

Date Reviewed	November 2021	Next Review Date	November 2024
Consultations	Ramesh Malhan / DCE	Reviewed By	
Equality Impact Assessment		Responsible Officer	Head of Customer Voice
DPIA		Approval By	Head of Customer Voice / DCE

TENANT COMPLAINT POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide good quality services to all our customers, to recognise when things go wrong, to put things right, and value complaints as feedback to learn, improve and develop our services.

Black Country Housing Group (hereafter “BCHG”) recognises that handling complaints effectively is not just about processes and time limits. It is also about the culture within our organisation and the behaviour and attitudes we display.

This Policy is designed to understand what a service complaint is and dealing with it fairly and promptly.

2. AIMS

The aims of this policy are to:

- Put the customer at the heart and health and safety at the centre of the process
- Create a flexible and responsive approach that places customer first and the standard second
- Provide an outcome as soon as possible
- Apologise when we have made a mistake, or when something has gone wrong, to put it right as soon as possible
- Keep the customer informed and do what we say we will, when we say we will do it
- Make sure we address all elements of the complaint and provide clear explanations for any decisions made or actions taken
- Share our learning from complaints and use feedback in a positive way to learn and improve services

All staff are encouraged and empowered to resolve customer issues using the Quick Fix process putting the problem right straight away. Where they cannot do this, we will change our ways of working so they can in the future.

3. SCOPE

This policy relates to all residents, applicants, and customers of the landlord services of BCHG. Where a member of the public makes a complaint, BCHG will investigate and respond in line with this Complaints Policy and each case will be considered on its own merits.

4. RELATED POLICY AND PROCEDURES

BCHG will deliver a complaint policy that complies with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code (July 2020) setting out good practice to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. Building a safer future and Social Housing White Paper that sets out a health and safety based responsive approach.

The key areas of Internal policies and government legislation for this policy are:

Internally

Strategies	Policies/Procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Strategy • Customer Engagement Strategy • Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs and Maintenance Policy • Lettings Policy • Anti-Social Behaviour Policy • Tenancy Agreement obligations • Good Will & Compensation Payment Policy

Externally

Legislation and Regulation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Providers with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) have a duty to become members of an Ombudsman’s Scheme approved by the Secretary of State as defined by the 1996 Housing Act and 2011 Localism Act. • Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate, harass those that make a complaint • General Data Protection Act 2018 for the collection, storage, provision, and disclosure of data collated in relation to complaints • Fire Safety Act 2021 – to establish a complaint procedure to safety concerns • Building Safety Bill 2021 – removal of designated person by Feb 2022 provides a fast-track approach.

5. DEFINITION

A complaint is defined as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions by the Group or its staff affecting an individual or group of customers”.

A complaint would cover but is not limited to:

- Failure to act within policy or practice
- Unprofessional staff behaviours
- Failure to provide a service
- Failure to achieve service standard

- Health and Safety concerns
- Enactment of Pre-Protocol court process

A complaint can be verbal, over the phone and face to face or in writing by letter, electronic, or social media. BCHG will call out a complaint where a customer might have difficulty articulating it.

Where more than one service area is involved in a complaint, a customer led perspective is taken for their view. For the avoidance of doubt the service area responsible for the core part of the complaint will respond on behalf of both services.

WHAT IS NOT A COMPLAINT

There may be occasions where a customer has expressed their dissatisfaction with a service, but it is not appropriate to follow the Complaints Policy. The customer will be advised of this at the earliest opportunity and given information of alternative procedures and support available through their Customer Relation Manager.

A few examples of what is excluded:

- The issue is, or has been, subject to legal proceedings
- Liability issue that is subject to an insurance claim
- The complaint is being pursued in an unreasonable manner

6. COMPLAINT HANDLING PRINCIPLES

Summary of approach:

Stage	Definition	Responsibility	Expectation
Internal Complaint Process			
Tier 0 Fast Track Priority			
Fast Track	“An event assessed by anyone in the Team or individual resident to be at a significant health and safety risk”	Appropriate Senior Manager/ Executive Team	Screening assessment with customer. Customer First: agree allocated timeframe within 48hrs. Right to ‘Designated Person’ or Ombudsman. BCHG will continue to try to resolve
Tier 1			
Quick Fix	“Immediate or earliest opportunity as close to the point of service delivery as possible”	Front Line CRM/Manager / Team Leader	Agree response time with Customer. Work within a target of 3 days.
Tier 2			

General Complaints -	"Any dissatisfaction that cannot be recovered through Quick Fix front-line resolution".	Manager/Team Leader	Agree response time with Customer. Work within a target to: Acknowledge 3 days Respond within 10 working days. If dissatisfied customer can agree to internal review by a Senior Manager and be accompanied with a person of their choice. Respond to this within 10 working days.
Internal Process Ends			
Designated Person or	'Right to Designated Person'.	MP, Local Cllr or recognised Tenant Panel.	Opportunity for Local Resolution
Housing Ombudsman	Or the Housing Ombudsman	Housing Ombudsman	Dispute Resolution Standards

APPROPRIATE REMEDY

When investigating a complaint, consideration will be given to a range of remedies that may be appropriate, we will:

- Apologise immediately when we have made a mistake or let people down and put things right
- Where appropriate offer financial compensation

Occasionally there may be a need to commission an external, independent investigator where there is a particularly complex issue or there is a need for an extra level of independence.

COMPLIMENTS

Compliments are important to us as they show where we are getting things right and recognise the hard work of people working to provide services. BCHG will record Compliments, give staff positive feedback, and publicise this.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

BCHG aims to support a positive complaint handling culture by placing learning and improvement at the heart of this. This will include:

- Two reports to senior managers and Board that considers the themes or trends to

identify any systemic issues, serious risks, or areas for improvement for appropriate action.

- Proactively use learning from complaints to revise policies and procedures, to train staff and contractors and to improve communication and record-keeping.
- Resident Scrutiny Voice Panel will receive 2 reports a year on complaints and will review any Fast Track complaints to ensure compliance with this Policy and to make recommendations for future handling and management of complaints to Management.
- Sharing learning with the complainant and widely with customers.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:

- Positive feedback from users of the Policy
- A continuing trend of learning and improvement
- Staff empowered to make decisions

MANAGING UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANTS

The inclusion of this section within the policy is to ensure those customers who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner understand it is not acceptable and the right of staff to be protected.

BCHG will respond in a conciliatory way and offer appropriate support, including Mediation/Restorative Justice to resolve issues, each case will be looked at on its own merit.

CUSTOMER CONSULTATION

BCHG consulted customers that had used the complaint service and feedback of their experience. An independent survey was undertaken to gauge customer satisfaction with the way complaints were handled. The general complaint handling principles were agreed with the Resident Scrutiny Voice Panel.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Screening equality impact assessment has been reviewed to ensure that no groups or individuals will be negatively impacted because of this policy. There is no evidence this Policy will act adversely to any group. The monitoring log of complaints will help understand this moving forward.

REVIEW OF POLICY

Review of this Policy is every three years led by the Head of Customer Voice