



Complaints Policy

1. Aim of policy

- 1.1 This policy outlines our definition of a complaint, and states how we'll manage, monitor and learn from complaints.
- 1.2 This policy also covers our stance on abusive, persistent or vexatious complaints and complainants.

2. Scope of policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to anyone who has been directly and adversely affected by us, our homes or our services and includes:
 - Tenants, homeowners, licensees and former tenants
 - Users of support or care services
 - Users of our lettings, allocations services or sales process
 - Resident representatives or advocates, providing consent has been provided from the resident(s) they are representing
 - Private residents
 - Partner agencies
- 2.2 Within this policy, we define a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction with the standard and/or delivery of service provided by us or our staff.
- 2.3 Matters that are not considered as complaints under this policy are:
 - An initial request for a service, information or an explanation of how a decision has been made
 - A report regarding neighbour nuisance or disputes between neighbours, as these will be managed in accordance with our Anti-Social Behaviour policy
 - Dissatisfaction with the decisions made in accordance to our policies, where there is a more appropriate appeals mechanism
 - Disputes regarding service charge calculations, as these will be managed in accordance with our Rent and Service Charges policy
 - A claim for damages or personal injury which will be dealt with as an insurance claim
 - Matters which are expected to be, are or have been the subject of legal proceedings, including disrepair claims
 - Matters relating solely to services or decisions outside of our control
 - Attempts to reopen previously concluded complaints or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have provided our final decision



- 2.4 We will not normally consider complaints that relate to matters that happened more than six months ago, however discretion can be applied where there is a valid reason for the delay.
- 2.5 Complaints made directly to our Executive Team, including our Chief Executive Officer (CEO), will be passed back to the most appropriate member of staff and will be dealt with in accordance with this policy.
- 2.6 Any complaints received in relation to dissatisfaction with debt advice we have provided or any other service for which we are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) will be investigated in line with this policy by the Governance team who will observe the FCA handbook Dispute resolution: Complaints (DISP).
- 2.7 All staff need to be aware of this policy.

3. Policy statement

- 3.1 We're committed to delivering services of the highest quality and achieving high levels of customer satisfaction. We recognise that sometimes we might get it wrong or our services may not be meeting the expectations of our customers. This policy provides a clear, simple and accessible opportunity for our customers to be able to raise complaints and have them promptly, politely and fairly handled.
- 3.2 This policy supports our Customer Strategy, our commitment to valuing customer feedback and providing us with an opportunity to listen to and learn from our customers. This policy and approach enable us to continually improve what we do, and the way we do things, enabling us to constantly develop our organisational strength.
- 3.3 We'll use our discretion, with management approval, in the implementation of this policy and may at times make a decision outside of but within the spirit of the policy.

4. Policy

Accessibility

- 4.1 We want it to be easy and accessible for our customers to make a complaint, as such complaints can be provided in a variety of ways:
 - Digitally via our website, social media or online account
 - By email
 - By text
 - By telephone
 - In person
 - In writing
 - Through a representative or advocate (where consents been provided)



First Point of Contact

- 4.2 We aim to resolve customer complaints promptly and will try to resolve complaints at 'First Point of Contact', wherever possible.
- 4.3 To do this the member of staff who first receives a complaint will do everything within their ability and knowledge to resolve the problem. If they are unable to do this then the most appropriate person/team will be given an opportunity to speak with our customer within the initial phone call. If a call back or message needs to be taken, this will result in the complaint moving to a Stage 1 investigation.
- 4.4 If the complaint is received via a method other than telephone, we'll try and call our customer to discuss the complaint and resolve at First Point of Contact where possible.
- 4.5 If we're unable to resolve a complaint at First Point of Contact or our customer has specifically asked for a formal investigation of their complaint, this will be handled through our two-stage formal process.
- 4.6 When complaints are resolved at First Point of Contact we'll continue to record and monitor these so that we continue to learn from our customers and improve our service delivery.

Investigation – Stage 1

- 4.7 During the formal investigation, the investigating manager will aim to make personal contact with our customer by close of business the following working day of receiving the complaint. This personal contact is made to acknowledge the complaint and to help the investigating manager understand/resolve the issues raised. If the customer doesn't wish to be contacted as part of the investigation, or no contact's been possible following reasonable efforts, the manager will continue the investigation using the information available.
- 4.8 We'll aim to carry out a full investigation and communicate our findings to our customer within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged by the investigating manager. If this isn't possible, we'll inform our customer within these 10 working days, to advise when we expect to deliver a full response.
- 4.9 Our response will include an explanation of what actions have been or will be taken to resolve the issues raised. Where a response includes promises of future actions, such as repair works, the investigating manager will agree a date for the actions to be completed and resolve the case. We'll attempt to discuss the outcome with the customer by phone in the first instance before completing a resolution letter.
- 4.10 The investigating manager will be responsible for monitoring and ensuring that any future actions are completed within agreed timescales. Should timescales not be reasonably kept then customers can make a new complaint about this failure of service.



