

# **Complaints Compensation Policy Consultation Report**



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## Aims of the consultation

It is important that we hear from as many people as possible who live and work in Sandwell every day when developing our policies.

This consultation was designed and completed to obtain feedback from residents, tenants, employees and councillors on our Complaints Compensation Policy prior to its publication. Feedback received in this consultation will inform the final version of the Complaints Compensation Policy.

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework that outlines how and when compensation will be provided to tenants and residents.

The Complaints Compensation Policy details our offer of reasonable compensation, to tenants and residents who have been negatively affected by failures in our service delivery.

## Approach to the consultation

Please note that the analysis of feedback found in this report pertains only to survey feedback received in the public consultation.

### **Promoting draft policies within resident engagement groups:**

The Council distributed the policy and raised awareness through two Housing Policy engagement sessions, as well as with various resident engagement groups, including the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group and members of the Sandwell Community Information & Participation Service (SCIPs).

### **Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities (SNAC) Board**

Additionally, feedback was provided by elected members regarding operational delivery when the policy was presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny (SNAC) Board on 6th February 2025. These suggestions have been incorporated into the final drafts of the policy documents.

## Online Consultation

Online consultation took place over a 4-week period, from February 5th to March 5th 2025. The survey included a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions, allowing respondents to provide feedback on the policy proposals, assess the document's accessibility for residents, and highlight any missing elements. Based on the feedback received, revisions will be made to the policy document where necessary before it is finalised and presented for Cabinet approval in April 2025.

## Summary of consultation results

The consultation findings highlight mixed support for the Complaints Compensation Policy, with exactly half of respondents agreeing with the aims of the policy.

Those that disagreed with the aims of the policy raised concerns about its effectiveness and the council's commitment to ensuring fair compensation for tenants. Some respondents stated that the council's approach was more focused on minimising payments rather than addressing legitimate concerns.

Respondents were divided on the questions regarding the policy's clarity. While some respondents found the language straightforward and appreciated the outlined payment processes, others emphasised a disconnect between the policy's promises and actual practice. A concern for respondents was the lack of awareness among tenants about compensation entitlements. Neither was a clear consensus reached on whether the policy sufficiently explains compensation exemptions.

Respondents were clear in their desire for paper copies of the policy to be provided for tenants, especially those without digital access.

## Consultation questions and responses

As of March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025, this consultation had **10** responses.

### **Please tick which best describes your interest in this consultation.**

9 of 10 respondents (90%) were interested in this consultation as they are a tenant living in socially rented accommodation. 1 respondent (10%) selected the 'prefer not to say' option.

### **Please state which type of accommodation you live in.**

4 respondents (40%) live in a house.

5 respondents (50%) live in flats.

1 respondent (10%) lives in a maisonette.

### **Please state your age group.**

1 respondent (10%) is aged 18-24.

1 respondent (10%) is aged 25-34.

6 respondents (60%) are aged 35-59.

1 respondent (10%) is aged 65 and over.

1 respondent (10%) selected 'prefer not to say'.

### **What is your gender?**

9 respondents (90%) identified as female.

1 respondent (10%) selected 'prefer not to say'.

### **What best describes your ethnicity?**

5 respondents (50%) are White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British.

1 respondent (10%) is Other Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups.

1 respondent (10%) is Caribbean.

1 respondent (10%) is Indian.

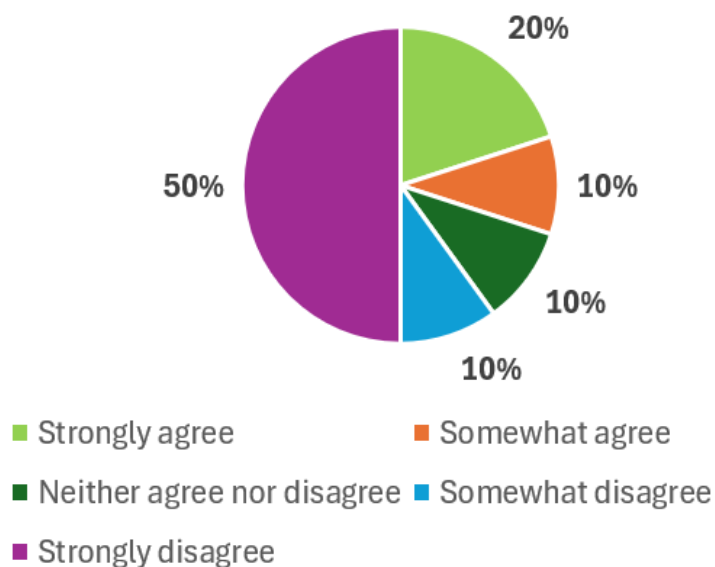
2 respondents (20%) selected 'prefer not to say'.

