

Portsmouth Rotary Housing Association

Title	Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy
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1. Policy Scope

The policy applies to the quality of services delivered by PRHA. The following groups of people will have access to the policy:

- Tenants and their spouses living in properties owned or managed by PRHA
- Family members of tenants living in properties owned or managed by PRHA
- Professional services providing support to tenants living in properties owned or managed by PRHA
- People who have applied for housing with PRHA

For the purposes of this policy all the above will be referred to as ‘customer’.

The policy does not apply to:

- PRHA Contractors
- PRHA Employees
- Tenants complaining about their neighbours

PRHA will provide a detailed response if an expression of dissatisfaction is outside the scope of this policy.

2. Equality Act 2010

PRHA has a reasonable adjustments policy to ensure access to the complaints procedure is not unduly obstructed for individuals who may have difficulty accessing and interpreting information. Where reasonably possible PRHA will provide the resources to ensure all expressions of dissatisfaction can be reported and investigated in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

3. The Housing Ombudsman

This policy complies with the Housing Ombudsman's 2020 complaint handling code. Persons outlined in section one of this policy can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time to throughout the duration of the investigation into their complaint. Ombudsman contact details are as follows:

Telephone: 0300 111 3000 - 9.15am - 5.15pm, Monday to Friday
Post: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Web: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

PRHA will co-operate fully with the Ombudsman Service during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting decision, which will be binding on PRHA.

4. Policy Purpose

PRHA recognises that feedback is a driver for service improvement. PRHA will encourage feedback regardless of content. Effective handling and reporting of complaints will increase customer confidence and satisfaction.

PRHA aims to:

- encourage feedback, both positive and negative
- resolve complaints quickly and sensitively to the satisfaction of the customer
- wherever possible, resolve complaints at the first point of contact
- learn from complaints, comments and compliments to help us improve our services and reduce the level of future complaints and dissatisfaction

5. Definitions

- **Comment** - A comment is positive or negative feedback about our service, which does not necessarily require a formal response.
- **Complaint** - A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction or concern, in any form, with PRHA services, whether justified or not, which requires a response. The word 'complaint' does not need to be mentioned in order for PRHA to identify and investigate an expression of dissatisfaction.
- **Compliment** - A compliment is an unsolicited expression of gratitude or praise for an employee, Board member or service area.
- **Informal complaint or groan** - A complaint that can be resolved quickly at first point of contact, and where a written response is not sought by the customer.
- **Service request** - A request for a service, such as a repair or the logging of an anti-social incident, which has not been previously made to PRHA.

6. Submitting a complaint, comment or compliment:

Anyone who receives a service from PRHA can make a complaint. This includes:

- residents, or prospective residents, of properties owned or managed by PRHA
- residents of neighbouring PRHA properties
- former residents who have been living in PRHA properties or who have been in receipt of any services offered by PRHA
- third parties, such as an MP or Councillor, the Citizen's Advice bureau or other advocate, on behalf of a customer

7. Complaints from third parties

Where the third party is not an MP, Councillor or a person with power of attorney, PRHA

will require the written permission of the resident to correspond with their advocate. PRHA will correspond with the advocate and copy the customer in on any communications.

8. How to complain

Complaints can be made via PRHA's website; by email: text message; letter; telephone or in person. The email address is enquiries@prha.co.uk and PRHA's text number is 07860 063317.

Customers may make a complaint to anyone in the organisation. All complaints will be logged by PRHA staff.

PRHA will accept complaints in any language. If a customer needs help to put their complaint in writing, or needs an interpreter to help them make a verbal complaint, we will make the necessary arrangements for this on request.

9. Data Protection and Confidentiality

PRHA's Data Protection Policy will apply to all complaints, comments and compliments. Information received from customers will be stored securely and will not be shared with external parties without the consent of the customer. All feedback will be anonymised for the purposes of reporting to PRHA's complaints handling performance.

10. Time limits

Complaints must be made within six months of the matter occurring, unless the issue becomes known retrospectively or relates to an on-going delay. This time limit is in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service guidance on complaints and the timescales they operate. If a complainant believes there is reason for the time limit not to apply, they will need to provide the reasons why so that a decision can be made.

11. Complaints received by Board Members

Where a Board member receives a complaint, they will pass it on to the Housing team in order that the complaint is administered in accordance with PRHA procedure.

12. Exclusions

If the issue is not a complaint within the definition of this policy, other procedures will apply.

Examples of this include:

- a first request for service, information or an explanation of our policies and procedures
- neighbour disputes or anti-social behaviour, unless the complaint refers to our failure to deal with the disagreement appropriately
- issues regarding hate crime or domestic violence
- a claim being dealt with by our insurers
- issues where a resident has commenced legal action against us
- a dispute against the amount of rent or service charge being charged
- appeals against policy decisions

13. How PRHA will deal with complaints

- We will deal with complaints impartially, objectively and professionally.
- We will take ownership, apologise where we have made a mistake and aim to resolve the complaint to the customer's satisfaction.

