
Complaints & Compliments Policy Senior Living Services

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Date Issued: January 2017

To be reviewed: January 2019

Version Number: 2

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a significant landlord One Housing recognises that providing a high standard of service delivery is essential. We welcome feedback from our customers and seek to ensure that we recognise and learn from occasions where we have performed as well as those instances where our performance should have been better.

The proper handling of complaints is therefore one of One Housing's highest priorities. Staff members are trained to perceive complaints as a valuable source of information about services and processes that handled in the correct manner can assist in continuous improvement.

To ensure that this policy meets the support needs across One Housing's diverse range of customers, it has been written in consideration of the Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary And Health Service Ombudsman, 2008), The National Patient Safety Agency Being Open Framework and the Department of Health 2009 guidance on better customer care, CQC Fundamental Standards and the ARCO Consumer Code.

Season provide senior living services as part of One Housing's specialist care and support arm. This policy and the accompanying procedure apply only to services operating under the Season brand. One Housing has prepared this policy after consultation with residents following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011. It lays the foundation for the **Complaints and Compliments Procedure (Senior Living Services)** and should also be considered in conjunction with One Housing's **Compensation & Other Payments Policy**. The impact of the revised policy will be assessed after 6 months of issue and reviewed.

1.1 Definitions

Compliments

This policy encourages all kinds of feedback. Anyone who has a relationship with One Housing can compliment a member of staff, a team or the organisation. Compliments are passed on to staff and their line manager, and are used to identify areas of good practise One Housing can learn from. Compliments can be submitted verbally to any member of staff who will forward this on or can be forwarded to solutionsbox@onehousinggroup.co.uk

Complaints

One Housing operates a complaints process with up to 2 stages, covering any issues that impact on the customers' experience of living in our services. Commonly these will relate to issues such as;

- a failure to comply with policy, procedure or standards of service delivery
- a decision which the complainant believes is not fair or clear to them
- the behaviour of One Housing staff or contractors

Complainants

Complaints from the following individuals or groups will be managed under this policy:

- tenants, shared owners or owner occupiers living in a One Housing senior living scheme
- MPs or councillors making a complaint on behalf of a tenant in a One Housing senior living scheme
- other advocates acting on behalf of the individual, including family members and carers of a tenant in a One Housing senior living scheme

We will cooperate in the same way with an intermediary acting on behalf of complainants as we would with the complainant themselves.

Anonymous Complaints

Where complaints are made anonymously we will investigate where possible but it is much easier if we are able to talk to the individuals who are raising the concerns. One Housing has a zero-tolerance approach to victimization of complainants and customers can be assured they will not experience a negative response if they make a complaint.

2. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Aims

- To deliver a complaints service that meets One Housing's service standard
- To facilitate organisational learning from complaints

Objectives

- To facilitate the effective and early resolution of complaints
- To manage all complaints in an open and accountable way
- To work collaboratively internally, with partner organisations and other agencies where necessary to coordinate comprehensive outcomes to complaints.
- To use the analysis of complaints to help One Housing improve services and reduce the level of complaints.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1. How to complain

Complaints can be made in any manner and to any person including;

- In writing via letter, email, fax, complaints form (hard copy or One Housing website).
- By telephone
- In person to any member of staff

To help understand the concerns the more information the complainant is able to provide the better. In any case we will, where possible, meet with complainants to ensure we fully understand the concerns and the range of possible resolutions.

3.2. How One Housing manages complaints

In dealing with each complaint we will;

- Ensure that all tenants, family members and representatives know how to complain
- Make personal contact with complainants, ideally face to face or by telephone, to understand their complaint, attempt resolution and update them
- Where the complainant doesn't know what they want by way of resolution we will discuss a range of potential options with them
- Acknowledge all complaints in writing within 2 working days
- Respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days. Where this is not practically possible, we will give reasons and agree new timescales with the complainant
- Review and respond to Stage 2 complaints within 10 working days following receipt of the escalation request

- Support vulnerable customers through the complaints process and, where appropriate, refer them to alternative services that may be able to assist
- Help access independent advocacy where the complainant lacks capacity to make the complaint or take part in the investigation and outcome
- Provide alternative avenues to seek support when the service requested is outside One Housing's remit where appropriate and where possible

3.3. Timescales for Complaints

In compliance with the ARCO Consumer Code we will provide a final decision in writing within 56 calendar days of receiving a complaint, unless we have previously agreed a later deadline. In practice we aim to respond much quicker than this as set out in our Complaints and Compliments Procedure summarised below.



