

Stroma Certification Ltd

Complaints Procedure

Produced By:
Mr Mark Rollins . General Manager

Authorised By:
Mr Neil Bleakley - Technical Director

On behalf of Stroma Certification Ltd

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1.0 Introduction

Stroma Certification Ltd aims to provide high quality services to scheme members and their customers. All complaints that arise will be dealt with promptly, professionally and transparently.

The approach adopted is to understand the root cause of the complaint, investigate and report on the validity of the claim and further develop our services using an ethos of continuous improvement.

Stroma Certification operates a Complaints Procedure, in addition to an Appeals procedure that conforms to the requirements of the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), ISO BS EN 17024:2003 and BS EN 45011:1998.

2.0 Complainants

Stroma Certification will process any complaint received in accordance with the 3 categories as detailed in section 3.1. Stroma Certification will not limit who can and cannot make a complaint, and have provided a list below:

- Householder/ Client
- Householders/Clients agent (estate agent or solicitor)
- Employer of the scheme member.
- Another scheme.
- Stroma scheme member.
- Compliance officer (trading standards or building control).
- Member of public.
- Candidate undertaking a Stroma Certification training course.
- Training awarding body.
- Government Department
- Any other stakeholder.

The above list is no exhaustive, and Stroma Certification will deal with any other complainant in the same way.

For any complaint received, there is no charge to the complainant and any resolution costs will be paid for by Stroma Certification.

3.0 Categories of Complaints

Stroma Certification operates this Complaints Procedure to ensure any complaint received will be addressed correctly and following a clear process. Complaints are classified into three separate categories, which are detailed and explained below.

3.1 Complaints against Scheme Members

Stroma Certification will process all complaints received concerning the actions of certified scheme members and the certificate produced, or their actions. Complaints against scheme members can be further categorised as:

- Behaviour of the scheme member.
- Behaviour of the scheme member's company.
- Timescales and/ or the output produced by the scheme member.

Clients of certified scheme members have the opportunity to raise a complaint directly to Stroma Certification after (or before) the complaint has initially been raised to the member or any company or organisation that they represent, unless the nature of the complaint means that this method is inappropriate.

In accordance with Stroma Certification's Code of Conduct members are required to provide all of their customers with a copy of their own complaints process and the Stroma Certification Complaints Procedure

3.2 Complaints against Stroma Certification

Stroma Certification will process all complaints against Stroma Certification, which can be categorised as:

- Behaviour of a member of Stroma Certification staff.
- Training course and associated services.
- Certification Issuing and Lodgement.
- Timescales and/ or the output produced as a result of an audit.

3.3 General Complaints

Stroma Certification will process any other general complaint received. Examples of this could be:

- DCLG.
- DEFRA.
- DECC
- Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD).
- Output produced by another scheme member.

All general complaints will be addressed in line with the processes as detailed within this document.

4.0 Reporting a Complaint

Complaints can be reported by telephone, email or in writing to Stroma Certification by completing the following:

When registering a complaint, the following information is required:

1. Complainant name.
2. Address of complainant.
3. Contact details (telephone and email).
4. Availability for feedback (preferred time to discuss feedback / research the complaint further etc).
5. Nature of the complaint and how this is to be addressed.

For complaints concerning Stroma Certification scheme members, the following additional information will be required:

1. The Stroma Certification membership number (if known) and/or name of the member who carried out the work.
2. The assessment number / details if available.
3. Date assessment/ installation was carried out.

Complaints should be reported either by:

1. Phone: 0845 621 11 11
2. Email: certification@stroma.com
3. In writing to:
General Manager
Stroma Certification Ltd,
Unit 4, Pioneer Way,
Pioneer Business Park,
Castleford,
WF10 5QU

5.0 Dealing with the Complaint

Stroma Certification aims to respond to a complaint within 3 working days of receipt. The initial response will consist of a preliminary assessment or a 7 day holding period to allow additional time to review the reason for the complaint. A formal resolution will be undertaken, and reported back to all relevant parties at a later date, dependent on the severity of the complaint.

If the complaint cannot be resolved within the initial response, Stroma Certification will provide the complainant with an estimate of the length of time required to resolve the complaint.

The protocol for resolving complaints is as follows:-

1. The majority of minor complaints will be resolved by the Stroma Certification helpdesk. All verbal complaints will be recorded by the helpdesk and notes made on the nature of the call and the recommended solution to resolve the complaint.
2. If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved, then the complaint will be escalated to the General Manager. Any person registering the verbal complaint will be notified of the requirement to submit their complaint in writing to the General Manager. An email will be sent to the complainant to inform them of Stroma Certification's Complaints Procedure.
3. The General Manager will investigate the complaint, and after logging the complaint, will produce an initial response within the 3 day period of the written complaint being received, whilst undertaking a more thorough investigation.
4. If the nature of the complaint is such that the General Manager cannot resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, it will be referred to Stroma Certification's Technical Director. A written response will be issued within 21 working days, once a further review has been undertaken.
5. If the complaint still cannot be resolved, it will be referred to the appropriate body overseeing the complaints process as outlined in section 6.0.