Review – Stage 2

- 4.11 Should our customer feel that the actions taken or proposed by the Stage One investigating manager does not resolve the issues raised in their complaint they can request for their complaint to be reviewed. Requests can be made in any format but need to be within 15 working days from the date of their Stage One resolution response. We have a two-question form which we ask our customers to complete. These questions are:
- what part of your original complaint hasn't been resolved?
 - how you feel we could resolve it?
- 4.12 We'll aim to acknowledge a request for a complaint review within 3 working days. We'll not unreasonably decline a request for a complaint to be reviewed at Stage 2, but it could be declined if our customer:
- hasn't provided specific reasons for requesting a review
 - solely seeks a resolution that's is outside of our control, our policies or is unreasonable
 - has refused to engage with staff in trying to resolve the complaint at an earlier stage
 - solely seeks a higher award of compensation but where the amount offered is in line with our Compensation policy
- 4.13 Where a request is declined this decision will be authorised by a senior manager, not involved in the complaint, and the reasons will be clearly explained to our customers.
- 4.14 Where the request is accepted, the complaint will be reviewed by two senior managers who haven't previously been involved in the complaint and a response will be provided in writing.
- 4.15 We'll aim to have completed and provided the outcome of the review to our customer within 20 working days of the complaint being referred for review. If this isn't possible, we'll make contact within these 20 working days, to advise when we expect to deliver a full response.
- 4.16 During the formal review, the review managers will liaise with our customer either by phone or a meeting at our office to understand the unresolved issues and our customer's desired resolution. If the customer doesn't wish to be contacted as part of the investigation, or no contact's been possible following reasonable efforts, the managers will continue the review using the information available.

External Referral

- 4.17 Should our customer feel that the actions taken or proposed by the Stage 2 review does not resolve the issues raised in their complaint they may take their case to be externally reviewed by either:



- A 'Designated Person'.
- The Housing Ombudsman Service (customers must wait 8 weeks from the date of the Stage 2 review response before doing so)

4.18 In some cases, complaints may need to be referred to alternative organisations for external review:

- Residential Leaseholder complaints to First Tier Tribunal (Property Chambers)
- Financial Services to the Financial Ombudsman Service
- Home buyers to the Home Warranty Body

4.19 When complaints are resolved through the formal process these will be logged, root causes identified, corrective actions recorded and monitored so that we continue to listen to and learn from our customers.

MP and Councillor Enquiries

4.20 Third party enquiries for information or complaints made by MP's or Councillors on behalf of customers, outside of their capacity of a 'Designated Person', will be acknowledged within three working days and responded to by the most appropriate manager and approved by a member of the Executive Team.

Unacceptable Behaviour

4.21 We understand that customers may feel upset or frustrated when making a complaint, however there are some behaviours or actions that we consider unacceptable. These include:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour – examples include, but are not limited to, threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, derogatory and discriminatory remarks, rudeness, inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated or malicious allegations
- Unreasonable demands – examples include, but are not limited to, demanding responses within unreasonable timescales, refusing to speak to employees who can assist and/or insisting on speaking only to a particular member of staff, repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns
- Unreasonable persistence – examples include, but are not limited to, persistent refusal to accept decisions or explanations made in relation to a complaint, continuing to pursue a complaint without presenting any new information, making excessive and unwarranted contacts taking up a disproportionate amount of staff time and resources

4.22 Demonstration of these behaviours may result in a complaint not being investigated, escalated and/or action being taken to prevent further unreasonable behaviour as per our Unacceptable Behaviour policy.

5. Statutory requirements

- RSH Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard



- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- GDPR together with the new Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018)
- Equality Act 2010

6. Related policies

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- Customer Strategy
- Compensation Policy
- Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Rents and Service Charges Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy / GDPR

7. Monitor and review process

- 7.1 We monitor and analyse the types of complaints we receive and the way they have been handled. This includes, upon conclusion of a complaint, satisfaction surveys being conducted to assess customer satisfaction.
- 7.2 The monitoring and analysis we do helps us to ensure that our policy is fit for purpose, our process is being managed in a fair and consistent manner, our staff training is appropriate, we deliver against our resolution promises and we are achieving our complaint service standards.
- 7.3 Performance and trends relating to the complaints service will also be regularly reviewed by Management, Executive and appropriate Board/Panel as agreed, and performance results will be published in annual reports to customers.
- 7.4 This policy will be approved by the Executive and reviewed annually.

8. References/appendices

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Author	Owner	Date approved	Review date
Danielle Lethbridge	Sarah Phillips	November 2018	November 2019