

Compliments & Complaints Policy and Procedure

SUBJECT: COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE SECTIONS: All departments REVIEWED BY: Corporate Support Officer	Policy No: 303A	RSH Code: Regulatory
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 BCHA provides a diverse range of housing, support and learning services. This policy aids BCHA to offer a high standard of customer service and support to enable people to take control of their lives.
- 1.2 BCHA welcomes feedback from all customers, as a valuable tool in helping us to co-produce and improve the services we provide.
- 1.3 BCHA will work collaboratively across the organisation to resolve and learn from customer complaints.

2.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 2.1 BCHA is committed to ensuring that all customers have equal access to the compliments and complaints processes, irrespective of their age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs, race or national origin, or if pregnant. In the operation and review of this policy, the organisation will seek to remove any barriers or obstacles, so that everyone can exercise their right to give feedback about the services they receive.
- 2.2 BCHA will ensure, where residents struggle with literacy, it will be the responsibility of a senior practitioner to sit with and go through any outcome letter for a customer within supported housing and assist them with any response. Tenancy Officers will be responsible for doing this if the customer is in a General Needs property.
- 2.3 BCHA can provide any letters in large print or braille, if you need either of these for your correspondents, please just let us know. BCHA can also provide any outcome letters in another language if required. Please let us know if this is required and we can discuss this with you.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This procedure relates to Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA) and its subsidiaries.
- 3.2 For the purposes of this procedure, the terms “**customer**” and “**complainant**” are used to apply to all of the following:
 - All customers living in accommodation we manage.
 - Those using Outreach or Floating Support Services
 - BCHA Learn participants.
 - Prospective customers (e.g., applicants for accommodation or services and job applicants)
 - People seeking information from BCHA.
 - Members of the public
 - People acting on behalf of customers (advocates)
 - People living next to BCHA-managed services.

It must be borne in mind that different customer groups may not have the same legal or contractual rights as each other so responses need to be tailored to recognise this.

- 3.3 Complaints involving abuse or neglect will be dealt with immediately under our **Safeguarding Policies** but may be dealt with under this Policy where the Organisation's actions or responses are called into question.
- 3.4 Complaints about the conduct of neighbours, visitors etc. will be handled initially under the **Anti-social Behaviour policy**, unless the complaint is about how we have responded or the actions we have taken to resolve the ASB.
- 3.5 All **Business disputes** will fall outside of this policy and will be governed by the Terms & Conditions set out in the relevant Contract or Supply Agreement.
- 3.6 Staff and volunteers must use the procedures outlined in the Staff Handbook, including the **Grievance Procedure**, should they wish to raise their own complaint.
- 3.7 Complaints regarding staff conduct, where the concern raised may require immediate action against the staff member will be escalated to the people team and will follow the internal investigation process. The complainant will be informed of this however due to GDPR we will not be able to share individual actions taken by BCHA against staff members.
- 3.8 If a complaint relates to a staff member and is originally accepted as a complaint but during investigation this needs to be handled through our internal investigation process, as letter will be sent to the customer "complaint escalated to internal investigation" explaining this to the customer, the complaint will then be closed and internal investigation completed. The customer will be kept informed as a part of the internal investigation process.
- 3.9 Repair complaints relating to time taken to complete the repair will only be considered if the repair was not completed within the repair timescales for routine, urgent and emergencies.
- 3.10 Complaints which relate to an appeal of a warning letter or eviction notice will be escalated to initially go through the appeals process. The appeal will be heard by a Housing Manager. If the customer is unhappy with how the appeal was handled, then they can escalate this through the complaints process.

Anonymous Complaints

- 3.11 Anonymous complaints will be dealt with at the discretion of the assigned Manager recognising the reasons why people may choose not to identify themselves. Anonymous complaints will be handled in line with this policy; however, investigation and further action may be limited if more information is needed to ensure a fair investigation.

Anonymous complaints may also need to be handled with reference to the **Harassment and Discrimination Policy**, or in conjunction with the organisation's **Whistleblowing Policy**.

