

Complaints and Compliments

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.’** Sometimes things go wrong, and we fail to meet your expectations. Your feedback, good or bad, will help us to learn and continually improve the services we provide to you and our other customers.

Why compliments are important to us.

Finding the time to say ‘well done’ 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. You can make a compliment by telling us in person, by email or by telephone.

Why feedback is important to us.

We need to know if we fail to meet your expectations. This gives us the opportunity to put things right and improve the services we provide. If you tell us that you are unhappy with our service, our priority is to put things right locally and informally, apologising where we get things wrongs and put things right where we can.

What is a complaint?

The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code, defines a complaint as **‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.’**

We will ask you to tell us the reason for making a complaint and what you would like us to do to put things right. We have developed a complaint form to help us understand the nature of the complaint and the desired resolution. You can complete the form from our website, by email, 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 check we have your permission to consult with the person. We will send our response directly to you and send a copy to the third party unless you give us any other instructions to follow.

What is not a complaint?

In most cases you need to tell us about your problem and give us an opportunity to put things right before you make a complaint. For example, if your home has a problem with damp or mould, or a repair contractor failed to turn up to an appointment, you need to let us know and give us a chance to investigate and fix it. This is known by the Housing Ombudsman as a **‘service request.’** If we fail to address your service request, you can then make a formal complaint.

The following are not complaints. If you contact requesting information, or an explanation of our policies and procedures, or report a neighbour dispute, or anti-social behaviour, unless your concern is about how we have responded to your request.

Complaints and Compliments

We will normally only deal with a complaint that is about an incident that took place within the last 12 months, unless 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.

Putting things right

We will try to resolve your concerns. 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. We share any lessons learnt across our teams. We aim to resolve complaints whilst acting within our policies, procedures, and any legal duties. We will not make promises we cannot deliver or offer outcomes that cause unfairness to other residents.

When we receive a formal complaint there is a structure that we must follow. This is set out by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

'Stage 1 formal complaint'

We will acknowledge your complaint within **five working days** (this does not include bank holidays or weekends). The day we receive your complaint is **day zero**. We aim to issue a response to your complaint within **ten working days** of acknowledging your complaint. Sometimes it is not possible to completely resolve your complaint within ten working days, and we will ask you for extra time. This will not normally exceed a further **ten 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 we can do to resolve the complaint.

If we believe we have taken all reasonable actions to resolve the complaint or are unable to deliver the outcome you would like, then you can ask for your complaint to progress to our 'stage 2 – complaint review'. It helps if you explain why, you remain dissatisfied and what you would like us to do to put things right. You should normally request such a review within **twenty working 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 completed 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 acknowledge this within **five working days** and then investigate and reply to you within **twenty working days**.

Complaints and Compliments

This may take a little longer, in which case we will ask you for extra time. This will not normally exceed a further **twenty working days** without good reason.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

We are members of the Housing Ombudsman Service which is set up by the government to look at complaints about housing organisations. The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent and impartial organisation set up to resolve disputes between tenants and social landlords. The Ombudsman can request us to act if they decide we have not managed your complaint properly. The Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code manages the way we govern complaints. We seek to comply with the Code and our self-assessment against this Code is available in our complaint section of our website.

If you have allowed us the chance to use our two-stage complaint process you can then ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to investigate your complaint if you are not happy with our response.

However, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for help, support and advice at any time, and in fact they strongly recommend that you go to them for free advice rather than using solicitors.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is contactable at:

PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET

Telephone 0300 111 3000.

(The Ombudsman encourage customers to use [email](#) or their [online complaint form](#) rather than sending post to their PO Box address in Preston to avoid delays).

Learning lessons

We always try to learn lessons if we fall below the standards you expect from us. To do this, we keep records of all complaints, the service area involved, how long it took us to respond, where the complaint involves the Ombudsman, and lots more. By the end of June 2024, we will publish a Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report. Our Board will add its comments, and we will publish the report so you can see how we plan to improve our service.

One of our Board members acts as Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). The MRC does not deal with the investigation of individual complaints. Instead, they promote the importance of good complaint management across the Association. Making sure the Board receives regular information on what is not working as well as it should for our customers and help us to learn from any issues and trends and summarise this in our annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report.

Our Director of Operations acts as our Senior Lead Person and is responsible for checking our compliance with the Complaint Handling Code and identifying any lessons and trends and these are addressed through policies, procedures, and systems.