

# **Complaints and Compliments Policy**

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## 1. Policy statement

- 1.1 Cardiff Community Housing Association (CCHA) is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints about the services we provide.
- 1.2 We welcome feedback from customers as it provides the organisation with an opportunity to learn and understand how we can improve the services we deliver. It also allows us to understand the expectations and needs of our customers. We will use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.
- 1.3 We will handle all complaints, compliments and enquiries efficiently and effectively to monitor, review and continually improve our services.
- 1.4 We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we will put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you're entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we will apologise and, where possible, try to put things right for you. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 This policy sets out our approach to providing resolutions where customers have raised concerns, complaints and compliments. This policy also sets out how we will learn from complaints and compliments that we receive.

## 3. Scope

### 3.1 Who this policy applies to

- 3.1.1 When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. In certain circumstances, you may have a statutory right of appeal. In these cases, rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal.
- 3.1.2 This policy covers complaints about the standard of service or any action by staff or contractors that affects any individuals or a group of people. This policy applies to any customer who wishes to make a complaint or compliment. It also applies to any customer who enquires about a level of service we have provided through their designated elected member (MP, MS and Local Councillor). Non-customers and advocates (where prior consent has been received) should also use this policy.
- 3.1.3 This policy does not cover requests for services where we have not already been approached. These requests for service will be dealt with separately. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response,

you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below, and this policy will apply.

- 3.1.4 Complaints made via a residents' panel or similar are not covered under this policy. All such complaints will be sent to the Head of Housing and Communities to investigate outside of the complaints process.
- 3.1.5 Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not covered by this policy and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.
- 3.1.6 All members of staff at CCHA need to be aware of this policy. Members of staff can advise complainants on the type and scope of complaints they can consider.

## **3.2 Complaints involving multiple bodies**

- 3.2.1 If your complaint covers more than one body (for example, a local authority, a public body, or one of our contractors), we will usually work with them to decide who should take the lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.
- 3.2.2 If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf, you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complain formally, we will involve the relevant organisation(s) in the investigation but retain overall responsibility.

## **3.3 Key definitions**

### **3.3.1 Service request**

When a customer asks for a service to be provided. This is different from a complaint. CCHA will expect any member of staff to act on a service request.

### **3.3.2 Complaint**

#### **A complaint is:**

- An expression of dissatisfaction or concern.
- Written or spoken or made by any other communication method.
- Made by one or more members of the public (someone or a group in receipt of or denied a service to which they are entitled by the service provider).
- About a public service provider's action or lack of action or the standard of service provided.
- Something which requires a response.
- It can be about the service provider itself, a person, body or trader acting on its behalf, or a partnership of service providers.

### **A complaint is not:**

- An initial request for a service, such as reporting a repair.
- An appeal against a 'properly made' decision by a public body.
- A means to seek change to legislation or a 'properly made' decision (when laws or policies have been correctly applied, e.g. the setting of rent payments).
- A means for lobbying groups/organisations to seek to promote a cause.

#### **3.3.3 Compliment**

When a customer informs us that they were happy with the service that they have received.

#### **3.3.4 Customers**

Anyone who is in receipt of our services or anyone affected by our services. This could include customers, leaseholders, shared owners or anyone in receipt of services provided by CCHA.

#### **3.3.5 Advocate**

An advocate is another person who is authorised to act on behalf of the complainant. We will need signed permission for this.

#### **3.3.6 MP, MS and Local Councillor Enquiries**

This includes any elected member including MP (Member of Parliament), MS (Members of the Senedd) and Local Councillors. Any correspondence regarding these groups will be dealt with as enquiries. We will not require signed permission to deal with direct Elected Members enquiries [as set out in the Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) (Elected Representatives) Order 2002]. There may still be circumstances where it is necessary to contact the constituent to obtain consent to process their sensitive personal data.

#### **3.3.7 Compensation**

Refers to any action that puts right a service failure. This can be non-financial as well as financial.

## **4. Responsibilities**

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of the Head of Governance and Company Secretary to review this policy in accordance with CCHA's Policy Framework.

## 5. How to make a complaint

### 5.1 Telling us about your concerns and complaints

5.1.1 You can express your concerns to any member of staff who will log a complaint on your behalf. In addition to that you can also raise a complaint in any of the following ways:

- **Website:** Use the 'Contact Us' form on our website:  
<https://ccha.org.uk/contact/>
- **Phone:** Contact our Customer Service helpline at **02920 468 490**
- **Email:** Email us at [info@ccha.org.uk](mailto:info@ccha.org.uk)
- **Letter:** Write to us at: Complaints, CCHA, Tolven Court, Dowlais Road, Cardiff, CF24 5LQ.
- **Form:** Use our Making A Complaint Form.