Persistent and Vexatious Complaints

- 3.12 On occasions there are customers who persistently make complaints that are without foundation, repetitive and unreasonable or that are malicious or vexatious. Managers will review the evidence to establish this and decide how these customers will be managed, taking into consideration clauses within the relevant **Tenancy Agreement**, our **Anti-Social Behaviour Policy** or the **Procedure for Handling Persistent and Vexatious Complaints**.

Serious Matters

- 3.13 Complaints of a **serious** nature must be referred to the Director of Homelessness, Health, and Wellbeing (or another Director or Company Secretary in their absence). The Director will determine how the matter should then be addressed – using this policy or another policy. Serious complaints would include:

- Acts or alleged acts of gross misconduct by staff.
- Instances involving serious injury or death.
- Complaints reported to the press.
- Notification of any legal proceedings
- Enforcement notices from the local authority or similar body
- Safety and Safeguarding matters
- Any other issue which poses a serious risk to BCHA or its customers

Contact from MP's, Councillors and the Press

- 3.14 Where an elected representative contacts BCHA, correspondence will be routed to the Chief Executive for response and will include information regarding the complaint handler and at what stage the complaint is at.
- 3.15 Contact from the Press will be forwarded to the Communications Team and that team will liaise with the relevant departmental staff prior to responding.

4.0 Responsibilities

The Board

- 4.1 A member of the Board will be designated as Board champion for complaints and compliments to support a positive complaint handling culture. A description of the Board Champions role is outlined in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The Board will receive quarterly reports on compliments and complaints in order that it can gain assurance about the operation of this policy and have an insight into customer views about how they are experiencing service delivery. In addition, the Audit, Risk & Treasury Committee also has oversight of customer feedback to monitor service quality and specific issues or trends from a risk-based perspective.
- 4.3 Compliments/Complaints received by Board Members will be relayed, in the first instance, to the relevant Director. The Director will forward details to the Customer Services Team, who will enter the details onto the relevant section of Rubbix from 1st April 2024 and delegate accordingly.

Staff, Volunteers & Contractors

- 4.1 All BCHA staff, including volunteers and contractors, will be accessible and behave courteously when dealing with customers. Staff will also be sensitive to customers' needs, and individual situations, and assist whenever required.
- 4.2 All BCHA staff, including volunteers and contractors, will need to be familiar with and comply with the Compliments & Complaints Procedure.
- 4.3 All BCHA staff, volunteers and contractors, will record details of feedback they receive in customer case notes, and this will be reviewed at Team Meetings. All complaints will be forwarded to the Customer Services Team, who will enter the details on Rubbix from 1st April 2024.
- 4.6 BCHA promotes a positive culture regarding complaints and all staff have mandatory training to understand the Policy & Procedure. Complaint handling staff have additional training, and are empowered, where appropriate, to resolve matters directly and speedily with the complainant.

Customer Services Staff

- 4.7 BCHA will appoint a person responsible for handling all complaints in line with this policy; this person will be referred to as the Complaints Officer but may have other duties within the organisation. There will be support for the Complaints Officer to ensure consistency of service in the event of absence. The Complaints Officer will be responsible for administering and recording complaints, ensuring managers are assigned to assess, resolve, and respond to complaints. They will ensure that complaints are resolved within the protocols and timescales outlined in this policy.

Business/Departmental Managers

- 4.8 Business and Departmental Managers will be responsible for ensuring:
 - Expectations for service quality are communicated to customers and their teams.
 - Compliments and Complaints procedures are clear to customers and teams and are accessible to use for any customer.
 - Handling complaints at stage 1 which included clarifying the complaint with the customer (this may be done by meeting or phoning them), investigation of the complaint, communicating progress/delays to complainants and sending a timely response letter.
 - Documentation and case notes are uploaded to Rubbix from 1st April 2024
 - Reflective practice within their teams includes an opportunity to learn from compliments and complaints to improve service delivery and outcomes.

