business Services identify when formulating this policy, highlighted the need to ensure that the complainant understands:

- how to complain;
- to feel confident that their complaint will be dealt with seriously;
- understands that their concerns will be investigated, and they will be informed of the outcome of any investigation;
- trust that Sustainable Business Services will learn from complaints and feedback received.

## 2. Aims

We are committed to doing the right thing as a core principal of our values and vision. We will ensure that customers can raise concerns or make a complaint about our service and that those concerns, and complaints are fully investigated. When dealing with complaints we aim to adhere to:

- Evidence based investigations and responses. This will include providing a consistent approach to the management and investigation of complaints.
- Logical and rational in our approach.
- Respond to complaints and concerns within appropriate timeframes.
- Provide opportunities for people to offer feedback on the quality of service provided.
- Provide a level of detail appropriate to the seriousness of the complaint.
- Identify the causes of complaints and to take action to prevent recurrences.

### **3. Definition of a complaint or concern**

A complaint or concern is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service carried out by Sustainable Business Services, either verbal or written, and whether justified or not, which requires a response.

### **4. Who can make a complaint**

A complaint may be made by the “Decision Maker” of the business in question, or by another employee of the business, where the Decision Maker has given consent for the employee to act on their behalf. A Decision Maker is the main person within a business responsible for decisions and who has the requisite authority to make those decisions.

In the case of an alternative employee pursuing a complaint on behalf of the business concerned we will request that the business’ Decision Maker provides us with written (whether by letter or email) confirmation that they wish for us to communicate with their chosen individual in respect of the complaint, and that they provide authorisation for complaint outcomes and any associated evidence to be shared with their chosen individual. This will be documented within the appropriate businesses notes within the complaint system.

Sustainable Business Services will not accept complaints made by third party brokers on behalf of a customer.

### **5. Complaints that cannot be dealt with under this policy**

The following complaints will not be dealt with under the Sustainable Business Services Complaints Policy:

- A complaint made by an employee about any matter relating to their employment.
- A complaint, the subject matter of which has previously been investigated under the policy.

### **6. How to complain**

Information about giving feedback or making a complaint can be found on the Sustainable Business Services website. A complaint can be made:

By telephone: 0191 8155200

By email: [complaints@sustainablebusinessservices.co.uk](mailto:complaints@sustainablebusinessservices.co.uk)

By Post: Sustainable Business Services, 38 Gillas Lane, Houghton Le Spring DH5 8EE

If we are unable to resolve your complaint directly, or if it has been unresolved for more than eight weeks you can escalate your complaint to the free and impartial Ombudsman Service;

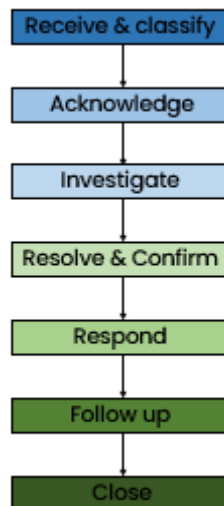
Post: Ombudsman Services: Energy, P.O. Box 966, Warrington, WA4 9DF

Phone: 0330 440 1624

Email: [enquiry@ombudsman-services.org](mailto:enquiry@ombudsman-services.org)

## 7. The Sustainable Business Services complaint process

The following steps must be followed for all customer complaints received by staff at Sustainable Business Services Ltd, regardless of department or level of complaint.



All complaints will be acknowledged on the day the complaint is allocated to a complaint handler (the acknowledgement will usually be via email or telephone call but can be via letter in some circumstances although this should be the exception rather than the norm). An offer should be made to discuss with the complainant the following:

- The complaint process.
- Timescales for responding.
- Expectations and desired outcome (if unclear) of the complainant.

The complainant will be asked to provide express consent to allow Sustainable Business Services to handle the complaint in the event that the complaint requires support or investigation from parties or organisations outside of Sustainable Business Services, such as energy suppliers. The complainant will be provided with a named contact (and their contact details) who will be their point of contact throughout the complaints process. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, the named contact needs to be changed during the life of the complaint, the new contact will ensure that the customer is made aware of the change of contact and provided with their contact details.

The complaint handler will capture relevant information about the case and ensure this is accurately recorded. The complainant can expect that:

- They will be kept up to date with the progress of their complaint.
- If a case has passed the 10-working day Customer Service target (or the timescale agreed with the complainant separately), the complainant should receive an update every 10 working days thereafter the target has been surpassed. This could be by telephone, email or letter but the format should be agreed with the complainant in advance.
- They can expect to receive a quality response which advises of the method of investigation, outcome and conclusion.