5.1.2 Our Making a Complaint Form are also available at our offices.

5.1.3 We will provide this policy in different languages and formats upon request depending on the needs of the communities we serve:

- You can translate this policy into various languages on our website.
- You can connect with us using sign language on our website.
- You can access an audio-described version of this policy using our website.
- We can offer this policy in large print or braille upon request

5.1.4 Please refer to our **Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Procedure** for further details on managing complaints.

### 5.2 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

5.2.1 We believe it's best to deal with things straight away we will aim to agree a resolution with you in **10 working days**. This does not affect your right to register a formal Stage 2 complaint.

5.2.2 If you have a concern, please raise it with the person you're dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern, the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If there is a simple solution, we will offer to provide the correct service and put right any mistake we have made. If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

- 5.2.3 We will let you know what we find from our investigations via your preferred method of communication. If you would like a summary of our investigation and resolution actions in writing, we will provide this on request within 10 working days of the resolution actions being agreed.
- 5.2.4 If we are unable to provide a resolution to the complaint within 10 working days or if the complaint is of a serious or complex nature, or about a member of staff this will automatically be dealt with as a formal complaint at stage 2. This decision will be made by the Governance Team on review of the issues raised and where required, confirmed by the Head of Governance.
- 5.2.5 In line with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales model policy requirements any stage 1 complaint that is not provided with a resolution within 10 working days will automatically be registered and dealt with as a formal stage 2 complaint. Stage 1 complaints cannot be extended past 10 working days under any circumstances.
- 5.2.6 If you are not happy with the response provided at this stage, you can ask for a formal review at stage 2. If we can't resolve your complaint at Stage 1, we will explain why. You then have the right to ask for a formal investigation at Stage 2.
- 5.2.7 We reserve the right to close complaints where complainants do not respond to communications within a reasonable timeframe.



## 5.3 Stage 2 – Formal Complaints

### Acknowledging your complaint

- 5.3.1 If you feel that we have not adequately addressed your concerns at Stage 1 informally then you have the right to ask for your complaint to be reviewed at Stage 2 for a formal complaint response. We will ask you to provide a specific reason for the review and the outcome you are seeking. Any new issues raised will be treated as a new Stage 1 informal complaint.
- 5.3.2 When you have logged a complaint with us, we will;
- Formally acknowledge your concern within 5 working days.
  - Let you know how we intend to deal with it and the name of the person who will be investigating your complaint. The assigned person will act as the key contact during the investigation.
  - If your concern is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from the relevant service area to look into it and respond to you. If it is more serious, we may involve a member of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), another relevant body (see Section 3.2), or we may appoint an independent investigator.

- Ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you need documents in large type.
- Deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- Make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

5.3.3 If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

5.3.4 You may ask an advocate to act on your behalf providing we have written consent from you or the parties involved, or where there are documents that allow advocates to act on behalf of an individual who lacks capacity (as defined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005[1]).

5.3.5 Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within six months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind. We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to explain why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.

5.3.6 We reserve the right to close complaints where complainants do not respond to communications within a reasonable timeframe.



## Investigation

5.3.7 **We will aim to investigate Stage 2 complaints as quickly as possible and within 20 working days.**

5.3.8 If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within 20 working days why we think it may take longer to investigate;
- tell you how long we expect it to take and set out a request for an extension if required under mutual agreement;
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and;
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

5.3.9 If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a formal response.



- 5.3.10 The person who is investigating your concerns will firstly aim to establish the facts. We will explain our understanding of the complaint to you and ask you to confirm what outcome you are hoping for. The extent of the investigation will depend upon how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we may draw up an investigation plan.
- 5.3.11 We will look at relevant evidence. This could include information you have provided, our case files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we will talk to the staff member or others involved and look at our policies, any legal entitlement and guidance.
- 5.3.12 In some instances, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.



## Outcomes

- 5.3.13 After we have formally investigated your complaint, we will let you know what we find. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions in your preferred method of communication as well as in writing. We will outline the actions we will take to resolve the complaint and when they will be done. All resolving actions will be assigned deadlines unless there are reasonable exceptions not to do so. We will then close the complaint on the basis that the resolving actions are completed.



## 5.4 Putting things right

- 5.4.1 If we didn't provide you with a service you should have had, we will aim to provide it now, if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd done things properly.
- 5.4.2 If you had to pay for a service yourself, when we should have provided it for you, where reasonable and appropriate, we will try to refund the cost.
- 5.4.3 We may offer appropriate compensation in line with the conditions included in the **Sorry Payments Procedure**.

