

Concerns, Complaints and Compliments Policy

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1.0 Introduction

Policy statement

- 1.1 This policy sets out Beyond Housing’s approach to receiving and responding to concerns, complaints and compliments.
- 1.2 We are committed to proactively hearing when we get something wrong and working with customers to resolve concerns and complaints in a consistent, fair, impartial and transparent way. We also want to hear when something is great, through compliments.
- 1.3 We are keen to understand where we need to improve the service we provide. Both positive and negative feedback can help us understand what we can do differently to improve our service in the future.
- 1.4 We aim to deliver an excellent customer experience in line with our corporate strategy to provide quality services to customers. If we fail to do this we will:
 - Apologise
 - Accept responsibility where we have failed
 - If in our control, we will put things right. Where we are unable to control or influence the issue, we will explain and signpost to the relevant agencies/partners where possible
 - Listen to concerns and take effective action to prevent the same thing happening again and learn from the experience
- 1.5 This policy outlines:
 - How we will resolve concerns or complaints

- How a customer can escalate a complaint if they are unhappy with the decision or outcome

2.0 Objective

Aims

2.1 Customers should expect to receive the best customer experience from Beyond Housing. When things go wrong we will:

- Make it easy for customers to tell us when they are not happy
- Manage and resolve concerns and complaints in a timely and effective way
- Work collaboratively and with partner organisations and other external agencies to provide comprehensive and clear resolutions
- Use and understand all complaints data to help improve services and reduce the level of concerns and complaints
- Be accountable in our handling and management of complaints

2.2 Our approach to handling complaints will be easily accessible and well publicised. It will be simple and easy to understand. Customers can raise a complaint by:

- Email
- Letter
- In person at any Beyond Housing office
- By telephone
- Via our website www.beyondhousing.co.uk
- Social media – to respect confidentiality we will utilise private messaging

2.3 Customers can authorise someone else to raise a concern on their behalf, such as an ‘advocate’. This could be a friend/relative or a representative from an external organisation (such as Citizens Advice).

Confidentiality

2.4 Beyond Housing will comply with collection, storage, access to, provision and disclosure of data in accordance with all relevant data protection and information security legislation.

Equality and diversity

2.5 Beyond Housing are committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion, i.e. fairness, accessibility and transparency. We value diversity and are committed to promoting the equality of opportunity to ensure all customers are treated fairly.

We will seek to identify customers who are vulnerable and account for their specific needs when handling their complaint by making appropriate and reasonable adjustments.

3.0 Definitions

Concerns

3.1 A concern is an expression of dissatisfaction where we aim for quick problem solving within three working days, rather than substantial investigation.

Complaint

3.2 A formal complaint is defined as ‘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 group of residents.’

Stage one complaint

3.3 If we are unable to resolve a customer issue as a concern, we will log as a stage one complaint.

3.4 We will acknowledge a customer stage one complaint within two working days and advise the customer of the name of the lead officer appointed to investigate and respond to the complaint.

3.5 If required, the lead officer will contact the customer to discuss the complaint by telephone, email or a home visit - depending on the nature of the issue. If the complaint cannot be resolved within ten working days or less they will agree a resolution date with the customer.

3.6 Should a customer decide not to engage with the process, we may have no other option other than to close the complaint due to no contact.

3.7 The lead officer will provide a written response to the complaint.

3.8 If the customer is unhappy with the stage one response, the customer may appeal within 28 working days. If the customer does appeal, the complaint will be escalated to a stage two complaint.

Stage two complaint

3.9 We will acknowledge the stage two complaint within two working days and advise the customer of the name of the senior manager appointed to investigate and respond to the appeal.

- 3.10** The senior manager will contact the customer by telephone, email or a home visit - depending on the nature of the issue. If the complaint cannot be resolved within 20 working days or less they will agree a resolution date with the customer.
- 3.11** The senior manager's complaint response will make it clear it represents Beyond Housing's 'final decision' and marks the end of the internal complaints process. We will always aim to achieve a satisfactory resolution to the complaint. If, however the customer disagrees with the final decision, the customer may contact any of the following and ask them to review the complaint:
- A Member of Parliament (MP), Local Councillor. An MP or Councillor may be involved at any point in pursuing a complaint; however, they do not take up their formal designated role until the complaint process has been exhausted. Contact with an MP or Local Councillor can be made via <https://www.writetothem.com>
 - The Housing Ombudsman Service. A statutory eight weeks, from the date of the final decision, must have elapsed before the complaint may be referred directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Once the Housing Ombudsman has reviewed the complaint, their decision is final. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted at <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk> or 0300 111 3000
- 3.12** Beyond Housing respects the rights of customers to complain to these statutory bodies and will work openly with partner agencies to resolve any legitimate concerns that customers raise. We will co-operate fully with the Housing Ombudsman Service during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting decisions, which will be binding on us.