**For all questions, respondents could select one of the following answers:**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

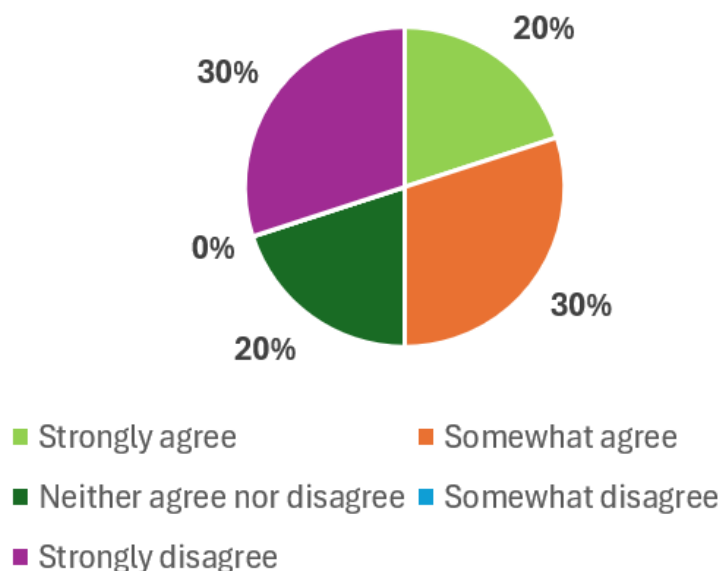
**1) Before reading this policy, I was aware of the support Sandwell Council provides to tenants and leaseholders regarding complaints compensation.**

The majority of respondents (60%) disagreed with the statement, with half of respondents (50%), strongly disagreeing.



## 2) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the aims of the Complaints Compensation Policy?

Respondents provided mixed feedback on the aims of the Complaints Compensation Policy, with half of respondents (50%) agreeing with the aims. 3 respondents (30%) strongly disagreed with the aims of the Complaints Compensation Policy.



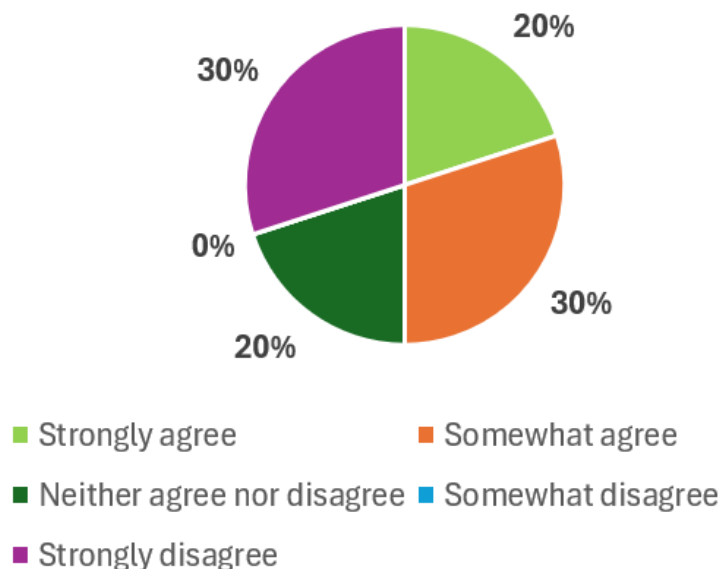
Respondents who strongly disagreed with the aims of the Complaints Compensation Policy, suggested that the complaints service itself was unsatisfactory as the council 'offer pitiful compensation to get you off their backs' and 'do not make checks' to evaluate compensation requirements but make decisions 'solely based on their own conclusions'. Another respondent added that they had doubts over the usefulness of the policy as 'they (Sandwell Council) won't improve'.

One respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed said that the 'service needs reviewing with a view to reduce the number of complaints coming through to the council'.

A respondent who agreed with the aims of the policy, did so because 'the complaints compensation process needs to be simplified, and this policy goes some way to achieve that'. This respondent also emphasised that the council must be 'mindful of those tenants who may prefer paper copies of the information offered and those whose first language is not English'.

