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### APPROVED BY:



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities



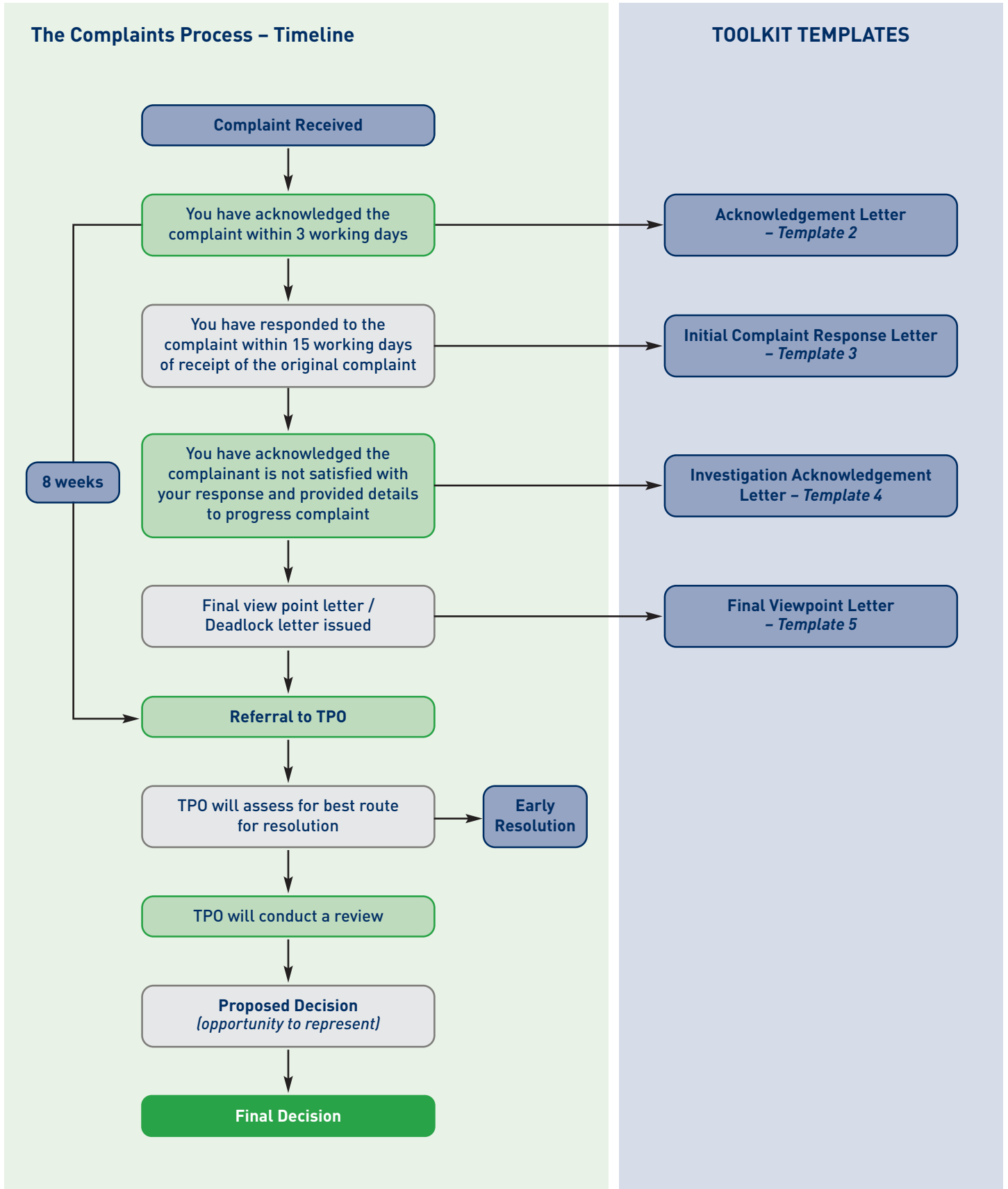
The Property Ombudsman Milford House, 43-55 Milford Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2BP

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**1. AGENT GUIDE – The Complaints Process**



## 2. How to Handle Complaints...and Resolve Them

TPO has been dealing with disputes between consumers and property agents since 1990. In that time, we have seen many complaints that could have been resolved by the agent without referral to TPO. The following tips are based on that experience.