Our **Complaints and Compliments Procedure** provides more detail on each stage, our response times and what you can do if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

In order for One Housing to investigate complaints effectively we need to know about concerns as soon as possible. The longer the period of time between the concerns arising and One Housing being made aware of them the harder it is for the person investigating the complaint. We are also anxious that customers do not have concerns for an extended period where we may be able to deal with them.

Consequently, whilst there is no time limit on when complaints can be raised we strongly encourage complaints to be raised as soon as possible.

3.4. When a complaint may be managed under a different policy and procedure

There are some things which are not covered by our Complaints Policy but we will nevertheless do our best to resolve the customers' concerns, for example;

- where the complaint is reporting concerns about possible abuse or neglect - in this case we will investigate the concerns under our safeguarding policies
- where the complaint is about services for which One Housing is not responsible - in this case we will advise the customer on where to take their concerns and support them to do so where possible
- where the complaint is reporting repairs for the first time - in this case we will refer the concerns on to our Housing Management Team and ensure repairs works are followed up
- where the complainant is taking legal action against One Housing on the same issue - in this case we will wait for the legal process to conclude before considering the complaint. We will continue to try and resolve the concerns in the meantime.

3.5. Advocates

One Housing recognises that some people who wish to complain may need support in doing so. One Housing accepts complaints made by advocates on behalf of a complainant. One Housing will take steps in line with its Data Protection Policy to make sure that the complainant is in agreement. A completed and signed advocacy form may be required to evidence a complainant's authorisation where the advocate is not known to the service.

If the complainant lacks capacity to complain we will provide support to access an advocate where one is not already available.

3.6. External Complaints Resolution Bodies

On the rare occasions when One Housing is unable to conclude its complaints process to the satisfaction of the complainant, they will be advised of their right to approach a designated person such as an MP, Councillor or a recognised Designated Tenant Panel.

In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, complainants may refer their complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service eight weeks after exhaustion of One Housing's complaints procedure.

Complaints relating to services commissioned by the Local or Health Authorities retain their right to complain to these bodies directly at any stage. For all services provided by Season customers will also have the right to refer their complaint the Local Government Ombudsman who deal with complaints about adult social care providers. These organisations will often expect internal complaints procedures to have been fully exhausted before getting involved, but in some cases will investigate before internal procedures are completed.

Services provided by One Housing under its Season brand will usually also be registered with and regulated by the Care Quality Commission. CQC do not directly deal with complaints from customers but they nevertheless encourage customers to raise concerns with them as this can inform the way they inspect services.

One Housing respects the rights of its customers to complain to these statutory bodies and will work openly with partner agencies to resolve any legitimate concerns that customers raise.

We will cooperate fully with the relevant Ombudsman during any investigation and will comply fully with the resulting decision, which will be binding on us.

4. LEGISLATION, REGULATION & GUIDANCE

Government legislation has an impact on how One Housing can implement its Complaints and Compliments Policy. Listed below are the key regulatory standards and statutory Acts that have been acknowledged.

- Homes & Communities Agency Regulatory Framework 2012
- Localism Act 2011
- Mental Health Capacity Act 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Social Care Act 2008
- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
- ARCO Consumer Code

5. 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, including:

- anything of a personal nature that is not a matter of public record about a tenant, 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:

- One Housing is required to by law
- the information is necessary for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

6. MONITORING & REPORTING

Complaints will be monitored in and the findings will be regularly published to scrutiny groups, residents and the Board. In line with best practice recommended by the Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, 2008) One Housing seeks continuous improvement through using feedback and lessons learnt from complaints to improve service design and delivery.

7. GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY

Term	Definition
Advocate	A person or persons acting on behalf of a complainant to assist them in making and managing their complaint with One Housing
CQC	Care Quality Commission – a UK regulator that checks whether hospitals, care homes and care services meet national standards. For more information see www.cqc.org.uk
Designated Persons	Designated Person is defined in the Localism Act 2011 as an MP, Councillor for the region in which the complainant's home is located, or a recognised Designated Tenant Panel. For more information see the guidance on www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Housing Ombudsman Service	Ombudsman service to look at complaints about registered providers of social housing. For more information see www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Local Government Ombudsman	Ombudsman service to look at complaints about providers of adult social care. For more information see http://www.lgo.org.uk/adult-social-care/
MCA	Mental Capacity Act 2005 – a UK parliamentary Act designed to protect people who lack the capacity to make particular decisions. For further information see www.legislation.gov.uk
One Housing	One Housing
Season	One Housing's entity for senior living accommodation www.onehousinggroup.co.uk
Senior Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Head of service area ▪ Assistant Director of service area ▪ Director for service area