### 3) The policy is clear about what type of compensation will be offered to complainants.

Respondents again provided mixed feedback to question 3, with half of respondents (50%) agreeing. 3 respondents (30%) strongly disagreed.



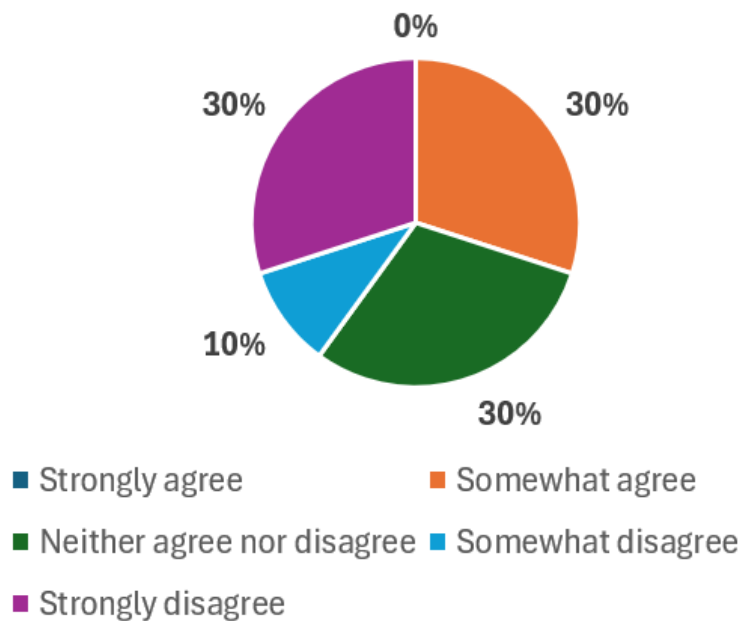
Those that agreed, did so as 'clear and plain language' is used and because 'discretionary payments and quantitative payments are discussed within the policy, outlining the circumstances of when a compensation payment is justified'.

However, those that disagreed highlighted a disconnect between 'what it (the policy) says and what it (the council) does'. Another respondent echoed this sentiment, adding that the council 'doesn't go through with it'. Another respondent who strongly disagreed stated that they have 'never been informed about any possible compensation'.



#### 4) The policy is clear about the circumstances under which compensation will be offered to complainants.

Overall, no consensus was reached on the policies clarity regarding compensation circumstances. 3 respondents (30%) agreed, 4 respondents (40%) disagreed and 3 respondents (30%) neither agreed nor disagreed'.

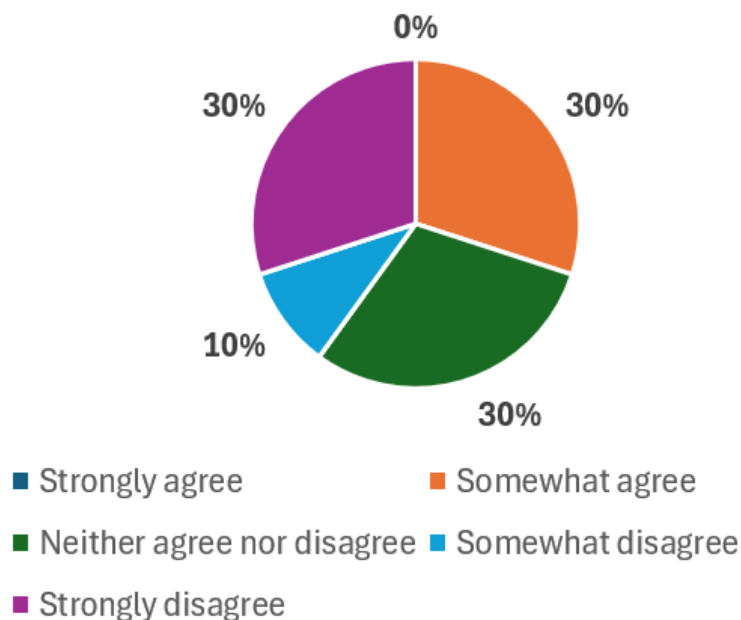


Those that agreed, did so as the policy is 'clear', using 'plain language', and because the policy 'clearly outlines' the process of receiving compensation 'in the event of loss, suffering inconvenience to a tenant or leaseholder'.

A respondent who disagreed stated that the policy only 'outlines basic concepts' and another added that they 'have not been informed of anything'.