## 5.5 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

- 5.5.1 If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the service provider.
- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

5.5.2 The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right.

5.5.3 You can contact the Ombudsman:

<b>By phone:</b>	0300 790 0203
<b>By email:</b>	<a href="https://complaints.ombudsman.wales/en/pre-complaint">https://complaints.ombudsman.wales/en/pre-complaint</a>
<b>Via the website:</b>	<a href="http://www.ombudsman.wales">www.ombudsman.wales</a>
<b>In writing to:</b>	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae Pencoed CF35 5LJ

#### 5.5.4 **Alternative bodies**

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. We can advise about such organisations. Please see **Section 10** for further help and guidance also.

## 5.6 **Customer contact**

5.6.1 In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

5.6.2 We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

5.6.3 We have a separate procedure to manage situations where we have to take a different approach in managing customer contact.

## 5.7 **Elected Member Enquiries**

5.7.1 Any enquiries from an elected member regarding a new complaint will be dealt with through the complaints process.

- 5.7.2 Any enquiries from an elected member regarding an existing complaint will not be raised as a new complaint. The staff member overseeing the existing complaint will provide the elected member with regular updates and ultimately the final response to the complaint.
- 5.7.3 All elected member enquiries will be dealt with under the Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) (Elected Representatives) Order 2002 and will not require written permission to act on a customer's behalf.

## 5.8 Exceptions

- 5.8.1 Any complaints addressed directly to the Chief Executive will be dealt with through the complaints process. For complaints addressed directly to the Chief Executive, the staff member overseeing the complaint will provide regular updates to the Chief Executive and will obtain approval from the Chief Executive before sending any closing response.
- 5.8.2 Any aspect of a complaint that is governed by other legislation (e.g. employment law) will be dealt with through the appropriate procedure. The customer will be advised of this.
- 5.8.3 Complaints concerning governance will be investigated and dealt with by the Corporate Director, Central Services.
- 5.8.4 Any legal proceedings (such as injunctions, demotions, evictions, disrepair and court actions) will not be dealt with under this policy. Any complaints that involve legal proceedings will not be handled under this policy.
- 5.8.5 If a customer, third party or advocate appoints a solicitor, it will be referred to the relevant Head of Service who will decide whether to register this as a formal complaint, give a full response or appoint our own solicitors. If a solicitor is appointed whilst a complaint is being processed, this will also be referred to the responsible Head of Service and Company Secretary who will decide whether to suspend the complaint or continue to provide a response.
- 5.8.6 Complaints regarding Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) will be dealt with under the **Anti-Social Behaviour Policy** unless there is dissatisfaction with the delivery of the service.
- 5.8.7 Any insurance claims or related matters regarding damages will be dealt with under CCHA's insurance arrangements.
- 5.8.8 Appeals regarding local authority allocation decisions will not be dealt with under this policy.

## 6. Managing compliments

- 6.1 Compliments can be made in a number of different ways. This includes in writing, in person, by phone, by email or via our website and directly via social media. Compliments will be logged and shared with the relevant individuals and managers. This will contribute towards ongoing complaints and compliments learning.
- 6.2 Please refer to our **Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Procedure** for details on our compliments process.

## 7. Summary of response deadlines

- 7.1 We will aim to ensure that you are satisfied with how your complaint was handled. We are committed to the following response deadlines when managing your complaint:

Response deadlines	
<b>Resolving Stage 1 Informal complaints</b>	Within 10 working days
<b>Acknowledging Stage 2 Formal complaints</b>	Within 5 working days
<b>Investigate Stage 2 Formal complaints</b>	Within 20 working days
<b>Note: all timescales above exclude weekends and bank holidays.</b>	

## 8. Monitoring and learning from complaints, compliments and enquiries

- 8.1 We are committed to learning from customer feedback including complaints, compliments and enquiries. We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made.
- 8.2 We will regularly review and analyse trends, monitor performance and recommend improvements. We will periodically survey complainants to understand levels of satisfaction and to ensure that the service is fair and accessible. We will also use complaints data and trends to inform on-going resident involvement activities regarding involvement with service improvement and scrutiny.
- 8.3 Our Operational Management Team (OMT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) will consider a summary of all complaints quarterly and will be made aware of all serious complaints. Our People and Customer Experience Committee (PACE) will scrutinise complaint performance on a quarterly basis, making recommendations to our Board as required. Our Board will consider our response to complaints at least twice a year. We will share an

anonymised summary of complaints received and complaints outcomes with the Ombudsman as part of our commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.

- 8.4 Where there is a need for significant change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it. We will let you know when changes we've promised have been made.
- 8.5 We will monitor complaints to ensure that we are treating all customers fairly and lawfully under the Equality Act 2010.