Our formal signed complaint responses will ordinarily be conveyed via letter (email correspondence will only be responded to by email when the complainant has expressly requested this as their preferred method of communication and security measures will be implemented in line with office policy to protect personal information sent via email). The complaints handler will include information on the next stages of the complaint's procedure should the complainant wish to take matters further. The response will include:

- An explanation of how the complaint has been investigated.
- An explanation based on facts.
- Whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld.
- The conclusions reached in relation to the complaint
- Where appropriate, a proposed resolution.
- Information and contact details of the Ombudsman and Citizens Advice Bureau as appropriate is the next stage of the complaints process.

We are committed to providing quality responses and, as such, we will carry out regular reviews of our complaints handling processes, including internal quality monitoring and peer reviews. If at any time during the complaint process the complainant or their chosen representative decides that they would like to withdraw the complaint, this request can be made either verbally or in writing. The withdrawal of a complaint will be acknowledged in writing.

## **8. Roles and Responsibilities**

Appendix 1 outlines our roles and responsibilities in detail.

## **9. Referrals to Ombudsman Services Energy Broker ADR Scheme**

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint investigation by Sustainable Business Services or if the complaint remains unresolved for more than eight weeks, they can approach the Ombudsmen for advice. Ombudsmen Services is an impartial free service available. Sustainable Business Services will provide information on how to contact the ADR Scheme when issuing its final written response.

## **10. Record Keeping**

Sustainable Business Services will keep clear and accurate records of complaints is important and these should be retained for a period of six (6) years.

## **11. Monitoring and Reporting**

The Sustainable Business Services Director uses complaints and feedback to improve its internal processes. A monthly report is produced which details:

- Number of complaints received.
- Number of complaints received considered to be based on solid evidence or good reasons (complaints upheld).
- Issues and key themes identified.
- Training and procedure issues identified.
- Actions implemented, to improve services as a result of the complaints made.

## 12. Distribution

Sustainable Business Services will ensure that appropriate information is available in relation to the complaints policy and procedures.

## 13. Quality Assurance

Sustainable Business Services will monitor both the effectiveness of the complaints process, and how complaints information is being used to improve the services offered. Specifically, the Director will aim to provide a system to:

- Disseminate learning from complaints across the relevant parts of the organisation.
- Include the use of complaints procedures as a measure of performance and quality.
- Use complaints intelligence to provide relevant information to managers for further dissemination.

## 14. Whistleblowing

The law provides protection for colleagues who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. These are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by a colleague who has a reasonable belief that:

A criminal offence; A miscarriage of justice; An act of negligence An act of bribery, financial fraud or mismanagement; An act creating risk to health and safety; An act causing damage to the environment; Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information; A breach of any other legal obligation; or Concealment of any of the above; is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed.

It is not necessary for the colleague to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed – a reasonable belief is sufficient. Colleagues do not have responsibility for investigating the matter – it is the Company's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

A colleague who makes such a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because they have made a disclosure.

If colleagues are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, they should seek advice from their Line Manager, Compliance, or the Company Director. If colleagues are still unsure, they can also seek advice from the Whistleblowing Hotline. United Kingdom 0800 609 172.

## **15. Compliance and Review**

Compliance with the policy and procedures laid down in this document will be monitored by the Director, James Staniforth. The Director is responsible for the monitoring, revision and updating of this document. This policy will be kept under review in light of operational experience, with the first review taking place one year from issue.

## **16. Appendix 1: Allocation of Responsibilities**

The Director will:

- Explain the complaints process to a complainant
- Ensuring complaints logs are up to date and accurate for reporting purposes.
- Attempt to resolve informally wherever appropriate to do so.
- Investigate and respond to complaints.
- Recording details of the complaint securely as well as the outcome, and response letters.
- Provide relevant reporting to the business.
- Have awareness of, and log complaints.
- Management of the procedures for handling complaints and concerns through the departments within Sustainable Business Services.
- Ensure information collected from complaints is reported to the appropriate departments to enable organisational review, learning and development.
- Consider emerging themes and learning from the complaints reporting mechanism. Identify service improvements/complaint trends as a result of complaints and concerns being raised.