



South Cambridgeshire District Council

Compensation Policy relating to the Council's Housing Landlord Services

Version	1.0
Ownership	Head of Housing
Approved by	Cabinet
Policy Contact	Head of Housing
Approval date	24 March 2026
Publication date	May 2026
Date of next review	March 2031



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Scope and purpose	3
3. Principles	4
4. Types of compensation	5
5. Compensation categories and calculation	5
6. Remedies beyond compensation	9
7. Process	10
8. Authorisation of Compensation	11
9. Exclusions	11
10. Accessibility and inclusion	12
11. About this policy	12
12. Complaints and Service Requests	12
13. Our values	13



1. Introduction

- 1.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC)'s Housing Department aims to provide excellent customer service, but we recognise that mistakes can happen, and we may sometimes fall short of the standards we strive to deliver.
- 1.2 Where it is found that we have not met the level of service that was expected, SCDC will issue an apology to the person(s) affected and will aim to rectify the issue that the complaint was made about. Where appropriate, in some cases SCDC will offer additional compensation as part of the remedy.
- 1.3 Compensation may be financial or non-financial (for example replacement of items or a goodwill gesture). Where maladministration is found, goodwill gestures will not replace appropriate compensation.
- 1.4 This policy takes effect from 1 April 2026, following Cabinet approval and implementation of the Housing Ombudsman guidance. In most cases, we will not consider compensation claims under this policy relating to closed complaints where issues occurred before this date unless the problem is ongoing. However, where legislation permits us to review cases involving earlier issues, we will assess those claims accordingly.
- 1.5 Claims for compensation should be raised as soon as reasonably practicable. We will consider circumstances and vulnerabilities if a claim is late, in line with the Complaint Handling Code (2024).
- 1.6 SCDC adopts the Housing Ombudsman's 'single vision of fair compensation' demonstrating its key principles of fairness, putting things right and learning from outcomes. This policy aligns our awards of compensation with the Ombudsman's approach to avoid significant discrepancies.

2. Scope and purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that residents are not financially disadvantaged as a result of any failure by the Council or its appointed contractors in the management or maintenance of Council-managed homes.



2.2 This policy explains how we assess, calculate and award compensation so that redress is fair, reasoned and proportionate, restoring residents to the position they would have been in had the failing not occurred. Our approach aligns with the Housing Ombudsman's compensation guidance and Complaint Handling Code (2024).

2.3 This policy applies to:

- All tenants of council-managed housing.
- All landlord-related services provided by the local authority.
- Compensation arising from service failures, loss of amenities, or breaches of statutory obligations.

It does not apply to:

- Council-owned companies (e.g., Ermine Street Housing, Shire Homes Lettings).
- Non-landlord services (e.g., homelessness support, private sector adaptations).
- Other services provided by the Council.

2.4 Contractors must operate compensation arrangements aligned to this policy. Where liability is shared or unclear, SCDC may make interim payments to the resident and recover costs from the contractor later. Payments will not be duplicated.

3. Principles

3.1 The principles are as follows:

- **Fairness:** Compensation reflects actual loss, inconvenience, or distress.
- **Transparency:** Clear criteria and processes are communicated to tenants.



- **Proportionality:** Awards are based on the severity and duration of the impact.
- **Accountability:** Decisions are documented with written justifications.
- **Flexibility:** Each case is assessed on its individual merits, including any vulnerabilities disclosed or identified.
- **Alignment:** We aim to align awards with Ombudsman practice to avoid significant discrepancies.

4. Types of compensation

4.1 The types of compensation are:

- **Mandatory Payments:** Required by law (e.g., Home Loss, Right to Repair). As these are mandatory, they are not included within this policy.
- **Quantifiable Loss Payments:** For actual financial losses with evidence (e.g., receipts).
- **Discretionary Payments:** For time and trouble, or distress, and inconvenience.
- **Goodwill Gestures:** Modest, non-obligatory offers (e.g., vouchers, flowers).
- **Specific compensation orders instructed by the Housing Ombudsman:** Including percentage of rent awards where appropriate.

5. Compensation categories and calculation

5.1 No tenant should be financially disadvantaged because of a failure of the housing service or its contractors. Compensation will be assessed based on:

- Severity and duration of the issue



- Impact on the resident (including vulnerabilities)
- Evidence provided

SCDC will ensure that any vulnerabilities disclosed or identified, such as health conditions, disabilities, age-related needs, or other personal circumstances, are fully considered when assessing compensation. In line with the Housing Ombudsman's increasing emphasis on recognising the heightened impact vulnerabilities can have on residents, we will assess each case individually and may make higher awards where vulnerabilities have exacerbated the distress or inconvenience caused. This approach supports the Ombudsman's core aim that compensation should be fair, proportionate, and restore residents to the position they would have been in had the service failure not occurred.