**Remember:** Handling a complaint properly will reduce the chance of referral to the Ombudsman or the courts, save you time and maintain (and sometimes even enhance) your reputation.

### Acknowledge the complaint

Whether you think the complaint is justified or not, the consumer will always consider that it is. Acknowledge the complaint and explain what you will do next and by when. **NEVER, EVER IGNORE A COMPLAINT.**

### Understand the complaint

Consider the needs of the individual and, where appropriate, make reasonable adjustments for consumers who might be disadvantaged because of factors such as their age, infirmity, disability, lack of knowledge, lack of linguistic or numeracy ability, economic circumstances, bereavement or do not speak English as a first language.

Take the time to make sure you fully understand the issues being raised. If you address all the issues at the outset you are more likely to resolve matters there and then.

### Be honest

Everyone knows that everyone makes mistakes. If you have made a mistake, acknowledge and apologise for the error. Do not attempt to avoid, gloss over or omit issues central to the complaint.

### Be thorough

Spend the time investigating the issues. Complainants will know when you have not investigated their concerns properly – this will cause further dissatisfaction and the dispute to escalate.

### Be polite and professional

Regardless of the complainant's manner always be polite and professional when responding. Never use inappropriate or provocative language, or make personal allegations.

### Take complaints off-line

Consumers may complain via social media platforms. Regularly check your social accounts and always take complaints off-line by acknowledging the contact and then directly contacting the consumer.

### Don't be afraid of complaints

If you want to grow as a business, you need to know when you get it wrong! Make it easy for consumers to contact you and take active steps to change processes or behaviour where shortcomings are found.



### 3. In-house Complaints Procedure – TEMPLATE 1

We are committed to providing a professional service to all our clients and customers. If things go wrong, we need you to tell us about them. This will help us to resolve issues as soon as possible and improve our service going forward.

If you have a complaint, please put this in writing (letter or email) to us. We will acknowledge receipt and respond in line with the timescales and stages set out below. The process should take no longer than 8 weeks.

We consider the needs of the individual and, where appropriate, make reasonable adjustments for consumers who might be disadvantaged because of factors such as their age, infirmity, disability, lack of knowledge, lack of linguistic or numeracy ability, economic circumstances, bereavement or do not speak English as a first language.

#### Stage 1 – Your Complaint

Please put your complaint in writing either by letter or email and address it to:

\_\_\_\_\_ (including role).

Please include as much detail as possible, including dates, names of any members of staff you dealt with, and where you are able to enclosing/attaching any supporting evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Remember to include details for complaints from a 3rd party or contractor if they differ from your usual complaints procedure.**

#### Stage 2 – Our Acknowledgement

Your complaint will be acknowledged and we will start our in-house complaints process.

**Timescale:** Within 3 working days of receiving your complaint.

#### Stage 3 – Our Investigation

Your complaint will be investigated and \_\_\_\_\_ (relevant member of staff if applicable) will provide a formal written response addressing your specific complaints and proposing resolutions where appropriate.

**Timescale:** Within 15 working days of receiving your complaint.

#### Stage 4 – Our Final Investigation

If you remain unhappy, your subsequent complaint will be investigated and \_\_\_\_\_ (relevant member of staff if applicable) will provide a written response outlining our final position and proposing resolutions where appropriate.

**Timescale:** Within 15 working days of receiving your subsequent complaint.

#### Stage 5 – The Property Ombudsman

Should you remain dissatisfied after receiving our final viewpoint letter, you can refer your complaint to:

The Property Ombudsman  
 Milford House, 43-55 Milford Street, Salisbury SP1 2BP  
 01722 333306 | www.tpos.co.uk admin@tpos.co.uk

**Timescale:** You must refer your complaint to The Property Ombudsman within 12 months of the date of our final viewpoint letter.

**If we have not addressed your complaints within eight weeks, you can refer your complaint to the Ombudsman. No charge will be made for any complaint we handle.**



#### 4. Acknowledgement Letter – TEMPLATE 2

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ *(Complainants name)*

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Property Address)*

Thank you for your email/letter dated \_\_\_\_\_ *(date)*, we are sorry you are dissatisfied with the service provided.

We appreciate you raising your concerns and \_\_\_\_\_ *(company name/member of staff)*  
will provide a formal investigation into your complaints by \_\_\_\_\_ *(date)*. Should more time be required to  
investigate the issues raised \_\_\_\_\_ *(member of staff name)* will contact you to explain why.

