

Complaints and Compliments Factsheet

This factsheet explains how you can contact us if you want to make a complaint or pay us a compliment, and how we will respond.

Our mission is to provide and maintain a high standard of specialised housing and support services for older and vulnerable people, delivered through a strong brand, service excellence and meaningful partnerships. However, we acknowledge that sometimes things go wrong, or our performance or services will not meet customers' expectations. We welcome feedback and will take the opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Your feedback will help us to learn from our mistakes and continually improve the service we provide to you and our other customers.

Why compliments are important to us

By finding the time to say 'well done' if a person or service merits it provides a great boost to our teams. Compliments are important as they help us to monitor what works well and when members of staff have been particularly helpful. Compliments can be made by completing a compliment slip that can be found in your scheme, or alternatively by telling us about it either in person, by email or by telephone.

Why complaints are important to us

We need to know about complaints so we have the opportunity to put things right and improve the services we provide. We will apologise where we get things wrongs and put things right where we can.

What is a complaint?

Following the introduction of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, a complaint is universally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

You can make a complaint to us if you feel:

- unhappy about a service we have provided and this is not the first time you have reported it to us, or
- you have not been treated fairly and in accordance with our policies and procedures, or
- dissatisfied about the way you have been treated by us or the way a member of staff has behaved.

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What is not a complaint?

If you are reporting a first request for service, information or an explanation of our policies and procedures or you are reporting a neighbour dispute or anti-social behaviour, unless your complaint is about how we have handled the case. We may also refuse to deal with an unreasonable complaint, for example if you keep raising the same issues in different ways. We will normally only deal with a complaint that is made about an incident within the last 6 months, unless in our opinion there is good reason for your delay in reporting or it is about a health and safety concern. We will tell you if we are unable to deal with your enquiry as a complaint and if you disagree with our decision you can refer to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

How we will respond to your complaint

If you tell us that you are unhappy with our service, our first priority is to put things right locally and informally. Where possible we will try and resolve your dissatisfaction promptly without the need for lengthy investigations.

We will record and investigate your complaint as a 'stage 1 formal complaint' if we cannot resolve the problem in this way i.e. if it is complicated; or you have expressly asked for your complaint to be treated as a formal complaint.

We will always ask you to clearly tell us the reason for making a complaint and what you would like us to do to put things right. If we are unable to resolve the complaint through taking your requested action, we will explain the reasons for this and discuss alternatives or simply apologise for our mistake and ensure that any lessons learnt are shared across our teams. We aim to resolve complaints whilst acting within our policies, procedures, and any legal duties. We recognise that we are entitled to balance the needs of individual customers with the needs of the Association, other residents and our staff; as well as ensure we achieve good value for money. We will therefore seek to manage expectations and will not make promises that cannot be delivered and outcomes offered that would cause unfairness to other residents.

Making a complaint

We have developed a complaint form to help us understand the nature of the complaint and the desired resolution. This can be completed in writing, via email or the internet or we can complete the form with you over the telephone or in person. Please note that if you make a complaint via social media, we will contact you directly but not via social media too discuss the situation with you.

If you prefer, you can ask someone else to contact us on your behalf. We will always check we have your permission to liaise with the person. When we respond to such a complaint we will do this directly to you and send a copy to the third party unless you give us any other instructions to follow.

Letters addressed to our Chief Executive will not automatically form part of this complaints process.

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A petition on behalf of multiple customers will not be treated as a formal complaint unless this is specifically requested and will be dealt with in the same way as other contact with our customers. Interactions and correspondence will be directed to the nominated signatory as opposed to all signatories.

Putting things right

'Stage 1 formal complaint'

We will acknowledge any 'stage 1 formal complaint' that you make within five working days of receipt and we aim to issue a response to your complaint within ten working days. Sometimes it is not possible to completely resolve your complaint within ten days but we will always be clear about how we intend to sort out the problem and how long this will take, although this will not normally exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

If having received our response you believe that we have not responded or resolved the issue, you can contact us to discuss the matter and we will explore with you if there is anything more that can be done to resolve the complaint.

If we believe we have taken all reasonable actions to resolve the complaint or we are not able to deliver the outcome you would like, then you can ask for your complaint to progress to our 'stage 2 – complaint review'. You will need to explain why you are not satisfied and also what you would like us to do to put things right. You should normally request such a review within 20 days of our 'stage 1' response unless there is good reason for delaying such a request i.e. you waited to see if actions taken have resolved the issue to your satisfaction.

'Stage 2 complaint review'

Our 'stage 2 complaint review' is the second and final stage of our internal complaint process. The purpose of this stage is to review the decisions made at the previous stages of your complaint. It will look to see if we have carried out the agreed actions, checking that we have followed our policies and procedures fairly and appropriately. It will also consider what further action we might take to resolve your complaint.

If you request this review, we will make a stage two decision within 20 working days from the request to escalate being made- if this is not possible, an explanation and a date by when the stage two response should be received. This will not normally exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

This is the final stage of our internal complaints process.

What do I do if I remain unhappy with the outcome of my complaint?

If following the outcome of our review you remain unhappy you can elect for your complaint to be considered further by a Designated Person.

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A Designated Person is an MP or Local Authority Councillor or a designated Tenant Panel. We do not have our own designated Tenant Panel but we can let you know if one exists in your locality.

Alternatively, you can decide to wait 8 weeks from the date of our final decision and then ask the Housing Ombudsman Service directly to review your complaint. The Housing Ombudsman will not consider any complaints until our own complaints process has been exhausted and you have referred your complaint to a Designated Person or the 8 weeks' time period has passed.

It should be noted that the Building Safety Act 2022 includes amendments that will remove the Designated Person requirements and this is expected to become effective between 28 October 2022 to 28 April 2023.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

We are members of the Housing Ombudsman Service which is set up by law to look at complaints about housing organisations.

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

We seek to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and our self-assessment against this Code is available in our complaint section of our website.