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## **Complaints, Comments, Compliments Policy & Procedure**

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Author: Carolyn Arnold / Gill Rigby

Date Approved: 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Review Date: 9<sup>th</sup> September 2026

Version: 1.0

Pages: 7

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Harborne Parish Lands Charity is committed to creating an open and non-defensive culture which acts to protect the rights of the people with whom we work. We welcome feedback of any kind.



### **Purpose of the policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for listening and responding to all resident feedback, including complaints.

The aim of this Policy is for residents to be able to:

- Feel confident to speak up on concerns and complaints
- Register feedback in the simplest possible way in a private area in each scheme
- Feel listened to and understood, where possible through a private interview
- Be confident that their issues have been resolved and addressed in an efficient and timely manner
- Feel that their feedback has made a difference
- Feel confident raising concerns and complaints which are summarised and reported to Trustees for trends and lessons learnt

This policy is publicised on our website and on the noticeboards at all of our schemes.



### **What Is a complaint?**

A complaint is distinct from a Service Request.

***"A service request is a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right".***

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A complaint arises when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.

We follow the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code which provides the following definition of a complaint:

***"A complaint is 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 a group of residents".***

We want you to tell us when:

- We fail to deliver a service.
- You are unhappy with the standard of our service, or a service delivered on our behalf by another company, for example, a maintenance contractor.
- You are unhappy with our response when you request a service.
- You have received poor customer service or discrimination from a member of our staff or from a company acting on our behalf.
- You are unhappy about our policies or how they have been used.
- You feel you have been treated unfairly.

Whenever you express dissatisfaction, we will always give you the choice to make a complaint.



### Who Can Complain?

You can make a complaint if you are:

- A resident.
- Applying for a home with us.
- Any other person or organisation affected by our services.

You may appoint someone to deal with a complaint on your behalf and you may bring someone with you to any meetings held to discuss your complaint.

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### How Do I Make A Complaint?

You can make a complaint in any way you choose:

- **In Person** – to any member of staff
- **Email** – send to [Info@hplc.org.uk](mailto:Info@hplc.org.uk)
- **Letter** – write to us at 109 Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9AA
- **Phone** – 0121 426 1600

Complaints can be made to any member of staff. Try and speak to the person you would normally deal with, or The Head of Operations if they are unavailable.



### What Happens If I Complain?

We will do our best to sort things out straight away. We recognise there will be times when things are more complex and we need more time, if this is the case we will let you know and keep you informed of progress.

We will:

- Make it easy for you to complain by publicising the policy on scheme noticeboards and on our website
- Deal with complaints on their merits and have an open mind
- Give you a named contact for your complaint.
- Offer extra support if you need it, for example interpreting
- Give you a fair chance to set out your position
- Consider all the information and evidence carefully
- Explain the reasons for decisions made and the details of any remedy to put things right
- Keep the complaint confidential as far as possible with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter
- Resolve complaints at the earliest stage and as quickly as possible

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- Acknowledge mistakes we have made and apologise for any failures and inform you of the action we are taking to prevent the issue happening again
- Let you know your options if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint

### Complaints Involving a Third Party

As the housing provider, HPLC holds overall responsibility for the services delivered to residents, including those provided by third parties. We are accountable for ensuring that any complaint involving a third party is handled with the same level of diligence as if the service was provided directly by our staff. In order to do this, the Complaint Team liaise with the third party and co-ordinate a response in accordance with our complaints process.



### Formal Complaints Procedure

#### Stage One

Once we receive your complaint this will be referred to the nominated Complaints Officer who will:

- Acknowledge your complaint **within 5 working days** of the complaint being received.
- Assemble the complaints team to decide an appropriate course of action to investigate
- Respond fully to you in writing within **10 working days** from of the complaint being acknowledged, confirming:
  - the complaint stage;
  - the complaint definition;
  - the decision on the complaint;
  - the reasons for any decisions made;
  - the details of any remedy offered to put things right;

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- details of any outstanding actions, which will continue to be tracked and actioned promptly. You will receive updates on these actions as appropriate.
- details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if you are not satisfied with the response.
- If it proves impossible to do so within the timescale, we will let you know we need further time to consider the complaint – this should not exceed a further 10 working days unless there is a good reason in which case we will provide a full explanation and a timescale for a response.

### Stage Two

You are not required to explain your reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration and we will make reasonable efforts to understand why you remain unhappy as part of our stage 2 response. Your request for Stage 2 will be acknowledged and logged **within 5 working days** of the escalation request being received.

Your appeal will be passed to the Chief Executive who will review all the information from Stage one and speak to you to see if a resolution can be reached. The Chief Executive will respond **within 20 working days** from the date you requested a review of the Stage one decision. If this proves impossible, they will let you know that further time is needed – this should not exceed a further 20 working days unless there is a good reason in which case they will provide a full explanation and a timescale for a response.

The Chief Executive will inform you in writing of:

- the complaint stage;
- the complaint definition;
- the decision on the complaint;
- the reasons for any decisions made;
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right;
- details of any outstanding actions, which will continue to be tracked and actioned promptly. You will receive updates on these actions.
- details of your options if you are not happy with the stage 2 decision.

### What If I Am Not Happy With The Stage Two Decision?

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If you are still not satisfied with the outcome at Stage two, you will have exhausted HPLC's internal complaints procedure. You then have the right to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. You can engage with the Ombudsman through the following channels:

- **Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)**
- **Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)**
- **Phone: 0300 111 3000**

### **Write to:**

Housing Ombudsman Service  
PO Box 1484  
Unit D  
Preston  
PR2 0ET

If we are unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, we will inform the Ombudsman and notify the complainant in person, providing a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code. Information will also be provided on our website.



## **Satisfaction Monitoring**

An annual complaints performance and service improvement report will be submitted to the Board of Trustees

The annual complaints performance and service improvement report and the Board of Trustees' response will be published on the website.

The Chief Executive is responsible for complaint handling. The Chief Executive will review all complaints to identify opportunities for learning and ways to improve the service.

We review all complaints to identify areas for improvement and we use this learning to revise our policies and procedures, train staff and improve communication and record keeping.

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### **Complaints That Will Not Be Considered**

We will always try to accept a complaint; however a matter will not be considered as a complaint if:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago. There is discretion to accept a complaint outside this time limit if there is a good reason to do so.
- Legal proceedings have started which is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.
- The matter has been previously considered under the complaints policy.

If a complaint is not accepted, an explanation setting out the reasons why will be provided to the complainant and they will be notified of their rights to take the decision to the Housing Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion is fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell us to take on the complaint.

We reserve the right not to deal with a complaint if it is being pursued in an unreasonable manner. Use of offensive or abusive language will not be tolerated.

### **Links to Other Documents**

- [Anti-Social Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Hate Crime Policy](#)
- [Domestic Violence Policy](#)
- [POVA and Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Equality & Diversity Strategy](#)
- [Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints Policy](#)

