

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy



Title	Compliment, Comment and Complaints Policy
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1.0 Introduction

Cheltenham Borough Homes is committed to providing a high standard of service to customers. As part of our continuing effort to improve services provided, we rely on feedback from our customers. We want to know when we get it right, so standards can be maintained or improved, and we want to know when someone is not happy with the service they received.

This policy has been aligned with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code which sets out good practice that allows landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

2.0 Policy Statement

CBH will recognise compliments, ensure colleagues are made aware of those received by Service Area and learn from the positive customer experience.

CBH is committed to an honest and thorough approach when dealing with comments and complaints. The policy ensures comments and complaints are handled locally, sensitively and without delay. CBH will be fair, honest and open, will aim to put things right, will seek an effective resolution for all parties and learn from outcomes.

CBH define a complaint as: "An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own colleagues, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents".

The Policy is in line with relevant legislation such as the Localism Act 2011, Housing Act 1996 (schedule 2), General Data Protection Act 2018, Equality Act 2010, Housing Ombudsman Scheme, and Tenant and Involvement Empowerment Standards.

The Policy will be reviewed every three years or amended in response to changes in legislation within this timeframe.

Recommendations for any changes will be referred to the Tenant Scrutiny Improvement Panel for approval.

2.1 Policy Objectives

- To ensure all compliments, comments and complaints are dealt with in accordance with Policy.
- To ensure all residents, leaseholders and colleagues are aware of the policy.
- To identify lessons learned to improve services.
- To have a policy that is simple to understand and use.
- To have a policy that is sensitive to anti-discriminatory matters in respect of age, gender, race, class, disability, culture, language, religion or sexuality.
- To have a policy that is fair, accessible and transparent, CBH values diversity and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity to ensure all customers are treated fairly.
- To use signposting to other organisations such as Citizens Advice, Lease and Shelter to aid the resolution of disputes.

CBH reserve the right to use discretion when applying the policy and may deal with a complaint differently where individual circumstances merit it. Any discretion will be applied fairly and appropriately, complaints will be progressed as far as possible to maximise the opportunity to resolve a dispute.

3.0 Complaints within scope of this Policy

- Delays in delivering services.
- Failure to follow policies and procedures.
- Inadequate or unsatisfactory services.

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- Rudeness, inappropriate or offensive behaviour.
- Unfair discrimination.
- Delays in or failure to make decisions.
- Compensations claims against CBH resulting from a complaint.
- Customer dissatisfaction with contractors/partners working on behalf of CBH.

Not within scope of this Policy

- Complaints about Anti-Social Behaviour (these are dealt with through CBH ASB Policy).
- Request for a repair (unless previous requests have gone unmet).
- Complaints regarding services for which CBH is responsible.
- Complaints regarding Homeseeker Plus Policy (they have their own complaints process).
- Initial requests for services.

4.0 Who can complain

Any customer of CBH or their representative who has been given appropriate consent (third party authorisation will be obtained by CBH).

5.0 Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of GDPR and Data Protection law. CBH reserve the right to discuss complaints with relevant colleagues and/or third parties. Information will only be shared to assist with the investigation and processing of complaints and not for any other reason.

6.0 Time Limits

It is always better to try and resolve issues as soon as they arise but CBH recognise this isn't always possible. A complaint should be made as soon as possible after the event and within three months of the event occurring. If three months has passed since the event exceptions can be considered by the relevant Head of Service.

7.0 How can complaints be raised?

CBH are committed to meeting the diverse needs of customers and will make any reasonable adjustments required on request.

CBH are keen to ensure that there are no barriers to a customer making a complaint. Compliments, comments and complaints can be made in person, in any medium appropriate for the individual including phone, email, the CBH Website, the CBH Portal, on audiotape, in writing, in Braille, in languages other than English. If a translation or Braille is required, the investigation time will be extended in agreement with the complainant to allow documentation to be translated.