5.1 Complaints against Scheme Members

All complaints received in respect of the assessment activity of scheme members will be reviewed by the relevant Scheme Manager:

1. After receipt of the complaint the scheme member shall be permitted an opportunity to contest the complaint. The scheme member will be expected to submit any supporting documents, relating to the nature of the complaint, within 15 days of the request being sent by Stroma Certification.
2. A full review of the documents will be undertaken by a member of the Stroma Certification Quality Assurance department.
3. If the complaint is upheld, the member shall receive written confirmation of the nature and extent of the complaint. All lodged reports that are directly affected shall be withdrawn/ suspended and amended in line with the corrective action.
4. The member shall also receive written confirmation of the corrective action to their internal policies; re-training may be recommended.
5. For more severe complaints that require resolution including amendments to the member's working procedures, the member shall be informed of the deviation from the acceptable quality standards and procedures, and they shall be issued with a mandatory improvement action list. Their scheme membership shall be suspended until such time that they have completed the required improvements to their own quality system, and provide demonstrable evidence of such improvements to Stroma Certification. Future assessment activity will be monitored to measure the effectiveness of the improvement activity. All cases of suspension may escalate to expulsion, in the event of either:
 - a. The corrective action not being suitably implemented.
 - b. Numerous complaints received against a member that are upheld.
 - c. The member being found guilty of intentionally misrepresenting the scheme rules or Stroma Certification generally.
6. For extremely severe complaints that represent a significant deviation from the acceptable quality standards of operation, expulsion of the scheme member may be required in combination with corrective action to the offending assessment activity. All cases of expulsion will be reported to all other certification schemes.

5.2 Statutory Rights

All complaints received in respect of the assessment activity of scheme members will not affect the statutory right of the client or homeowner at any stage of the process.

It is the responsibility of the scheme member to ensure that this is explained to the client or homeowner when a complaint is received. Stroma Certification would typically expect to see a statement to this effect in a complaint response issued to a client or homeowner.

Stroma Certification will audit this process as part of the actions undertaken in section 10.0 and failure to adhere to this process will be dealt with in accordance with the Code of Conduct policy.

6.0 Non-Resolved Complaints

All complaints received by Stroma Certification will be fully investigated and resolved internally. Those complaints that are not resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all parties involved will be forwarded to the arbitration party as follows:

- i) Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) complaints will be referred to the Governing Body in accordance with the requirements of BS EN 17024:2003. For further details of the Governing Body please contact the CSH department.
- ii) All other complaints will be referred to the Stroma Certification Appeals Panel for a resolution of the complaint, as explained in Section 6.1.

6.1 Stroma Certification Appeals Panel

The Stroma Appeals Panel consists of 3 members from outside of Stroma Certification. All 3 members will attend the appeals meetings where a representative of Stroma Certification will be present however they do not hold any voting rights. The Appeals Panel will be ultimately responsible for dealing with the resolution of any complaint that has previously been addressed through the Stroma Certification Complaints Procedure.

All appeals must be submitted in writing and following the process as detailed in section 4.0.

The Appeals Panel will arbitrate between the complainant and Stroma Certification, and will provide a fair and unbiased adjudication on the appeal.

6.2 Outcomes

Likely actions to be recommended by either Stroma Certification or the relevant body will be:

- Complaint not upheld then no further action is to be taken.
- Minor complaint upheld, improvement action may be implemented.
- Request further information/ investigation.
- Amendments to Stroma Certification policies and procedures.
- Re-train on specific area of the scheme &/or software or type of property.
- Suspension of the scheme member subject to re-training or achievement of qualification or outcome of ongoing investigation.
- Suspension or Revocation of the scheme member's certification. If this action is taken, Stroma Certification will notify all other certification schemes. This will be removed when any corrective actions required have been implemented.

7.0 Complaints where Criminal Activity Appears to be Involved

If a complaint appears to involve apparent criminal activity, the incident will immediately escalate to the General Manager and, without hesitation, be reported to the appropriate authority, for example the police department.

8.0 Member Complaint Requests

Stroma Certification will actively contact the clients of certified members during the complaint investigation process.

Clients of scheme members will be asked to submit feedback on the following:

- Pre-visit contact and information.
- Onsite survey behaviour.
- Post-visit information and certificate production.

All members are expected to adhere to both the Complaints Procedure and Code of Conduct

Every year, 1% of scheme members will be contacted to provide records of any complaints received in line with Stroma Certification's Code of Conduct. These will be checked and recorded. Failure to do so may result in action being taken which may result in the member being suspended and/ or revoked from the Stroma Certification scheme.

9.0 Notifications – Scheme Members only

Stroma Certification requires all scheme members registering a complaint to forward a copy of this complaint to all schemes where multiple membership is held. The appropriate scheme will then be responsible for dealing with the complaint. For example, if a complaint is about a particular output then the scheme through which the certificate was lodged will be responsible for dealing with it.

10.0 Record Keeping / Amendments to Quality System

All records of complaints, appeals, disputes and outcomes will be maintained for a minimum of 7 years by Stroma Certification. The outcome of these complaints will be made available to the relevant bodies only.

All actions taken as a consequence of a complaint will be documented and the subsequent effectiveness of such actions will be monitored.

11.0 Amendments to Policy Documentation

Stroma Certification reserves the right to amend all policy documentation pertaining to the quality system, in particular the Complaints Procedure. All amendments will be issued to all scheme members with the appropriate implementation date clearly stated.