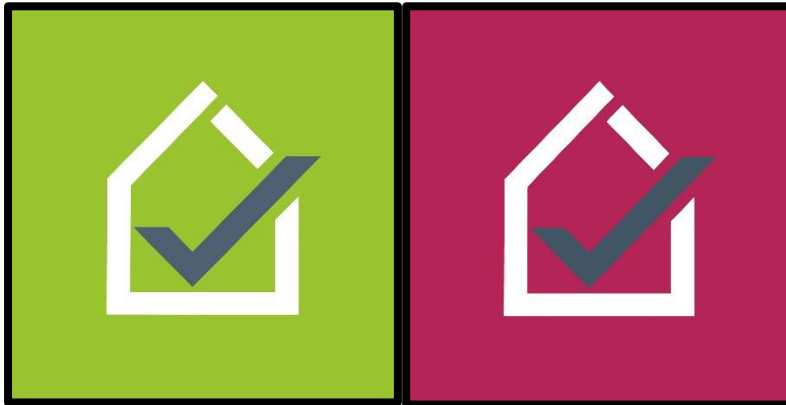


COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY



MONITORING INFORMATION:

POLICY/PROCEDURE/STRATEGY:

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENT POLICY

DATE APPROVED:

JUNE 2024

EXPIRY DATE:

JUNE 2027

OWNER:

HEAD OF CUSTOMER INSIGHT & EXPERIENCE

APPROVAL ROUTE:

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Complaints and Compliment Policy

Introduction:

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint code 2024 became statutory on the 1st of April 2024 and sets out, in law, the requirements that landlords are obliged to follow. The Complaints and Compliment policy and procedure is set out for both Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild staff to adhere to.

It is important to appreciate that the formal complaint investigation process is not to 'find fault,' but to look at the practices followed in relation to the complaint issues at hand. This also provides an insightful valuable source of information, and we will use these experiences to identify service problems and make improvements. Whilst we aim to provide high quality, person-centred services to all our customers, we recognise that sometimes we get things wrong. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that we handle complaints fairly and promptly using them as an opportunity to learn, improve and develop our services.

We recognise that handling complaints effectively is not just about adhering to policies and time limits. It is also about the culture within our organisation and the behaviour and attitudes we display.

Complaints and Compliments are the valued voice of our customers and tell us how they feel about the services that we offer; we will embed an ethos of using complaints to learn where we can improve the performance of our services.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Put the customer at the heart of the complaints process
- Apologise when we have made a mistake, or when something has gone wrong, to make things right as soon as possible.
- Keep the customer informed and do what we say we will, when we say we will do it
- Make sure we address all elements of the complaint and provide clear explanations for any decisions made or actions taken
- Share our learning from complaints and use feedback in a positive way to learn and improve services

- Encourage staff to feel empowered to resolve the customer's issues

Definition

The Housing Ombudsman defines a complaint 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”.

A request for service, action or enquiry from a resident will not be treated as a complaint. A request for service is defined as;

“A request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right”

Teign Housing differentiates between a service request and complaint in the following way:

Ask Once – where a customer makes a first-time request, this is defined as a service request.

We will record these requests, an appropriate staff member within the service area will action the requests and they will be monitored.

Ask Twice or More – where a customer has had to make a repeat request this will fall under the definition of a complaint set out above. We will record this as a formal complaint.

A resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such.

A service request would cover but is not limited to the following;

- A request to report a new repair
- A report that a repair did not go ahead as planned for example, a missed appointment
- A request to book an appointment with a member of staff

A complaint would cover but is not limited to the following;

- Failure to provide a service
- Failure to provide a service within agreed timescales
- Unprofessional staff conduct or behaviour
- Failure to act within a policy or procedure

A complaint must be raised when a customer expresses dissatisfaction with the response to a service request. A complaint can be made verbally, face to face, by phone, in writing, by email and by direct messaging on social media.

Where an expression of dissatisfaction with services is made through a survey or wider feedback this will not immediately be defined as a complaint. We will follow this up where we have the resident's contact details and will make them aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to.

Our approach to complaint management is local resolution of complaints as soon as possible with a focus on putting things right and learning from the complaint.

Process

Our complaints process is

- Make things right stage 1 – Investigation - the first stage of the formal complaint.
- Make things Right stage 2 – Review - the second stage of the formal Complaint.

Stage 1 = Acknowledgement to the customer and agreed action plan within 5 working days. Investigation by local teams and a full response, including lessons learned and actions taken to improve our service, sent to customer within 10 working days.

Stage 2 = Acknowledgement to the customer within 5 working days, full review of stage 1 undertaken by a manager who may be from a different business area to the complaint. This can be supported by an Involved Resident assigned to case, if required, and with full permission from complainant. A full response with any further lessons learned and actions taken to improve our service, is then sent to the customer within 20 working days.

If the Customer still feels that we have not 'Made Things Right' at stage 2, they then have the right to escalate their unresolved complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Where more than one service area is involved in a complaint, the service area responsible for the core part of the complaint will respond to the Customer Insight and Resolutions Manager within the agreed timeframe incorporating all elements of the complaint and with a completed response. It is the responsibility of the staff member that the complaint was originally allocated to, to correspond with other service areas as required.