- We will be clear about timescales and inform customers throughout any investigation

14. Initial Contact

PRHA will try to resolve the issue at the first point of contact. If the member of staff receiving the complaint considers that they cannot resolve it within PRHA's standard enquiry timescale of three days they will write to the customer explaining that the investigation will take up to 10 working days before a formal response can be issued.

15. Investigation – Stage 1

When a formal complaint is logged, it will be acknowledged within one working day. The customer will be contacted within two working days to establish what is required to resolve the matter and to agree a timescale.

It is expected that most complaints can be resolved within 10 working days but there may be times when it is necessary to agree a longer timescale.

If the timescale agreed needs to be changed we will agree a new timescale with the customer.

At the end of the investigation, the investigating officer will contact the customer in person to be followed by a full written response in plain English. The response will contain a summary of the complaint; our response including any action we are taking; an apology if appropriate; and details of how to appeal against the decision.

16. Appeal – Stage 2

If the customer believes we have not provided them with an adequate response, or they believe that our response is wrong, an appeal can be submitted to the Chief Executive. On receipt of an appeal, the customer will be contacted to establish the reasons for the appeal. If we cannot easily resolve any outstanding actions, the appeal will be formally reviewed by the Chief Executive.

If the decision is taken to investigate, the Chief Executive will seek to conclude the investigation within 10 working days. If more time is required the complainant will be contacted to agree a timescale.

The customer will be provided the option of including a board member or independent adjudicator to review the complaint with PRHA's Chief Executive.

The findings of the investigation will be discussed with the complainant followed by a full written response in plain English. The written response will contain a summary of the appeal; our response; and an apology if appropriate.

If the customer remains dissatisfied they will be advised to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

17. Compensation

Compensation, where appropriate, can be paid at any stage in the complaints process. All compensation payments will be made in line with our Compensation policy.

18. Complaints about a member of staff or Board member

If a complaint is made about the conduct of a member of staff or Board member the complaint will be investigated by the Chief Executive.

If the complaint is made about the conduct of the Chief Executive the complaint will be investigated by the Chair of the Board.

19. Suspected abuse

If something leads the person managing the complaint to suspect that abuse is taking place, the matter should be referred to PRHA's Safeguarding policies and procedures.

20. Vexatious, Unreasonable and Abusive Behaviour

To protect our staff PRHA will not engage with customers where the behaviour of the customer has become threatening or abusive. PRHA will take legal action against individuals who are persistently threatening or abusive.

PRHA's Vexatious Tenants policy will apply if the volume of written and verbal communication is deemed excessive, disproportionate and unreasonable.

21. Anonymous complaints

If PRHA receives an anonymous complaint, this may highlight a problem with the way customers perceive a service, or it might raise a whistle-blowing issue that needs to be followed up. PRHA will therefore record, investigate and monitor anonymous complaints in the same way that PRHA manages comments.

22. Media involvement

If the customer refers to a media story the matter will be referred to The Chief Executive and Chair of the Board.

23. Alternative dispute resolution

Where a complaint has not been resolved at the point of the customer's initial contact PRHA may offer the customer mediation or adjudication if we think this will assist.

24. External appeals against complaint responses

If customers are unhappy with the response they receive from us they can ask an external organisation to review the issues raised and advocate on their behalf.

25. Designated Person

If a complaint has reached the final stage of the procedure and the customer remains dissatisfied, the customer has the option to request a referral to a 'Designated Person' which could be a local councillor or MP. The Designated Person has to be contacted prior to contacting the Housing Ombudsman.

26. The Charity Commission

PRHA is Corporate Trustee of two Almshouse Charities. Residents living in Almshouse property have the option of referring unresolved complaints to The Charity Commission.

27. Monitoring and learning from comments, compliments and complaints

Gathering feedback from our customers on their experience of our services is important. PRHA will use this feedback to improve the service we provide. PRHA will analyse all complaints, compliments and comments and will monitor timescales for responding to them. PRHA will use diversity analysis to understand the nature of complaints, comments and compliments.

PRHA's Board will receive quarterly reports relating to complaints, comments and compliments. The reports will include details of lessons learned, feedback profiles and the performance of response times.

28. Training

Staff and Board members involved in managing complaints will receive appropriate training and guidance in order to handle complaints effectively.

29. Publicising the Policy

PRHA's Complaints, Comments and Compliments policy, including the process for making a complaint, will be publicised and easy to access. PRHA will publicise our approach in a variety of formats on request (for example large print, audio, Braille and other languages)

30. Background Legislation

- Housing Act 1996
- Localism Act 2011
- Housing Ombudsman: Complaints Procedures – Good Practice
- Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO) Consumer Code 2015

31. Related Policies and Procedures:

- Reasonable adjustments policy
- Compensation policy
- Anti-social behaviour and harassment policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Code of conduct
- Disciplinary procedure
- Whistleblowing policy
- Anti-social behaviour policy