**5) The policy clearly explains how and when exemptions for complaints compensation will be applied.**

Respondents again gave mixed feedback to question 5, with 3 respondents (30%) agreeing, 4 respondents (40%) disagreeing, and 3 respondents (30%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing'.

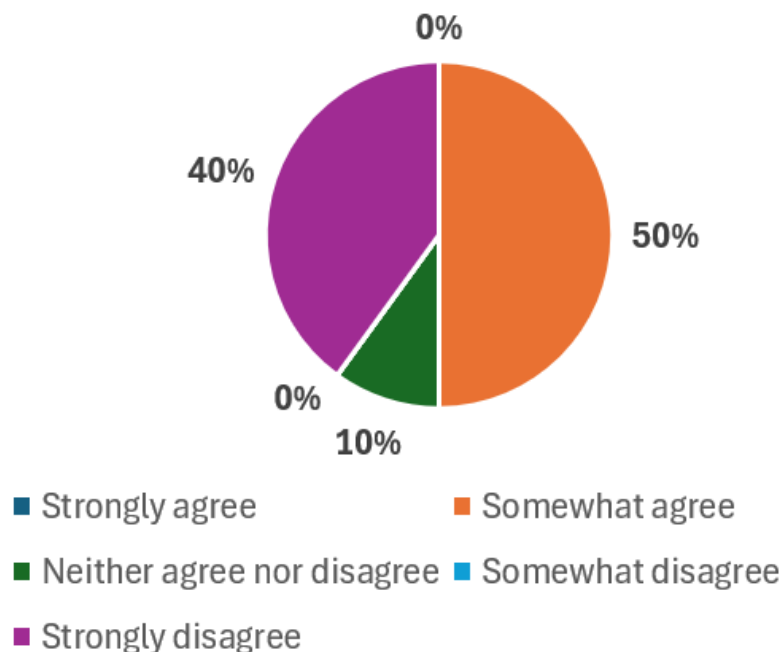


Respondents who agreed did so as 'clear and plain language' is used and because the policy 'clearly outlines when compensation will not be considered in 4.6.1 to 4.8'.

A respondent who disagreed, stated that 'everything will end up being exempt, and you (Sandwell Council) won't pay anybody anything'.

## 6) To what extent to you agree or disagree that the majority of service users will understand this policy?

No clear consensus was again obtained from respondent's feedback, with half of respondents (50%) agreeing and 4 respondents (40%) disagreeing.



A respondent that agreed also emphasised that 'all information should also be available in paper form', and another added that while the majority of service users will understand this policy, they will 'only read it if they are not making progress with a process that does not work, (and as such), want to request compensation from Sandwell Council'.

## 7) Any other comments

Respondents were then asked if they had any additional comments on the policy.

Two respondents provided extra comments on the policy and the complaints process more generally. One respondent said that 'some tenants suffer with mental health issues' and employees of Sandwell council must take this seriously. Another respondent said that 'if complaints were reviewed and monitored, compensation payments may reduce'.



## Actions taken in response to consultation feedback

During the consultation, respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on the reasoning behind their answers to the multiple choice questions. Question 7 also asked for any additional feedback on the policy not otherwise stated. Feedback received from respondents can be found in the table below, in addition to our response and any actions we are taking.

What respondents told us	Our response	Relevant actions	Timescale
The Complaints Compensation Policy should specify clear timescales for when tenants are eligible to file a complaint, as well as outline the expected timeframe for receiving a response.	We endorse this view, agreeing that setting clear timescales in the Complaints Compensation Policy will help manage tenant expectations and improve transparency. It's important that we specify when tenants can file complaints and the expected response time to maintain clarity and efficiency.	Develop and implement clear timescales within the Complaints Compensation Policy, outlining when tenants can submit complaints and the maximum time allowed for a formal response, to ensure transparency and accountability.	April 2025
Information should be presented in other languages.	While there are online tools available to help with language barriers on the website, we would like to do more to ensure that all	We will complete a review of our corporate priorities regarding language barriers online, in person, and in policy documents.	

	<p>information published by the council is accessible.</p>	<p>As part of the review, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assess current online tools available for language support.</li> <li>• Identify gaps in language accessibility for digital, in-person interactions, and policy documents.</li> <li>• Prioritise areas for improvement across all these areas.</li> <li>• Develop a plan to implement additional resources or tools to address these gaps.</li> </ul>	
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