

## Complaints Policy

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### 1. Policy Statement

Complaints are really important to us. We need to know if our service goes wrong so we can put things right and learn from our mistakes.

We capture all expressions of dissatisfaction, even if we feel we've delivered services in line with our policies. It helps us to concentrate on improving the things that are important to our customers.

Our complaints policy covers an actual or perceived failure in;

- our service offer
  - something we have or haven't done
  - the way our people delivered the service or
  - Services delivered by our partners.
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### 2. Contents:

This Policy sets out how we deal with unhappy customers and formal complaints.

Through this policy we seek to make sure:

- We are consistent and fair
  - Complaints are resolved as quickly as possible
  - Mistakes are corrected quickly and we do what we say we will
  - That action is taken to prevent similar service failures happening again
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### 3. Reference Documents

The Homes & Communities Agency requires us to have a Complaints Policy and to be members of the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service.

Our Independent Customer Panel operates under the framework suggested by The National Tenant Organisations Guide 'Tenant Panels: Options for Accountability.

If your complaint is Consumer Credit related please refer to our [Consumer Credit Complaints Policy](#).

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### 4. Legislative Requirements including links

Bromford's policy complies with;

[HCA Consumer standard](#)  
[Localism Act 2011](#)

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### Complaints covered by this Policy

Where the customer has expressed dissatisfaction with the service we have provided directly or by any company we employ to provide a service on our behalf.

### Complaints not covered by this policy

This policy does **not** cover Consumer Credit relating complaints or complaints where there is another appeal process already in place to handle them. However, if we fail to deal with an issue through the relevant appeal process, then the failure to do so can be dealt with as a Complaint under this Policy.

### How we manage complaints

We will;

- Accept complaints in any way the complainant wishes
- Notify customers how to make a complaint through our website
- Accept complaints from a third party acting on a customer's behalf. We need signed authority from the customer to divulge any information we hold to a third party. This includes requests from Local Authority Ward and County Councillors, however this is not necessary for MP's
- Offer a review process if the customer feels their complaint has not been resolved
- Offer mediation whenever it seems appropriate in order to reduce the time, cost and/or improve the outcome of the complaint

When we have an unhappy customer, we will do all we can to resolve the issue there and then. If we can resolve the issue for the customer straight away, we will capture the insight around the issue by recording the reason the customer was unhappy, even if it wasn't a service failure.

Where a complaint is made about the conduct of our people, appropriate consideration of our People Policies will be made if and where required.

If we cannot resolve the issue there and then due to the complexity of the issue, we will raise a formal complaint.

We have two stages of our complaint process.

#### **Stage 1**

We aim to deal with all complaints at Stage 1 because we want to put things right quickly. We will keep in touch with the customer verbally unless the customer requests another type of communication.

We aim to respond within 7 days. However, if the complaint is complex we will discuss and agree timescales directly with the customer.

If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome at stage 1, they have the right to request their complaint is reviewed at stage 2. We will need to understand what issues are unresolved from our previous response. Before escalating the complaint, we will review our previous response to ensure there are no outstanding and unresolved issues that can't be resolved straight away.

## Stage 2

A Senior Bromford Colleague will review the entire case with a member of the Customer and Communities Network. They may arrange to meet the complainant giving as much flexibility as possible to meet the customers' preference. The complainant can bring along a friend or advocate for support.

We aim to respond within 14 days. However, if the complaint is complex we will discuss and agree timescales directly with the customer. The outcome of the review will be communicated in writing. This is the final stage of our internal complaints process.

We may also escalate a complaint for review at stage 2 if we consider the dissatisfaction has already been fully investigated through another process. This will be communicated and agreed with the customer on acknowledgement of the complaint.

## Independent Customer Panel

If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome of our internal procedures we recognise an Independent Customer Panel (ICP) where the customer can refer their complaint to within 6 months of the Stage 2 response.

The Panel will review the information relating to the complaint and facilitate local resolution impartially, acting as an honest broker and constructively challenging both sides.

Having completed the review, the Panel may either refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman who will carry out a further independent review, or uphold the decision made at the stage 2 review.

The complainant may refer their complaint directly to the Ombudsman without referral to the ICP but **will need to wait 8 weeks** from the date of the stage 2 response before the Ombudsman will accept the case for adjudication.

Customers living in our Care Homes are regulated by the Care Quality Commission and can contact the Commission to review any 'care' related complaint if they feel it was not satisfactorily resolved at Stage 2.

**Restricting or changing access of complainants.** On rare occasions we may make the decision to restrict a customer's access to our services by making alternative arrangements for communication to manage the relationship more effectively. For full detail as to how and why the decision will be taken refer to our Restricting Customer Access Policy.

## Learning lessons from complaints

To learn from mistakes and continually improve, we review activity and trends around complaints and what action is taken to improve the service and prevent similar issues reoccurring.

The Head of Customer Service is responsible for the Complaints Policy and provides an annual report for scrutiny by the Customer and Communities Network.