It is never our intention to give our customers anything other than an excellent customer experience and I am sorry you have felt this was not the case for you this time.

To refresh you about how we will deal with complaints and the steps involved, I have enclosed a copy of our internal Complaints Procedure. Please take the time to read this.

Thank you for your patience.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Name)*

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Job title)*



## 5. Initial Complaint Response – TEMPLATE 3

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ *(Complainants name)*

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Property Address)*

Thank you for your email/letter of \_\_\_\_\_ *(date)*, raising your complaint to us.

Having considered the issues you have raised with us, I have summarised below what I understand your specific complaints to be and what you feel would resolve the matter for you:

- A \_\_\_\_\_
- B \_\_\_\_\_
- C \_\_\_\_\_
- D \_\_\_\_\_

If there are any issues you feel have not been covered above, please let me know within 48 hours so I can address these complaints too.

Based on the evidence available to me, I have concluded that....

*Please explain the company's position with regard to the complaints listed above. Include any resolution where possible.*

*You may like to enclose supporting evidence of your argument if appropriate.*

I hope this resolves the issues you have raised with us. If you are dissatisfied with this response you may escalate your response to \_\_\_\_\_ *(member of staff name)* who will conduct a separate review of your complaint within 15 working days of receiving your escalated complaint.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Name)*

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Job title)*



## 6. Investigation Acknowledgement Letter – TEMPLATE 4

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ *(Complainants name)*

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Property Address)*

Thank you for your email/letter of \_\_\_\_\_ *(date)*, in response to our initial investigation into your complaint. We are sorry you are not satisfied with the response received. Customer satisfaction and service provided is something we value and we would like to resolve your complaint.

Your complaint will be independently investigated by \_\_\_\_\_ *(name of member of staff)*, who will provide a final viewpoint letter/deadlock letter on the issues you have raised. *[delete if not the final stage]*.

This will be provided to you by \_\_\_\_\_ *(date)*.

Should more time be required to investigate the issues raised \_\_\_\_\_ *(name of member of staff)* will contact you to explain why.

To refresh you about how we will deal with complaints and the steps involved, I have enclosed a copy of our internal Complaints Procedure. Please take the time to read this.

Thank you for your patience.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Name)*

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Job title)*



## 7. Final Viewpoint Letter – TEMPLATE 5

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ *(Complainants name)*

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Property Address)*

Thank you for your email/letter of \_\_\_\_\_ *(date)*, regarding your complaint.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ *(name of member of staff)* and I have looked at your subsequent complaint.

We are sorry you have felt the need to escalate your complaint to this stage and that we have not yet been able to resolve the matter. It is never our intention to give our customers anything other than an excellent customer experience and I am sorry you have felt this was not the case for you this time. You can be assured that we take all issues raised to us very seriously.

I understand that you remain dissatisfied with our response to your complaint. Having thoroughly considered the complaints and correspondence to date, I understand your specific complaints to be:

- A \_\_\_\_\_
- B \_\_\_\_\_
- C \_\_\_\_\_
- D \_\_\_\_\_

Based on the evidence available to me, I have concluded that....

*Please explain the company's final position with regard to the complaints listed above.*

*You may like to enclose supporting evidence of your argument if appropriate.*



I would like to offer our sincere apologies that you felt the service provided to you fell below the standards expected of us. I have taken on board all of your comments and will use this feedback to review our procedures, practices and service levels and make amends where needed. I thank you for taking the time to bring these matters to our attention. As a business we welcome all feedback, both negative and positive.

This represents the final viewpoint of \_\_\_\_\_ (*Company Name*).

I hope that I have been able to resolve the matter to your satisfaction. If, however, you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to refer your complaint to The Property Ombudsman, details of which can be found below.

**The Property Ombudsman**

Milford House  
43-55 Milford Street  
Salisbury  
SP1 2BP  
01722 333 306  
admin@tpos.co.uk  
www.tpos.co.uk

Please be aware that you have up to **12 months** from the date of this email/letter to refer your complaint to the Ombudsman in writing, although it is preferable that you do so as soon as possible if you wish to pursue this matter further. I have enclosed The Property Ombudsman's Consumer Guide leaflet for your information.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_ (*Name*)

\_\_\_\_\_ (*Job title*)