Email: CBHcustomerrelations@cbh.org

Via: www.cbh.org

Telephone: 0800 4080000/0300 5550121

In writing: Customer Services Team Leader, Cheltenham Borough Homes Ltd, Hesters Way Resource Centre, Cassin Drive, Cheltenham, GL51 7SU

8.0 Complaint correspondence

- Language and tone must be open, in plain English with no jargon and show empathy to the complainant.
- Each response must be clearly identified: Stage 1 and stage 2 response (final response).
- All elements of the complaint must be responded to.
- Complainants should be informed of the outcome of the complaint including the landlord's position and the complainant given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision. This should be communicated wherever possible verbally with the final outcome letter being followed up to this conversation.

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- Clearly set out findings and conclusions with any evidence.
- Make reference to any relevant policy, procedure, legislation or good practice when providing a response.
- Acknowledge and apologise for any mistake or service failure and where applicable an explanation of what went wrong.
- Consider the outcome the complainant is looking for and if this can be achieved.
- Give details and timescales for any action CBH will take, for example timescales for repairs.
- Explain what CBH have learnt from the complaint and what changes or improvements will happen as a result.
- Give details of any redress offered, for example compensation or other actions
- Signpost the complainant to other sources for advice or support, for example Citizens Advice Bureaux, Age UK, Leasehold advisory service.
- Provide details of how the complainant can escalate their complaint if not satisfied with the response.

9.0 Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures

- CBH's Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures must be kept separate. Following the investigation of a complaint, it falls to the investigating officer to report any possible need for referral to the following:
 - an investigation under the Colleague Disciplinary Procedure; OR
 - an investigation of a criminal offence.
- Should the need for referral arise, it should be passed immediately to the Director for the Service Area and Head of HR should be notified.
- If a decision is taken to embark upon a disciplinary investigation, any other aspects of the complaint should be investigated under the complaint's procedure. The complainant will be advised of the procedure being followed.

10.0 Claims for Negligence or Breach of Contract

Should a complainant explicitly indicate an intention to take legal action in respect of the complaint, the details should immediately be passed to the Director of Service. Investigating officers should inform the customer that their complaint will be transferred to the relevant Director of Service at this point.

11.0 Housing Ombudsman (HO)

- CBH will publicise the role of the Housing Ombudsman in its advice to complainants.
- CBH will co-operate fully with any investigation pursued by the Housing Ombudsman. In such cases the Customer Service Experience Manager will act as the liaison for the investigation under the authority of the Director of Service or CEO.
- The Customer Service Experience Manager will act as the liaison officer when handling complaints, investigations or enquiries from the Housing Ombudsman.
- At the end of a Stage 2 investigation, the complainant will be advised on how they may escalate the complaint following the exhaustion of CBH complaints process. This will be communicated both in writing and verbally.

12.0 Performance Monitoring

- A quarterly report will be sent to The Executive and Leadership team detailing the number of compliments, comments & complaints for each area of service in addition to lessons learnt.
- Updates on compliments, comments and complaints will be included in the CBH News and published on the CBH Website. Performance updates will be included in the annual report
- Performance measures will include: the number of complaints received at each stage, % of stage 1 complaints resolved within agreed timescales, complaints not resolved within agreed timescales, the number of complaints upheld, upheld in part, the average time taken to resolve a complaint, and the feedback category of complaint.

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- An annual extract on compliments, comments & complaints handling will be prepared and included in the Customer Experience update.

13.0 Putting Matters Right

When CBH have upheld or upheld in part a complaint, it is important that this is acknowledged, and the appropriate form of action is taken.

An apology should be given, an explanation as to why the event occurred, what action CBH are going to take to remedy the situation and what lessons have been learnt.

In some instances, it will be appropriate to offer a gesture of goodwill or compensation. Compensatory payments (excluding purchases of goodwill gestures) should so far as is practicable return the complainant to the position they would have been in had there been no failure on the part of CBH.

If compensation is to be offered, the Compensation Policy must be referred to.

14.0 Training

Training will form part of induction training for all new colleagues. Additional training will be provided for colleagues that carry out complaint investigations

Refresher training will take place for all colleagues following approval of the new Compliments, Comments & Complaints Policy.