Each case will be assessed individually, with examples below. More than one factor can be compensated (e.g. financial loss plus loss of service and distress/ inconvenience),.

In relation to repairs-related complaints, SCDC follows the defined repairs timescales as set out in the Repairs & Maintenance Policy. The examples outlined below may apply in cases where repairs have exceeded these target timescales and appropriate temporary measures to mitigate the issue were not in place (e.g. temporary heaters provided during a loss of heating).

5.2 Financial Loss (Quantifiable)

Compensation for quantifiable financial loss will be based on receipts, invoices, or reasonable estimates. Eligible costs may include:

- Alternative accommodation: e.g., hotel costs when a property is uninhabitable due to a major leak - if not arranged by the Council
- Increased utility costs: e.g., use of electric heaters during boiler failure.
- Damaged belongings: e.g., carpets ruined by a sewage backup, considered via insurance where appropriate.

Note: An insurance settlement for financial loss does not prevent additional compensation for distress, inconvenience or complaint-handling failures.



5.3 Loss of Service (Quantifiable)

The daily rate of compensation for quantifiable loss of service will be based on severity, and type of service lost, reflecting impact and duration.

Example: Heating or hot water loss = £8-£15 per day

Factors considered:

- Duration and time of year
- Household vulnerability

Compensation will only be considered for the period that is greater than the target time for that repair, and where there are no issues with the Council or contractors accessing the property.

Additional payments may be made to cover financial loss and/or distress and inconvenience, where applicable.

5.4 Distress and Inconvenience (Discretionary)

Compensation levels are benchmarked against current Ombudsman Guidance, which may be subject to change:

- Minor impact: £50 - £100
- Moderate impact: £100 - £600
- Significant impact: £600-£1,000
- Severe long-term impact - £1,000 +

Discretionary payments will account for all service failures, including when multiple compounding issues occur. Issues taken into consideration include:

- Recurring service failures – repeated instances of the same or similar issues
- Impact on health and wellbeing – physical or emotional distress caused by the issue
- Disruption to daily life – interference with normal routines or essential activities



- Prolonged duration of the issue – the length of time the problem persisted without resolution

There is no fixed cap on compensation. Awards reflect the circumstances and impact. Payment above £2,000 require approval by the Head of Housing.

5.5 Complaint handling failures (Discretionary)

Where we fail to follow the Complaint Handling Code (2024) or our own complaints procedure, additional compensation may be awarded for time and trouble, delay, or poor communication, in addition to any award for the underlying issue.

- Minor complaint handling failure: £50 - £150
- Moderate complaint handling failure: £150 - £400
- Significant/severe failure: £400 - £1,000+
- Specific compensation orders made by the Housing Ombudsman

5.6 Examples of Compensation Cases

Compensation will generally not be considered for planned works or repairs that are completed within agreed timescales. Disruption to personal working arrangements, such as loss of earnings for self-employed individuals or those unable to work from home during the period for planned works/repairs, will not be eligible for compensation in these circumstances.

Any compensation will be determined based on specific circumstances of each case.

The following examples are provided for illustrative purposes only.

Case 1: Missed Repairs and Heating Loss – A daily award in the region of £8-£15 may be applied for the period beyond the target repair timescale, with additional discretionary compensation considered for any distress or inconvenience experienced. The level of any further award will take into account seasonal factors and the vulnerability of the household.



Case 2: Poor Complaint Handling – An additional payment may be made under the complaint-handling failures category from £50 upwards, where appropriate, depending on the nature of the complaint, the extent of the delay or error, and the impact this had on the tenant.

Case 3: Temporary Relocation – Compensation may include reimbursement of verified actual financial losses associated with temporary relocation, together with an additional discretionary award to recognise the disruption caused, where justified by the circumstances of the case.

Case 4: Loss of facilities – Compensation may include a daily award to reflect the loss of service, with an additional discretionary payment considered to recognise any distress or inconvenience arising from the loss of essential facilities, depending on the specific circumstances of the case.

Case 5: Exposure to damp and mould – Higher levels of compensation may be appropriate under a discretionary award where exposure to damp and mould has occurred over a prolonged period, particularly where this has had a greater impact due to the vulnerability of the household or the severity and duration of the issue.

5.7 Awards calculated as a percentage of net weekly rent

In exceptional cases, awards may be calculated as a percentage of net weekly rent for the period affected, where this better reflects the loss of use or overall impact on the household. Percentage-based awards may be more appropriate than daily rate calculations where the issue affects the fundamental habitability or enjoyment of the home, or where the scale or duration of the impact is not adequately captured by a fixed daily amount. This approach may be used alongside or instead of daily rate calculations, depending on the circumstances.