## 9. Data protection

- 9.1 The employee looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.
- 9.2 When managing complaints, all employees of CCHA must refer to and adhere to CCHA's **Data Protection Policy**.
- 9.3 With exception to elected member enquiries (**see Section 5.6**), any third party or advocate who wishes to act on behalf of a customer or resident must provide written permission to act on a customer's behalf.
- 9.4 This policy does not apply to data access issues. Please refer to CCHA's **Data Protection Policy** for details on making a request under data protection law. Please be aware that as Registered Social Landlord (RSL), we are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and therefore we cannot respond to Freedom of Information requests.

## 10. Further help and guidance

- 10.1 Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.
- 10.2 We have provided some examples of other service providers that you may wish to contact for further support:

### Age Cymru

*Age Cymru Advice provides confidential, impartial and expert information and advice to older people, their families, friends, carers and professionals.*

- **Phone:** 0300 303 44 98
- **Email:** [advice@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:advice@agecymru.org.uk)
- **Website:** [www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/)

### Shelter Cymru

*Shelter Cymru support people in Wales who are affected by the housing emergency by offering free, confidential and independent advice.*

- **Phone:** 08000 495 495 (urgent helpline)  
02920 556 120 (Cardiff office)
- **Website:** [www.sheltercymru.org.uk](http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk)

### **Advocacy Matters Wales**

*Advocacy Matters Wales provide Independent Advocacy for adults with a Learning Disability and/or Autism Spectrum Conditions in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.*

- **Phone:** 02920 233 733
- **Email:** [info@advocacymatterswales.co.uk](mailto:info@advocacymatterswales.co.uk)
- **Website:** [www.advocacymatterswales.co.uk](http://www.advocacymatterswales.co.uk)

### **Citizens Advice**

*Citizens Advice has a network of independent charities that offer confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person, for free.*

- **Phone:** 0800 702 2020
- **Website:** [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/)

- 10.3 You can also use this concerns and complaints policy if you are under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline:

### **Meic Helpline**

*Meic is the helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales.*

- **Phone:** 0808 802 3456
- **Website:** [www.meiccymru.org](http://www.meiccymru.org)

- 10.4 You can also contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

### **Children's Commissioner for Wales**

*The Children's Commissioner for Wales speaks up for children and young people under the age of 18 in Wales.*

- **Phone:** 0808 801 1000
- **Email:** [post@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:post@childcomwales.org.uk)
- **Website:** [www.childcom.org.uk](http://www.childcom.org.uk)

## 11. References

Related External Documents	
Reference	
Mental Capacity Act 2005	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/contents</a>
Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) (Elected Representatives) Order 2002	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2905/contents/made">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2905/contents/made</a>
Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2019/3/contents/enacted">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2019/3/contents/enacted</a>
	<a href="https://www.ombudsman.wales/">https://www.ombudsman.wales/</a>
Equality Act 2010	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents</a>
Related Internal Documents	
Data Protection Policy	
Equal Opportunities Policy	
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	
Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Procedure	
Sorry Payments Procedure	

## 12. Document control

Document Information	
<b>Business Owner:</b>	Head of Governance and Company Secretary – Daniel Lewis
<b>Version no:</b>	3.2
<b>Effective date:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> August 2024
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<p><b>This is a controlled document.</b>            If you are viewing this document from your personal drive, via email or as a hard copy, it may not be the latest version. The current version can be found on the Intranet.</p>	

Document History			
Date	Version no.	Author	Description
June 2017	1.0	Housing Team	Original policy developed and approved.
April 2021	2.0	Head of Governance – Daniel Lewis	Policy re-written. Approved by CLT on 20/04/2021.
July 2021	2.1	Head of Governance – Daniel Lewis	Stage 2 process amended – CLT to oversee Stage 2 complaints. Approved by Board on 21/07/2021.
February 2022	2.2	Head of Governance – Daniel Lewis	Stage 0 deadlines revised from 1 working day to 2 working days.
July 2022	2.3	Head of Governance – Daniel Lewis	Minor review - Added Section 8.3, 10.2 and 11. Amended other sections. Approved by Deputy Chief Executive on 22/08/2022.
November 2022	3.0	Head of Governance – Daniel Lewis	Major review to align with Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) complaints handling standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full review of policy</li> <li>• Stage 0 removed</li> <li>• Deadlines amended</li> <li>• 'Unreasonable complaints' section revised</li> <li>• Definitions adopted from PSOW</li> <li>• Data protection section expanded</li> <li>• Equality and diversity section expanded and moved</li> </ul> Approved by Board via decision between meetings on 14/04/2023 (DM17.22/23).



August 2024	3.1	Head of Governance and Company Secretary – Daniel Lewis	Clarifications on application of PSOW definition of informal and formal stages. Minor Policy review changes completed Aug-24
March 2025	3.2	Head of Governance and Company Secretary – Daniel Lewis	The Ombudsman contact information has changed. Notified by the Ombudsman via email 17.3.25