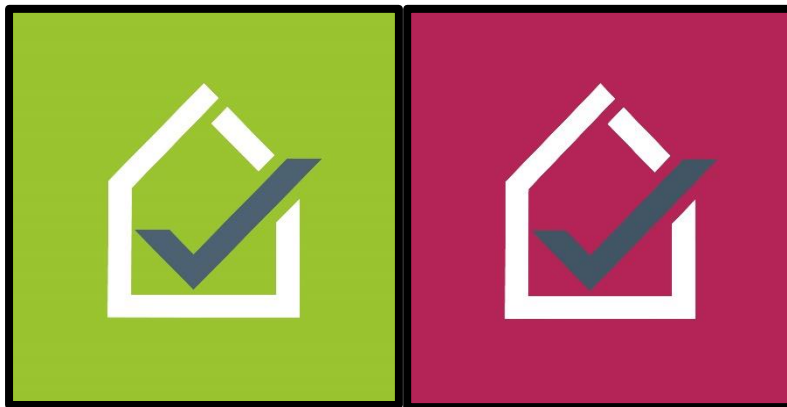




COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENT PROCEDURE



MONITORING INFORMATION:

POLICY/PROCEDURE/STRATEGY:	COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENT PROCEDURE
DATE APPROVED:	JULY 2021
EXPIRY DATE:	JULY 2024
OWNER:	ANDREA COLSON
JOB TITLE:	RESOLUTIONS MANAGER
APPROVAL ROUTE:	SMT

Complaint and Compliment Procedure



What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions by the organisation, own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers

Not all expressions of dissatisfaction are complaints many are requests for information, advice, or repairs requests, this is where the customer raises their dissatisfaction giving us the opportunity to Make Things Right for example.

A customer calls in to report a water leak they express their dissatisfaction as water has flooded their floor, this is the first time they have called to report the leak, this call is a request for a repair, though dissatisfied the customer is not making a complaint at this stage.

The Aim:

The aim of the complaints process is to use clear communication to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and learn from our mistakes, so they are not repeated.

Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild's approach to a complaint is to reach a resolution as soon as possible with a focus on 'Making things Right'

Receiving complaints

Complaints may be received by any means:

- letter
- email
- web form
- social media
- over the telephone
- in person whilst a member of staff is on site or visiting

Any member of staff may receive a verbal or written complaint, they will need to process and understand the information being shared with them, decide if it's a service request or a complaint and advise the customer any of the following where appropriate:

If the complaint is about - Noise Nuisance, Dog Fouling, Parking, or any issue with neighbours` Teign do not class them as a complaint because they are identified as tenancy issues and are captured within our Anti-Social Behaviour policy & procedure.

Staff will need to be advise and guide the customer to the Anti-Social Reporting page or the staff member can offer to complete the form for them during the call. We should also advise the customer that if they are not satisfied with the way the issue is delt with by the relevant team then they could look to raise a complaint at that point as this would be a complaint about potentially 'our handling of the issue' ' service delivered' or 'Lack of Action'

Where complaints are received from someone acting on behalf of the customer, we will need to ensure we have the permission of the customer to discuss with the third party. Where permission cannot be gained the complaint may be investigated but information which can be shared with the third party will be very limited.

'Make Things Right' stages 1 to 2 are open to tenants, leaseholders, shared owners and applicants who receives or requests a service from Teign Housing or Templer 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.

We will not investigate a complaint if:

- A request for service, action or information
- A report of antisocial behaviour -Noise Nuisance, Dog Fouling, Parking, or any issue with neighbours (Unless the issue relates to how we have handled it)
- Matters that have previously been investigated and resolved under our complaint's procedure
- If the complaint is about an incident over 6 months old
- Matters that are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings.
- A query about a policy (unless the issue relates to failure to comply with the policy)
- Concerns about the level of rent/service charge or the amount of the rent/service charge increase (depending whether a rent/tenancy is secure/affordable/social,

customers can appeal to the government about their level of rent or service charge;
customers can contact their housing officer in the first instance for information)

- concerns from leaseholders and shared owners about the reasonableness or increase of service charges (they may be able to appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal see: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/residential-property#leasehold> or for advice is available from the Leasehold Advisory Service at <https://www.lease-advice.org/>).
- issues being pursued in an unreasonable manner
- issues the Ombudsman has already decided upon

In all of these cases. Clear communication with the customer identifying the reasons we are declining to raise as a complaint should be sent to them in writing (email or letter)

Procedure:

‘Make Things Right’ Now

When a customer raises their dissatisfaction, ALL staff will have the aim to resolve it during the initial contact, the options to achieve a resolution will be discussed with the customer and if they are happy to proceed then the member of staff will resolve the issue and record it Housing Management System.

Logging a Resolution at ‘Make Things Right’ Now

The staff member dealing with the initial dissatisfaction must log the conversation and resolution on CX –THB Hub log on their tracker and THB staff log via the Resident Liaison Officer.