Compliment

- 3.13** A compliment is an expression of praise, encouragement or thanks for a positive experience. Any compliments received will be referred to the relevant person/team.

Customer

- 3.14** In this policy, unless otherwise stated, the term 'customer' is used to describe residents (tenants and leaseholders) and service users.

Exclusions

- 3.15** The policy relates to services provided by Beyond Housing and its contractors. Where it is not appropriate for this policy to cover certain aspects/issues they are managed in a different policy or process. These are;
- 3.16** Matters which are, or could reasonably be expected to be subject of court or tribunal proceedings, or where a complainant has submitted a compensation or liability claim
- 3.17** Complaints from individuals who are not customers will be acted on but are not covered by this policy

- 3.18 Complaints of anti-social behaviour are covered by Beyond Housing’s anti-social behaviour policy. A complaint will, however, be accepted if a customer is dissatisfied with how their anti-social behaviour case was handled once it has been concluded
- 3.19 Services for which Beyond Housing are not responsible e.g. local authority decisions about housing benefit or nominations, should be raised with the local authority. We will aim to sign-post customers to the most appropriate body.
- 3.20 Crimes such as theft or damage to personal property in an individual’s home or left in communal areas (for example car park or bike stores).
- 3.21 Issues that have exhausted our complaints procedure and no new facts or evidence have been provided.
- 3.22 Complaints that are reported to us six months after the issue occurred.
- 3.23 Complaints relating to serious safeguarding concerns will be investigated in accordance with the Safeguarding policy.
- 3.24 Sub-tenants of a leaseholder are required to direct their complaint to their contracted landlord or third party managing agent and utilise their complaints procedure.

Unreasonable behaviour

- 3.25 Beyond Housing will not discriminate against anyone who makes a complaint. If a complainant or their representative behaves inappropriately in making a complaint we will seek to manage the behaviour in line with our Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.

Third parties

- 3.26 We respect the customer’s rights to complain to these statutory bodies and we will work openly with partner agencies to resolve any legitimate concerns that the customer raise. We will co-operate fully with the Housing Ombudsman Service during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting decisions, which will be binding on us. Housing Ombudsman Services can be engaged at any point in the complaints process for support and advice.

Compensation policy

- 3.27 We recognise that, from time to time, we might not be able to provide the high quality services that we have promised and our customers expect. Where this happens, we aim to put things right quickly, and may also offer compensation to those who have received a poor standard of service. In these cases we will follow the guidance in our Compensation and Claims Policy.

Group complaints

3.28 We will treat complaints from a group of customers in line with the complaint process. To ensure we handle the complaint efficiently, we will ask the group to nominate a single point of contact and we will work with this person to resolve complaint.

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 It is the responsibility of the director of customer services to implement and oversee this policy.

4.2 Beyond Housing have a statutory responsibility to comply with all relevant regulation and legislation in relation to dealing with and handling complaints.

4.3 The legislation and regulation applicable to this policy includes:

- The Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard
- Localism Act 2011
- Housing Act 1996
- Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR)
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Ombudsman Scheme

5.0 Sustainability

5.1 There are no significant resource implications or environmental impact issues relating to this policy and any associated procedures.

6.0 Reporting

6.1 Following the principles of dispute resolution recommended by the Housing Ombudsman Service, Beyond Housing seeks to identify continuous improvement through understanding the themes and trends and using feedback and lessons learnt from concerns, complaints and compliments to improve service design and delivery. These focus on our corporate strategy objective, to improve the quality of services to customers.

6.2 Feedback is reported to the executive, senior leadership team, the Beyond Housing board and the customer engagement panel. The customer engagement panel involves customers in scrutinising complaint handling, complaint themes and trends, as well as plans for improvement.

7.0 Consultation

- 7.1 As part of the production of this policy, consultation with senior management has taken place.
- 7.2 This policy has been considered by our customer engagement panel and feedback incorporated.

8.0 Revision

- 8.1 This policy will be subject to review after three years or in response to changes in legislation or good practice, whichever is the sooner.

Version no	Revision date	Reason for revision
V1	07.11.2020	Complaint policy approach revised to align with Housing Ombudsman Service Code