

Appendix A: County Town Homes complaints procedure



We are committed to creating excellent homes for the people of Staffordshire and Shropshire. These homes come with a 10-year insurance backed warranty, for added peace of mind. Whether we are building our homes or taking care of our customers, we apply the same high standards of care.

We hope that our customers will be completely satisfied with their new home but we understand that sometimes things can go wrong and not live up to expectations. If this happens, we want to resolve any issues quickly and put things right.

Our clear complaints procedure makes sure that concerns can be address professionally and efficiently. This complaints procedure has been developed in line with the Consumer Code for Home Builders and you can find more details at www.consumercode.co.uk

Using our complaints procedure or the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS) does not affect your usual legal rights. You can find further details about the IDRS in section 5.

1. Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure has been developed for customers who purchase a home from County Town Homes. It is applicable to the customer for two years from the date of their reservation or legal completion - whichever is later.

Complaints can be made if the home buyer believes there has been a breach of the Consumer Code for Home Builders requirements.

Please note that this procedure does not apply to homes brought under a shared ownership scheme. For complaints about shared ownership homes, please refer to the Housing Plus Group complaints policy.

Resales

This complaints procedure applies to second and subsequent owners of a new home built by County Town Homes only if matters are reported within two years of the date of legal completion of the original new home purchase.

2. Making a complaint

Although we hope our customers do not have any problems after they move into their new home, our commitment continues after the sale has been completed.

Customers can make a complaint about any issue, including snags, defective/faulty/incomplete works or how we propose to fix a problem.

Complaints can be made in the following ways:

Call the customer care team: 01785 312 333

Email: feedback@countytownhomes.co.uk

Write to: Customer complaints and feedback team, County Town Homes (Stafford) Limited, Acton Court, Acton Gate, Stafford, ST18 9AP

3. The complaints process

We will issue a written acknowledgement of your complaint within 5 working days of receiving it.

We will aim to provide a response to your complaint within 10 working days of your complaint being made. If your concerns cannot be addressed within that time or further investigation is needed to determine our decision to accept or reject the complaint, you will be kept informed. You will be told the reasons for the delay and given a realistic new timescale, usually a further 10 working days.

Our response will explain whether the complaint has been accepted and what will be done to resolve the issue. We will also provide an estimated time for work to be completed.

If a complaint is rejected, we will provide the reasons why.

We will aim to resolve complaints within 56 calendar days. If we are unable to do this, you can raise a dispute.

4. Dispute

If we are unable to resolve issues to a complainant's satisfaction, the complaint will become a dispute. At this point, you can refer your complaint to the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme, the home warranty provider or both, as appropriate.

You can make a referral if the following applies:

- ◆ You do not receive any response from us within 20 working days of a complaint being made
- ◆ We cannot work together to reach a suitable resolution to the complaint within 56 calendar days of the complaint being made
- ◆ The defective, faulty or incomplete works - or issues arising from them - are not resolved within the timescales agreed between the buyer and the builder

5. Home warranty provider

Before contacting your home warranty provider, you must have made a complaint to the home builder and completed their complaints process.

If it is appropriate, the home warranty provider will:

- ◆ Deal with the complaint under its home warranty policy.
- ◆ Offer you the opportunity to refer the complaint to the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme, if the complaint falls outside its own dispute resolution scheme. You can then decide if you want to refer your complaint further.

6. Consumer Code Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme

A dispute may arise if a buyer believes that the builder has failed to meet Consumer Code requirements and the issue falls outside the home warranty provider's resolution scheme for defects or damage. The dispute could be resolved if the home buyer applies to the Consumer Code Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme.

A trained adjudicator will review written submissions from both parties and give a decision based on their findings. The adjudicator will decide whether a builder has breached the Consumer Code requirements and if so, whether the buyer has been caused detriment or suffered financial loss.

A dispute may be brought to the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme after 56 calendar days from the day that the buyer first raised the complaint with the builder. It cannot be no more than 12 months after the builder's final response to the complaint.

The warranty provider will provide an application form and a set of adjudication rules so that your complaint can be referred to the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme.

7. Accessibility

We will acknowledge the needs of vulnerable customers and help them to make informed decisions.

If a customer needs help making a complaint, we will provide help and support. If preferred, customers can ask for assistance from external agencies, including Citizens Advice.

We will always make reasonable adjustments and follow the Equality Act 2010, which will enable customers to report their concerns and follow the process. We will consider how we can make reasonable adjustments for a complainant, if required. More information can be found in the reasonable adjustments policy.

Customers might prefer to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf and to be represented or accompanied to any meeting with the developer. The representative could be an advocate, carer, family member, elected member, agency or professional body. If this is the case, we must receive or hold signed authority from the customer, which authorises us to work with the appointed advocate or representative.

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