Example 1 – A customer calls in unhappy that an appointment has been missed – the call handler apologises and agrees with the customer to send someone PM the same day – Tenant happy = issue resolved

Example 2 : A customer has received an invoice for removal of carpets from their former address, customer calls staff member who retrieves the saved PVI paperwork and sees it was agreed for the customer to leave all carpets, they should then reassure the customer a mistake has been made – requests finance to retract the invoice = Issue resolved

It is important for us to log all resolved dissatisfaction as this enables us to identify trends and make sure we learn from this information to prevent tenants having to complain.

If we cannot Make Things Right Now

If the customer is not satisfied with the staff's response and requests to make a formal complaint, or the staff member is unable to resolve the issue, there and then they must:

- Apologise that the tenant has had to make a complaint / for how the issue has made the customer feel
- Complete the online 'Make things right' form
- Advise the tenant that this has been completed and they will be contacted within the next 5 working days.
- If the customer has any special needs, we will try to accommodate these – for example, larger print, information in first language, interpreters etc.

Make Things Right Stage 1 - Investigation

Any member of staff in Teign Housing or Templer HomeBuild receiving a request to log a complaint will record the details on the 'Make Things Right' online form and advise the customer they will be contacted within 5 working days from receipt of the complaint by the Resolutions Manager.

Wherever possible the customer must be advised of the 2-stage formal complaint process, so they are aware of their right to escalate their complaint if they do not feel it is successfully resolved at any stage. Always direct them to the website / brochures for more information and record this signposting.

The Resolutions Manager will be the main point of contact throughout this stage for Customers and staff.

They will:

- Make contact with the customer within 5 working days of receiving the complaint and agree an action plan to investigate the complaint.

The process of agreeing an action plan may include a telephone / email conversation. Teams / WhatsApp or a face-to-face meeting, this will be led by the customer and what they feel comfortable with.

An Acknowledgement and Action plan (*Template: Acknowledgement Action plan stage 1*) will be sent to the Customer

- The Resolutions Manager will assign areas of the complaint to the correct staff member and advise them of the initial contact and action plan agreed.
What information / investigation is required and a time frame for them to work within, this is to ensure we can respond to the customer within 10 working days.

It is the responsibility of all staff to complete their investigations / supply information and work within the agreed timeframes in order for us to comply with the complaints timeline and deliver the agreed service to our customers that is complies with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Code. Failure to comply can result in a Complaint Handling Failure Order

- The requirement is to investigate and complete the action plan within 10 working days. Where there is good reason, this may take longer to complete it will be the assigned staff members responsibility to communicate any extension need with valid reason to the Resolutions Manager. The customer must be kept informed in writing by the Resolutions Manager
- The assigned staff member will investigate the complaint and feedback to the Resolutions Manager their findings and proposed resolution in writing within the agreed time frame. Those staff who have not discussed timeframe issues with the Resolutions Manager to agree adjustments required or do not comply, will be reported to their line manager. All staff are accountable within a Complaint Handling Failure Order from the Ombudsman.
- Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild aim to provide good services in line with our service standards. If we fail to do this, we will consider making a compensation payment. Should compensation be offered it will need to be awarded case by case within the compensation Policy and Procedure, customers should not have to wait unduly for teams to agree cost codes etc the award will be made and paid where accepted within the time frames agreed in the complaints policy and procedure.
- Resolutions Manager is responsible for recording and logging all correspondence for each complaint. As well as all lessons learned, actions required and actions taken, this will provide data for analysis and identifying trends and areas of no compliance across the business.
- Once the action plan has been completed the Resolutions Manager will contact the customer, confirm the agreed action has taken place with investigation feedback, the lessons learned, and actions taken. (*Template: Response Stage 1*) The tenant has 10 working days to agree they are satisfied or to request to escalate Make Things Right Stage 2

A complaint will not usually be escalated if we are still answering queries raised by the customer or if there are issues being resolved (such as ongoing works).

Resolving complaints at Making it Right Stage 1

- If we have not heard from the customer within 10 working days of resolving the complaint, the complaint will be identified as resolved on the system.
- At this point a satisfaction survey will be undertaken by the Resolutions Manager to gain feedback from the complaint process. Email is the preferred method if available. If not, a telephone satisfaction survey will be attempted three times and if that is unsuccessful a written survey will be sent
- The Senior Management Team will periodically review a sample of the complaint responses to provide constructive feedback and ensure lessons are learned.

Make Things Right Stage 2 - Review

Stage 2 should be used to review the complaint if the customer has not been satisfied with the initial 'Make Things Right' stage 1 response.

The complaint will be escalated on our housing management system by the Resolutions Manager.

This investigation will be undertaken by a Senior Manager (SM) from a different business area than the complaint. The complainant will have been asked in the stage 1 response letter if requesting escalation to stage 2 do they give permission to share information of the complaint with an involved customer who will be assigned to work alongside the SM to review the stage 1 outcome and review it from a Customers perspective. Allowing the review to consider the impact the complaint and resolution may have had on the complainant. The information shared will be anonymised no names or addresses will be shared.