6. Remedies beyond compensation

- 6.1 The Council may offer other remedies other than financial compensation. This may include



- Practical actions (e.g., repairs, redecoration)
- Apologies and service improvements
- Goodwill gestures (e.g., flowers, vouchers) – used in addition to, not instead of, appropriate compensation where maladministration occurred

Examples:

- A £20 payment and apology letter for a delay in resolving a pest infestation.
- A repaint of a room affected by damp, in addition to financial compensation.

7. Process

Step 1 - Advised

Tenant informs SCDC, or we are made aware, of the issue.

Step 2 - Log Complaint

Record in housing complaints system and acknowledge within 3 working days of receipt

Step 3 – Investigate

Review records, inspect property, gather evidence.

Step 4 - Assess Eligibility

Apply policy criteria and guidance.

Step 5 - Calculate Offer

Use standard rates and document rationale. Where appropriate make an early offer to resolve the complaint at Stage 1.

Step 6 - Approval & Communication:

Manager approval required; tenant receives a clear written explanation. Stage 1 response within 10 working days and Stage 2 within 20 working days (with extensions only by exception), in line with the Complaint Handling Code (2024).



Step 7 - Monitor & Learn:

Outcomes reviewed to improve services.

8. Authorisation of Compensation

- 8.1 Compensation claims will be considered by either the relevant Service Manager or Team Leader/Manager. These will usually be made as part of the complaints process (see point 12 below - how to make a complaint) or may be offered directly because of a failing identified by the Council. We will aim to make proportionate awards at the earliest stage to avoid escalation, in line with Ombudsman expectations.
- 8.2. If a resident is unhappy with the decision for compensation, they can ask for it to be reviewed by the Head of Housing. This request must be made within 20 working days of being told the outcome and will be considered as part of the Stage 2 complaints process. A final response will be given within 20 working days of the review being acknowledged.
- 8.3 To request a review, please follow the process outlined in 12.3. below.

9. Exclusions

- 9.1 Compensation will not be awarded for:
- Statutory payments already made.
 - Tenant negligence (e.g, failure to report issues promptly or deliberate damage)
 - Third-party issues outside council control (e.g. utility provider failures)
 - Where financial loss is fully covered by insurance or legal action.
- However, we may still award compensation for distress, inconvenience, loss of use, or complaint handling failures.



10. Accessibility and inclusion

10.1 SCDC is committed to engaging with tenants and residents in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#). Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure services are accessible to all. This may include:

- Contact preferences
- Offering home visits
- Use of advocates or interpreters
- Alternative communication formats, such as large print or translated materials
- Offering mutually convenient appointment times

11. About this policy

11.1 This policy will be reviewed every 5 years. However, earlier reassessment may be required following tenant feedback, further guidance or where there are changes in operations and/or legislation.

11.2 Trends and lessons learnt, including lessons from Ombudsman decisions and maladministration reports, will be reported to the Housing Engagement Board and Cabinet.



11.3 This policy has been produced in consultation with tenant representatives. If a tenant is interested in getting involved in shaping the housing service, further information is available on the [website](#), or contact resident.involvement@scambs.gov.uk.

12. Complaints and Service Requests

12.1 This Policy is often applied alongside the formal complaints process. Compensation may be offered to help resolve a complaint at either Stage 1 or Stage 2.

12.2 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, any compensation offered by the Council does not prevent them from seeking further resolution through the Housing Ombudsman.



12.3 For more information about our complaints policy, please visit our [website](#) or telephone 01954 713000 or email housing.complaints@scambs.gov.uk.

12.4 **Service Requests:**

A service request is a request from a tenant to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. A complaint is when a tenant expresses dissatisfaction in any form.

A tenant should report initial service requests, such as repairs or safety concerns through the designated channels:

Repairs: [Online](#) via the Council's [website](#).
By phone via the Repairs Hotline: 0800 0085 1313.
Through the **M&Me** Mobile App

General Queries: Tel: 01954 713 000 or email
duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk.

The [Communications Charter for tenants and leaseholders](#) sets out detailed guidance on how to contact the Council and the service standards that can be expected in relation to communication and responsiveness.

13. Our values

Ambitious

- We are proactive and take a forward-thinking approach to addressing challenges.
- We create smart solutions and reach our goals with determination and a clear vision.

Collaborative

- We foster a culture of teamwork and open communication.
- We work with and involve stakeholders, to improve how the organisation works and serves the public.



Compassionate

- We prioritise empathy and understanding in decision-making and service delivery.
- We consider the wellbeing of people and communities in everything we do and we replicate this when we talk to our colleagues because we know that when we support each other, we all do better.

Accountable

- We take responsibility for our actions and decisions.
- We own up to mistakes and make sure we fulfil our commitments.