When investigating a complaint, consideration will be given to the most suitable remedy and we will apologise immediately when we made a mistake and, where appropriate, offer financial gestures of goodwill as per the Compensation Policy.

Where we have agreed an action plan with the complainant, we will continue to track the actions to completion and provide progress reports to the complainant.

Residents are able to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf. They can also be represented or accompanied at any meeting with Teign Housing or Templar HomeBuild.

Scope

This policy relates to tenants, leaseholders, former tenants, shared owners, and applicants who receives or requests a service from Teign Housing or Templar HomeBuild and anyone acting on their behalf. Anyone making a complaint that has no connection to Teign Housing or its services will only be taken through to Stage 1 of our procedure. All complaints which are handled by a third party will be subject to the Complaint Code.

Where a member of the public makes a complaint to Teign Housing, Teign Housing will investigate and respond to each case on its own merits.

No decision or action should be taken to increase one customer's satisfaction to the detriment of another customer or group of customers. No customer will be subject to any adverse treatment by Teign Housing or Templar HomeBuild as a direct result of them making a complaint.

We will only deal with complaints that are brought to Teign Housing or Templar HomeBuild's attention within 12 months of the event leading to the customers dissatisfaction.

We will not re investigate complaints which have already been taken through our complaints process (please see the supporting procedure and our Contact Management Plan policy for more information) or where legal proceedings have begun.

We recognise that complaints made anonymously highlight a customer's dissatisfaction and/or concerns and can provide a learning opportunity for the organisation. We will therefore investigate complaints made anonymously in line with this complaints policy to the extent that it is practical to do so.

We reserve the right to deal with a complaint in a different way to that outlined in this policy and the associated procedure where the circumstances merit it. The decision to do so must be taken by a member of the Management Team. The procedure sets out circumstances in which Managers may choose to suspend or amend the usual complaint process with the agreement of the customer.

As the aim of the policy is to resolve complaints as soon as possible with a focus on Making things right, the use of mediation is encouraged by all parties where suggested.

Exclusions

We will not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints and will consider the individual circumstances of each complaint. There may be occasions where a customer has expressed their dissatisfaction with a service, but it is not appropriate to follow the Complaints Policy. In such instance the customer will be advised and given a detailed explanation why and alternative procedures including the right to take the decision to Ombudsman.

Examples of what is excluded;

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.
- Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.
- Matters that have previously been considered under the Complaints Policy
- Liability issues that are subject to an insurance claim
- The complaint is pursued in an unreasonable manner
- Complaint regarding Anti-social behaviour. This will be managed via the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure.

The Unacceptable Behaviour Policy will be implemented where residents and/or their representatives become persistent or demonstrate unreasonable behaviour when working with us regarding their complaint. Any restrictions imposed will be proportionate and in line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Compensation

We recognise that in some cases it may be appropriate to award compensation, a goodwill gesture, or reimbursement in relation to a complaint. Compensation or a goodwill gesture will be offered in line with the Compensation Policy and Procedure.

All complaints, compliments and compensation will be recorded on our housing management software.

Compliments

It is helpful to hear from customers when they are pleased with our services or our staff/contractors; it helps us to focus on what our customers want.

Compliments are shared with staff and used to continuously improve our service. They are also reported quarterly to the Executive Team and Board.

Continuous Learning and Improvement

Teign Housing supports a positive complaint handling culture and sees complaints as the golden thread for continuous improvements to our services. We will promote this culture by;

- Quarterly reports to senior managers and Board that considers the themes or trends to identify any systemic issues, serious risks, or areas for improvement for appropriate action.
- Using learning from complaints to improve communication and record-keeping, revise policies and procedures, and to train staff and contractors.
- Annual completion of the Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment
- CHATT (Complaint Handling at Teign and Templar) group will receive quarterly reports on complaints and will review a selection of complaints to ensure compliance with this Policy and to make recommendations for future handling and management of complaints to Management.
- Each investigating officer will be sent a Lesson Learnt form to complete by the Customer Insight and Resolutions Manager.
- Sharing learning with the complainant and widely with customers.
- Sharing learning at team meetings across Teign Housing and Templar Homebuild

Consultation

Periodic consultation with complainants will inform the effectiveness of this policy and will be used to improve the policy and procedure.

Teign Housing will publish this policy, the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code and information about the Housing Ombudsman Service on our website.

Performance Standards:

The Customer Insight and Resolutions Manager at Teign Housing is responsible for monitoring this policy to ensure that it is correctly applied. Teign Housing and Templar HomeBuild will record and monitor and use all complaints, customer satisfaction surveys, and “lessons learnt” to amend policies, procedures and working practices where appropriate.

Information about complaints handling performance and ‘lessons learnt’ will be benchmarked against HouseMark and be reported to committees, team meetings, tenant groups and on the website.

Review and Monitoring

The Customer Insight and Resolutions Manager will undertake regular reviews of the policy and any related procedures at intervals of three years or when considered appropriate. The policy will also be reviewed when other information that impacts the policy becomes available.