



Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

Hull Churches
Housing
Association

April 2024

Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1. Hull Churches Housing Association (HCHA) welcomes feedback on our services, whether positive or negative. Effective handling of comments, compliments and complaints increases customer confidence and satisfaction and can provide valuable insights into what we do well and where we need to improve.

1.2. We aim to:

- encourage feedback, both positive and negative
- resolve complaints to the resident's satisfaction, quickly and sensitively
- resolve complaints at the first point of contact, wherever possible
- learn from comments, compliments and complaints to help us improve our services.
- provide a fair and accessible complaints procedure that does not set up unnecessary procedural barriers

in operating this Policy, the Association meets the requirements of the Regulatory Standards for Social Housing Providers, and the Housing Ombudsman Service' Complaints Handling Code 2024.

2. Scope

2.1. This Policy applies to the Association customers, staff and approved contractors. Included below are definitions used throughout the Policy of 'Comment', 'Compliment' and 'Complaint'.

2.2. HCHA's aim is to treat all customers fairly and apply a consistent approach. However, situations do vary considerably, and staff will use their judgment to deal with each specific case depending on the circumstances. Staff may also take advice from the Associations legal advisors as to the most appropriate course of action and/ or joint working.

3. Definitions

3.1. Comments

A comment is positive or negative feedback about our service, which does not require a response. Anyone can make a comment to Hull Churches. All comments will be recorded and be investigated, and we will take action as required. Comments on areas of strength or weakness are used to continuously improve our service.

3.2. Compliment

A compliment is an unsolicited expression of gratitude or praise for a member of staff or service area. Anyone who has a relationship with Hull Churches can compliment a member of staff, a team or the organisation. Compliments are passed on to staff and their line manager and are used to identify areas of good practice we can learn from.

3.2 Complaint

A complaint is any 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, which requires further investigation and a written response.

3.3 Service request

A request for a service, such as a repair or the logging of an incident, which has not been made to the Association previously

4. Compliance and Legislation

4.1. In providing opportunities for customers to provide feedback on our services, the Association shows compliance with a wide range of legislation as well as the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024 through annual self-assessment.

Other principal Acts include:

- The Housing Acts
- The Crime and Disorder Act,
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act
- The Housing and Regeneration Act
- The Localism Act
- GDPR and Data Protection Act
- The Equality Act
- The Human Rights Act
- The Protection of Freedoms Act
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act

4.2. The Association is committed to regularly reviewing this policy and keeping its contents in line with the latest versions of these acts

5. Access and Communication

5.1. The Association is committed to ensuring that our Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure are accessible to everyone. The Association will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for the Association or use any of its services.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

6.1. The Association is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty with positive regard for the following core strands of equality; Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Maternity and paternity, Religion and/or Belief.

6.2. The Association recognises that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio-economic circumstances, employment status, class, appearance, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.

6.3. The Association will ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation. The Association will ensure as far as is possible that staff and others with whom the Association works, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act.

6.4. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Antisocial behaviour, Domestic abuse, Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Equality and Diversity Framework
- Involvement and Engagement Framework

7. Policy

7.1. Statement of Intent

- In setting the strategic direction of the organisation the Board and Senior Leadership Team commit to supporting communities to create safer environments and communicating to all customers a culture of transparency, honesty and integrity.
- The Association will communicate its expectations of behaviour from the outset either for the landlord/tenant relationship through a legal tenancy agreement and/or the care & support provider/client relationship, through a legal care agreement and throughout the relationship. The Association will expect the tenant to abide by the terms and conditions of these agreement at all times.
- We believe most minor problems are best resolved by prompt, informal discussion with the staff concerned.

- If the problem is not resolved promptly, or the complainant is unhappy with the actions proposed, then a formal complaint should be made.
- The Association will deal with comments, compliments and complaints impartially, objectively and professionally.
- Making a comment, compliment or complaint will not result in any advantageous nor adverse consequence such as treating a customer differently.
- Formal complaints are investigated in confidence. Information is disclosed only on a 'need to know' basis.
- The Association will continually evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken in response to a comment, compliment or complaint and will use this information to develop service standards, ensure appropriate resources are always available and set challenging targets for constant improvement.