- The assigned manager will contact the customer within 5 working days to inform them of their intention to investigate (*Template: Acknowledgement Action plan stage 2*)
- The Resolutions Manager will provide the Senior Manager with a detailed history of the complaint within the 5 working days after the complaint has been escalated to stage 2. Data Protection regulations will be adhered to when sharing information with other involved customers

- The customer will be invited to discuss with the Manager virtually, face to face, email or over the phone depending on the customers preference.
- The Senior Manager will look at all the evidence previously presented and hear from the staff who investigated the complaint at 'Making it Right' Stage 1, a Technical Expert if required (who may be a member of staff or an independent person) as well as the customer
- They will assess if there have been any administrative errors or misjudgements. They can only change the outcome of the complaint within the policies and procedures of the organisation.
- They will discuss the complaint with the involved customer and consider their perspective / expectation as a tenant regarding the initial investigation and response to the complaint. This feedback will help the final decision of the SM, involved customer input will be logged but not shared with the complainant.
- The Senior Manager will make their decision and write to the complainant to notify them of the outcome including any further lessons learned and required actions, within 15 working days of the acknowledgement of escalation (*Template: Response Stage 2*).
- Resolutions Manager is responsible for recording and logging lessons learned, actions required, and actions taken, this will provide data for analysis and identifying trends and areas of no compliance across the business.

Resolving complaints Making it Right Stage 2

- If we have not heard from the customer within 10 working days of resolving the complaint, the complaint will be logged as resolved
- At this point a satisfaction survey will be undertaken by the Resolutions Manager to gain feedback from the complaint process. Email is the preferred method if available. If not, a telephone satisfaction survey will be attempted three times and if that is unsuccessful a written survey will be sent
- The Senior Management Team will periodically review a sample of the complaint responses to provide constructive feedback and ensure lessons are learned.

Challenge Housing at Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild (CHATT) Group

- Quarterly a Group of involved customers will meet with the Resolutions Manager (RM) to discuss road maps of each complaint. These will be anonymised but will allow the group to monitor the trends and lessons learned. They will be able to challenge the RM as appropriate if they feel the customers voice has not been heard

or we have not acted as we should. Their role is to add a customer's perspective to all communications, decisions and responses during the complaints road map which will enable learning and potentially shape any changes to the process for discussion during future self-assessments.

The customer has the right to escalate their unresolved complaint to a Designated person. A designated person can be an MP, a local Councillor, or a Tenant Panel via the Ombudsman. You can find your MP on the website <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/> or your local Councillor on the website <http://www.writetothem.com/>. A designated person factsheet is available on the Ombudsman's website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Resolving complaints with a Designated person

- If we have not heard from the customer within 10 working days following the designated person's decision we will log as resolved.
- We will contact the customer to ensure resolution has been achieved and review the process and discuss lessons learned.

If the designated person cannot help, they can refer a complaint to the Ombudsman. Complaints to the Ombudsman do not have to be referred by a designated person but if they are not there must be at least 8 weeks from the end of the landlord's complaint process before the Ombudsman can consider the case.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about housing organisations. The Ombudsman must decide what is "fair in all the circumstances". The Ombudsman aims to work with tenants and landlords by making suggestions to resolve complaints. The Ombudsman only investigates complaints where they decide an investigation is proportionate to the circumstances and evidence, for example complex complaints involving many issues.

Suspending the complaints process

The Ombudsman may decide to suspend the complaints process. This may be because:

- An appeal body, tribunal or insurance company is dealing with the issue
- Matters in the complaint are subject to legal proceedings
- There is no value in investigating it
- There is a more effective way of resolving the complaint such as mediation

- The Contact Management policy is used
- The complainant is demanding outcomes outside the remit of the complaints process
- The complainant is submitting repeat complaints, either the same or with variations or additions
- The complainant raises an old complaint within a valid new complaint
- The customer will not communicate in person or by telephone on a complex complaint

The decision to do so must be taken by a member of the Senior Management Team and the customer must be informed in writing of why the process has been suspended, how we will work with them to resolve their issues and any future contact arrangements.

Supporting Customers

- The complainant may have someone with them at any meeting relating to their complaint, who can help them explain their concerns. Such a person cannot be a legal representative but could be a family member; someone from the Citizens' Advice Bureau; someone from a residents group or the Tenants' Forum; an advocate
- If the customer has language, hearing, or visual needs an appropriate service, for example translation or interpreting service, will be made available (at no cost to the complainant) if required

Mediation

- At any stage in the procedure, we may consider that mediation between the landlord and the complainant might help resolve the complaint
- We may also recommend mediation between tenants to support the effective resolution of complaints
- Mediation can be refused

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.

Customers can compliment us via:

- Make Things Right online form
- Letter
- Email
- Telephone
- In Person

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