



Complaints and Compliments Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a social landlord One Housing Group (OHG) recognises providing a high standard of service delivery is essential. The proper handling of complaints is therefore one of OHG’s highest priorities. Staff members are trained to perceive complaints as a valuable resource that handled in the correct manner can only assist in the continuous improvement of the services provided.

To ensure that this policy meets the diverse support needs of OHG and One Support customers, it has been written in consideration with the Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary And Health Service Ombudsman, 2008), The NPSA Being Open Framework and the Department of Health 2009 guidance on better customer care.

OHG has prepared this policy after consultation with residents. This policy lays the foundation for the **Complaints and Compliments Procedure** and should also be considered in conjunction with the OHG **Compensation & Other Payments Policy** and **Compensation & Other Payments Procedure**.

1.1 Definitions

Complaint

The 3-stage complaints policy covers complaints relating to:

- a failure to comply with a policy or procedure
- a decision which the complainant believes is not fair or clear to them
- the behaviour of OHG staff or contractors
- the level or standard of service delivery

It does not cover:

- complaints about services for which OHG is not responsible
- complaints where the complainant is also taking legal action against OHG on the same issue

Stage 1 (resolution)	Full written response from service manager
Stage 2 (review)	Review of stage 1, full written response by Assistant Director/ equivalent Senior manager
Stage 3 (appeal)	Area Board Complaints Panel Hearing – panel must consist of at least one resident representative

Compliment

This policy encourages all kinds of feedback from OHG customers, including positive feedback. When what we do is recognised as good service by customers, it is important that we know. OHG can then learn from this and ensure best practice becomes common practice.

Customer

This policy applies to anyone who contacts our service.

Please note: Recognised residents' associations will follow the complaints procedure specified in their recognition agreement.

2. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Aims

- to value complaints and compliments as an opportunity to learn and improve
- to deliver a complaints service that meets with residents expectations and meets the Audit Commissions "Excellence Standard"
- to increase residents' trust in the organisation
- to increase complainants trust in the complaint management and resolution process
- to make sure staff and customers are aware of the complaints policy and procedure

Objectives

- to thank and apologise
- to implement any improvement to services, resulting from complaints
- to provide timely and full responses
- to resolve problems as quickly and effectively as possible
- to work collaboratively with departments, partners and agencies where necessary to coordinate comprehensive response
- to provide guidance for OHG staff to ensure they can follow the related procedures
- to record, administer and monitor the complaints received into OHG
- to train staff to welcome and encourage complaints, establishing a learning culture within OHG so that it is prepared to accept criticism and learn from complaints.
- to inform staff and customers of the policy and procedure in a clear and informative way

3. POLICY STATEMENT

OHG is committed to providing a high quality service and all staff work towards this aim. However it recognises that customers may sometimes be dissatisfied with the standard of service they receive and that staff can make mistakes. Front line staff aim to resolve problems with early, informal and immediate action, but they will simultaneously provide residents the option to use the formal procedure. The three-stage formal procedure aims to provide customers with an efficient, useful and helpful outcome to their complaint

OHG will deal with all complaints in an open and accountable way and as far as possible according to agreed timescales as set out in the **Complaints and Compliments Procedure**. OHG will keep customers informed of how a complaint is progressing throughout the process.

OHG believes that complaints can provide important lessons and lead to service improvements for residents.

All complaints are made in confidence and OHG will deal with them in a fair, consistent and impartial manner. OHG will always listen, apologise, explain, investigate the complaint in full, and if necessary put things right.

3.1 When the procedure cannot be followed

OHG will operate the complaint handling procedure fairly. However, OHG may deviate from the formal complaint procedure, with agreement from a Director, if circumstances merit it. Deviation from the procedure will be recorded, explained to all parties and the manager must act consistently within the altered procedure.

3.2 When a complaint may be refused or terminated

OHG may refuse to deal with a complaint completely. Such circumstances include:

- complaints made twelve months or more after a complainant became aware of the problem
- If a complaint is about the same matter that has already been considered with only very minor difference, and has exhausted the complaints process. This should then be referred to the Ombudsman (see section 8). If this advice is not taken the complainant will be advised that OHG will not enter into any further correspondence about the matter.
- If a complaint is about a matter that has clearly not caused the complainant any injustice it may be appropriate to end the case at stage 1 of the process. OHG will not meet unreasonable demands or answer every point in an unreasonable letter.
- Where a complaint is persistent or unreasonable (see section 3.3)

Where a complaint meets the above criteria, a decision must be made by a Director to refuse, terminate or accept the complaint. Where it is refused the complainant must be provided with a written notice providing an explanation.

3.3 Persistent or unreasonable complaints

If a complainant has made unreasonable complaints in the past, OHG will not assume that the next complaint is unreasonable. The merits of each case will be considered rather than the attitude of the complainant. All relevant correspondence will be read and evaluated to consider all the circumstances of the complaint, including:

- the history of complaints submitted by an applicant
- whether a complainant has made persistent unreasonable complaints
- whether there is a strong likelihood that such complaints are being made to intentionally cause harassment, divert resources and to disrupt the proper workings of OHG
- whether the complainant or their representative has been rude or aggressive to staff or has produced excessive correspondence.

4 CONFIDENTIALITY

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as confidential. This includes:

- anything of a personal nature that is not a matter of public record about a resident, Customer, applicant, staff or committee member
- sensitive organisational information

Officers will ensure that they only involve other agencies and share information with the consent of the resident concerned, unless:

- OHG is required to by law
- the information is necessary for the protection of children

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

OHG recognises the needs of a diverse population and always acts within the scope of its own **Equality and Diversity Policy**, the Human Rights Act 1998, The Disability Discrimination Act, and Race Relations Act. OHG works closely with its partners to ensure it has a clear understanding of its resident community with clear regularly updated service user profiles. The Business Solutions Team is responsible for recording, analysing and monitoring information on ethnicity, vulnerability and disability.

6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The delivery of this policy will be monitored using a number of techniques described within the **Complaints and Compliments Procedure Document**. Complaints will be monitored in a number of areas and the findings will be regularly published to residents and the Board. In line with best practice recommended by the Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary And Health Service Ombudsman, 2008) OHG seeks continuous improvement through using feedback and lessons learnt from complaints to improve service design and delivery.

7 HEALTH & SAFETY

This policy will be carried out in compliance with the relevant statutory health and safety requirements and regulations.

8 HOUSING OMBUDSMAN AND CARE QUALITY COMMISSION

On the rare occasions when OHG are unable to conclude its complaints process to the satisfaction of the complainant, they will be advised of their right to appeal the decision made by OHG to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). The HOS will review the complaint and the actions of OHG in trying to resolve it, if they are not happy with the decision reached by OHG they may, recommend mediation, ask for more information, order or recommend OHG to do something, if they believe OHG is acting unreasonably refer them to their regulator

The HOS can be contacted via the details below:

Ref: OHG\SI\01\00001



Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN
TEL: 020 7421 3800

For clients of One Support services who are not residents of OHG, a complaint can be taken further by appealing to the relevant Local Authority or where they reside in a regulated scheme they may take the matter further with the Care Quality Commission.