7.2. Approved contractors

If comments, compliments or complaints received relate to an agency or contractor providing a service on behalf of Hull Churches Housing Association, under no circumstances will an agency or contractor take the lead if further investigation is needed. We will however, as part of our complaints' investigation, contact the agency or contractor. In doing so, we take into account General Data Protection Regulations and share information on a 'need to know basis' only.

7.3. Putting Things Right

Where the Association is shown to have made a mistake or treated the complainant unfairly, we will apologise and, where practical, put the mistake right. If we find we have acted fairly and in accordance with our policies, we will give a full explanation.

If the complainant has experienced loss or damage for which the Association is responsible, reasonable claims for compensation will be considered. All claims for compensation, other than those outlined in the Compensation Policy, will need the approval of the Board.

7.4. Time Limits

Comments, compliments or complaints must be made within twelve months of the matter occurring, unless it has only recently become known or concerns an on-going delay. If a customer feels that the time limit should not apply, they will need to tell us the reasons so that a mutual amendment can be agreed.

This time limit is in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code 2024, which also clearly sets out timeframes for responses to complaints received and escalated. These allow for a timely response to improve our services. If the Association feels it cannot adhere to these timescales, we will inform the complainant of the reasons so that a mutual amendment can be agreed.

7.5. Recording, Reporting, Learning and Publicising

- One of the aims of this policy is to identify opportunities to improve our services.
- We record all comments, compliments and complaints in a systematic way so that we can use the data for analysis and management reporting. By recording and using the information in this way, we can identify and share best practice, address causes of complaints and, where appropriate, identify training opportunities and introduce service improvements
- To collect suitable data, it is essential to record all feedback in line with minimum requirements, as follows:
 - the customer's name and address
 - the date, and the method by which, the complaint was received
 - the nature of the complaint and the service the complaint refers to
 - the date at which a stage 1 complaint was closed, or escalated to stage 2
 - the underlying cause of the complaint, reasons for remaining dissatisfaction and any remedial action taken at either stage
 - lessons we have learned, and improvements made to services

7.6. Performance

- The Board will receive half yearly updates on the following performance indicators:
 - Number of new comments, compliments and complaints
 - Average number of days to resolve a formal complaint
 - % satisfied with the outcome of the complaint being resolved
- The Association constantly strives to improve the services it provides to meet the needs of customers. For every formal complaint that is investigated by the Association or where actions are taken, the Association will survey customers involved to assess their satisfaction with way the case was handled, and the outcomes achieved. The Association will also take appropriate action where customers express dissatisfaction to improve the services provided.
- The Association will analyse all feedback as a means of identifying areas for improvement.

7.7. Exclusions

- If the issue is not a comment, compliment or complaint within the definition of this policy, we will deal with it through the relevant alternative procedure. This includes:

- a first request for service, information or an explanation of our policies and procedures
- neighbour disputes or anti-social behaviour, unless such incident is followed by a formal complaint referring to our failure to deal with the incident appropriately
- issues regarding hate crime or domestic violence unless such issue is followed by a formal complaint referring to our failure to deal with the issue appropriately
- a claim being dealt with by our insurers
- issues where a customer has commenced legal action against us
- a dispute against the amount of rent or service charge being charged
- appeals against policy decisions

7.8. Policy Implementation

- All staff have a responsibility to be aware of and abide by the provisions set out in this Policy and associated procedures. This will include recognising feedback, recording feedback accordingly and to be able to direct any customer concerns or enquiries that may arise to line managers and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team appropriately.
- As such, all staff will be trained to manage comments, compliments and complaints effectively and efficiently in accordance with this policy and associated procedures.
- Managers, Senior Leadership Team and Chief Executive have responsibility for investigating all formal complaints according to the procedures set out below. They will also be responsible for preparing half yearly reports to the Board and carrying out any strategic review of services.
- Overall responsibility and accountability for the implementation of this policy lies with the Chief Executive and Board.

7.9. Policy Update and Review

- The Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or more frequently if required by changes in legislation, regulation or as a result of system audits and continuous quality improvement processes.
- Major changes in this policy and subsequent implications on the complaints handling process and procedures will be presented to the Board for approval.
- Minor changes in this policy and subsequent implications on the complaints handling process and procedures will be presented to the Board for monitoring.