

Complaints and Compliments



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

Our vision is to be Lincolnshire's leading provider of specialist housing and support services for older and vulnerable people. 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 if we are at fault.

What is a complaint?

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.

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.

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. This allows a quick and effective solution to be reached without the need for lengthy investigations. We aim to investigate and resolve an informal complaint within 3 working days of it being made or within any timescale that we agree with you when you report your dissatisfaction to us.

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

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We will always ask you to tell us 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 the internet or we can complete the form with you over the telephone or in person.

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.

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 three 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.

We will close a complaint once we have provided you with a solution or a response to the issue. 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. We will need to be notified of your intentions to request such a review within 20 days of our 'stage 1' response.

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'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.

A member of our Executive Management Team will carefully review your reasons for this review and your expected outcome. We will only progress to this stage where there is a genuine review of the complaint. We will not seek to prolong our complaints process or defer decision making when our 'stage 1 outcome' is the only outcome that is possible.

If you request this review, we aim to confirm the review method within 7 working days and conclude the review within 20 working days of the confirmation. 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.

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.

The Housing Ombudsman contact details are below:

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk