

Complaints Procedure for Residents

Introduction

ccha expect a high standard of customer care to be applied when dealing with complaints at all times.

ccha have had regard to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code published July 2020 in the preparation of this procedure, seeking to meet the standards of the code wherever practicable. Details can be found here:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>

Our explanatory leaflet on **How to Make a Complaint** can be found on our website. It provides brief details on what you need to do to make a complaint. This document has been compiled to provide more detailed guidance to residents on how a complaint is processed. It should be read in conjunction with our **Complaints Policy**.

You can make a complaint directly or ask a representative to act on your behalf.

Below are definitions of two types of complaint: formal and informal. ccha record all complaints to identify where we have gone wrong, learn from our experience and seek to put things right by implementing improvements to our working practices.

Definitions

The Housing Ombudsman has recommended a universal definition of a complaint which ccha have adopted as their standard.

A Formal complaint is:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by ccha, our staff or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents”

An Informal Complaint is:

“Where a complainant may be dissatisfied with our service but not at a level where they wish to take the matter forward as a formal complaint and the matter is capable of resolution at an operational level”

IO is an abbreviation for “Investigating Officer”.

Assigned Officer is the member of staff responsible for the case whilst it progresses throughout complaints process.

CIM is the abbreviation for our Customer Investment Manager

CIO is the abbreviation for our Customer Investment Officer

CIA is the abbreviation for our Customer Investment Administrator

CHCP Croydon Housing Complaints Panel

Scope of Complaint

Means “**something ccha have done or not done**” in the provision of providing a customer service where the service has been:

- Delayed
- Failed
- Refused
- Poor quality
- Withdrawn
- Inappropriate

Or has an adverse financial impact for the complainant.

Or where the complainant believes:

- ✓ The staff behaviour is questionable
- ✓ They have been unreasonably disadvantaged
- ✓ They have been unfairly discriminated against

Reports of ASB fall outside the scope of our Complaints Policy, however we will address complaints where we have failed to follow our policies or procedures.

Timeframe for responses

Informal complaint

- 10 working days to resolve or escalate to Stage 1

Formal complaint

- Stage 1 log and acknowledge within **2 working days** of receipt of complaint
- Stage 1 response within **10 working days** of receipt of complaint
- Stage 1 holding response may be sent within **initial 10 working days** including revised date for formal response not to **exceed a further 10 working days** without good reason

- Stage 2 log and acknowledge within **2 working days** of request to escalate
- Stage 2 response within **20 working days** of request to escalate
- Stage 2 holding response may be sent within **initial 20 working days period**.
Delayed response should not **exceed a further 10 working days** without good reason
- Referral to Designated Person within **8 weeks** of Stage 2 closure
- Referral to Housing Ombudsman after **8 weeks** of Stage 2 closure
- Referral to Financial Ombudsman within **6 months** of Stage 2 closure

Our data system

Progress on any type of complaint will be recorded on our data system. All complaints will be logged and tracked in accordance with our set standard of performance criteria set out above.

Staff conduct

We expect the highest standard of behaviour from our staff and for all staff to be aware of how their behaviour can affect others. To achieve this standard, it is the general expectation that all members of staff, including others who may be working on our behalf apply effective behaviour when handling complaints. This will include:

- Being professional and honest with our customers
- Listening effectively
- Communicating regularly with customers and involving them in solutions
- Taking ownership of complaints and dealing with them in accordance with the Policy

Staff should always treat others with courtesy, respect and consideration and conduct themselves professionally when interacting with our residents or a complainant.

Communication with residents

When communicating with residents staff should:

- Use plain language that is appropriate to the resident.
- Address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons

for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

- At the completion of each stage of the complaints process contact the resident advising them of the following:
 - the complaint stage
 - the outcome of the complaint
 - the reasons for any decisions made
 - the details of any remedy offered to put things right
 - details of any outstanding actions
 - details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied.
- Adhere to any arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication.
- Keep residents regularly updated and informed even where there is no new information to provide.
- Given the resident fair opportunity to set out their position and comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.

Social Media communication

ccha will regularly promote and update all our media channels to ensure residents are made aware of their right to complain. This will be done as a minimum every 3 months (quarterly) through our website and our magazine.

ccha will manage communications through social media and will:

- Check social media each working day
- If sensitive information has been included the comment will be deleted and moved to private message for investigation.

ccha roles

Customer Investment Team (CIT)

Comprises:

- Customer Investment Manager (CIM)
- Customer Investment Officer (CIO)
- Customer Investment Administrator (CIA)

1. Customer Investment Manager

The CIM has overall charge of the complaints process. The CIO and CIA reports directly to the CIM.

2. Customer Investment Officer (CIO)

The role of the CIO is to facilitate a smooth process from the time a complaint is received to its conclusion. The Officer has a broad role across all teams and is responsible for identifying potential complaints; facilitating and managing the complaints process and escalating the issue if required.

3. Customer Investment Administrator (CIA)

The CIA is primarily responsible for recording the complaint over the telephone and administrating the online process. This involves logging the complaint, monitoring progress and recording all information.

4. Investigating Officer (IO)

The Investigating Officer is allocated by CIT dependent on the nature and location of the complaint. It will be the Investigating Officer's responsibility to take ownership of the matter; liaise directly with the complainant and regularly report progress. The role is to primarily arbitrate on the dispute and provide a resolution.

The staff member appointed to investigate **Stage 1** of the process would be the appropriate Operations Manager or, if delegated by the Manager, a Senior Officer.

An appropriate Director will be appointed to investigate **Stage 2**.

The IO must communicate both verbally and in writing to the complainant in a timely and satisfactory manner.

Complaint against staff

In the event of the complaint relating to a member of staff the Line Manager will be appointed the Investigating Officer at **Stage 1**.

This also applies to members of staff working for our contractors – complaints will be referred to the relevant Line Manager and recorded as a complaint.

A Director may become involved at **Stage 1** if the matter relates to a member of staff and there is a conflict of interest or a need for confidentiality.

Where appropriate, the Line Manager may liaise with Human Resources in relation to staff matters.

Compensation

The outcome of some complaints involves the payment of compensation.

The IO will make reference to our Compensation Policy. This policy provides for different levels of compensation with some fixed awards for missed appointments and late responses which should be applied as part of the process when considering a complaint.

Informal complaint

An informal complaint is something that is easily resolvable requiring little or no investigation.

Where a customer reports an issue to a member of staff, that member of staff should take responsibility for handling the issue and bringing about a swift resolution.

Where the failure relates to one of our contractors, we will initially refer the issue to them to quickly resolve. If the resident is not satisfied with the outcome, we will then raise a formal complaint.

Any failure of service is monitored centrally, and improvements identified.

The request will be logged and followed up after 10 working days to ensure they are either resolved or escalated through the formal complaint's procedure.

What happens when a complaint is received?

A complaint can be received by any member of staff who should listen, ask and understand what the complainant wants from making the complaint. For example:

- Apologise
- Carry out service/correction
- Provide an explanation

➤ Compensation

The case will be referred to CIT who will appoint an Investigating Officer.

There is then a staged process to follow. At each stage the assigned Officer should update progress with the complainant.

Stage 1

1. CIT will acknowledge in writing by letter within 2 working days and include our understanding of the scope of the issue to be investigated.
2. If the complainant disagrees with the content of the acknowledgement letter, the letter will be revised and re-acknowledged within 2 working days from the date of contact. The Stage 1 process will recommence from the date the revision was notified.
3. CIT will record the case and delegate to an appropriate Investigating Officer.
4. The investigation will look through the facts of the case using our systems and files as well as discussing with the complainant and any other relevant parties such as our contractors.
5. A full written response giving clear reasons for the outcome should be provided within 10 working days from the date the complaint was first reported, with exception of annual holiday, sick leave or jury service.
6. The response letter will state whether the complaint has been **upheld not upheld or partially upheld**.
7. If there is a good reason for a delay, a holding response will be issued with an explanation of what is happening and the expected timescales for sending a formal response.
8. Any delay should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.
9. If a repair or works are to be completed as part of the complaint outcome but will take longer than 10 working days, the complaint response letter will be sent within 10 working days, advising when the works will be due for completion and the final outcome of the complaint investigation.

10. Where compensation is offered and accepted by the complainant as part of the resolution, a compensation acceptance slip will be sent to the complainant with our response letter.
11. The compensation payment will be processed once we are in receipt of the complainants written acceptance of the offer.
12. Our Stage 1 response offers the complainant the option of escalating to Stage 2 of our process if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

Stage 2

Follows the same procedure as Stage 1. The only differences are:

1. A new Investigating Officer will be appointed.
2. Stage 2 completes the ccha process.
3. On completion of Stage 2 the complainant has the option to escalate to an external party as detailed below.

Designated person

If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to escalate beyond Stage 2, they can refer the case to a designated person as defined by the Localism Act 2011:

- Member of the House of Commons
- A local councillor
- Designated tenant panel

Tenant panel

ccha have a formal agreement with Croydon Council for the joint use of Croydon Housing Complaints Panel [CHCP]. This is an independent body of residents appointed by Croydon Council.

Complaints can be referred immediately, and a response is expected within 15 working days from referral.

To pursue this option the complainant must write to ccha and provide written consent for the matter to be referred to CHCP. Once received ccha will contact Croydon Council to commence the process.

The Ombudsman

Complaints can only be referred to the Ombudsman after an 8-week period has passed. Prior to this they must be referred to the Ombudsman by a designated person.

The Housing Ombudsman

For general advice, complaints and escalations, residents are able to access the Housing Ombudsman Service in the following ways:

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

On-line form: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/>

Complaints correspondence in writing: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

Other correspondence in writing: Housing Ombudsman, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London, E14 9GE

The Housing Ombudsman has now issued a new Complaint Handling Code details of which can be found here: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords/complaint-handling-code/>

The Financial Ombudsman

For complaints relating to financial matters residents can access the Financial Ombudsman Service in the following ways:

Telephone: 0800 023 4567

Email: complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Complaints correspondence in writing; The Financial Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, London E14 9SR

Version History	
Version code	1.3
Procedures name	Complaints Procedure for Residents
Lead Officer	Director of Operations
Equality Impact Assessment Completed	March 2020
Resident Consultation Completed	February 2020
Colleague consultation	February 2020
Date of Issue:	March 2021
Date of Review	March 2023
Policies and procedures replaced	New
Amendments Made	<p>Nov'20 –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of complaint amended to bring in line with Ombudsman as stated in the Complaint Handling Code. • Contact details for Ombudsman have been added along with ability to contact at any point for advice and a link to the Complaint Handling Code has been included. <p>Dec'20 –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ombudsman contact details updated. <p>Feb'21 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeframe for responses altered in line with the code. • Section on how to communicate with residents added.

- Revised for public issue.