Corporate Oversight

- 4.8 The Corporate Support Officer, supported by the Head of Strategy & Governance, will:
 - Monitor complaint outcome letters for quality and work with departmental colleagues to share good practice or improve communications, as needed.
 - Collate reports of complaint volumes, types and outcomes for senior management and board review
 - Feed into colleague training on complaints handling good practice.

- Undertake, seek board sign off for and publish the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code on the BCHA website.
- Ensure the more recent copy of the Compliments and Complaints policy is published on the BCHA website.

5.0 General Principles

- 5.1 All customers have a right to receive a good quality service and to expect to have their views heard, and to have appropriate action taken, when performance is below standard.
- 5.2 **Compliments** about colleagues and services or the Organisation more generally should be captured in a timely manner to demonstrate “when we have got it right” and to share with colleagues concerned. This sharing is also useful in knowing “what works” when services are being designed or reviewed.
- 5.3 In relation to complaints, BCHA will acknowledge all compliments and complaints and ensure that these will be dealt with:
- **Fairly**
 - **Consistently**
 - **Promptly**
 - **Politely**
 - **Confidentially**

BCHA is committed to providing services informed by Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) Framework as described in the Homelessness, Health and Wellbeing (HHW) document library on the BCHA Hub. [\(PIE\) Psychologically Informed Environments](#). This aims to ensure trained staff deliver services in a way that responds to customer needs, builds relationships, and uses evidence to inform future practice.

- 5.4 BCHA will use the outcome of complaints (and any actions taken) as a positive method of monitoring satisfaction and improving our services.
- 5.5 BCHA will provide support to anyone wishing to access or seek guidance about Compliments and Complaints Processes and customers can approach any member of staff for assistance.

6.0 Definitions

- 6.1 It is important that staff recognise the difference between the different types of feedback covered by this policy.
- **Service Request** - this is where a customer is unhappy about a situation that they wish to have rectified. Our frontline staff and Complaints Officer are empowered to resolve issues (where appropriate) directly and informally with the complainant. Service requests will be recorded as part of client case notes and reviewed as a standing item at team meetings. Customers will be encouraged to register any concerns about the service they receive at key working sessions.

A complaint should be initiated when the customer raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request.

If a customer does move forward with a complaint, this should not stop your efforts to address the Service Request

- **Complaint** – An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the landlords, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a customer or group of Customers.

All complaints will be recorded on Rubbix from 1st April 2024 and progressed in line with this policy.

The word “complaint” does not have to be used for it to be treated as such, and any complaint received via a third party must be handled in line with this policy. If a customer wishes a complaint to be logged, then this must be done.

- **Compliment** – positive feedback which lets us know if we did something well or if a member of our staff exceeded expectations.
- **Comment** – feedback comprising general views, for example - suggestions on how we could improve our service or general thoughts about aspects of a service.

6.2 Feedback of any type can be reported by:

- Telephone Customer Services 01202 410500
- In person (at an office or to front-line staff)
- Letter Customer Services, The Factory, Alder Hills, BH12 4AS
- Email: customerservices@bcha.org.uk (for compliments)
- Email complaints@bcha.org.uk (for complaints)
- Social media posts and messages, e.g. Facebook, etc.
- In our suggestions box (where provided)
- Or by any third party acting on the customer’s behalf (with written consent)
- Customer Survey feedback flagging potential complaints will be automatically sent through to Customer Services as they are received.

6.2a When a complaint is received through a social media channel the Complaints Officer will acknowledge this within 2 working days to the complaint through the channel it was received and apologise to the customer registering the complaint. All other correspondence will be taken off-line and in accordance with this policy.

7.0 Compliments & Comments

- 7.1 BCHA will record and acknowledge feedback, positive from customers to gain insight, and use the feedback to make improvements to services and processes.
- 7.2 Compliments and Comments provided directly to staff members should be passed to the Customer Services Team, who will log the details onto Rubbix from 1st April 2024. Data collected will be used to monitor Customer Satisfaction levels.

8.0 Complaints

BCHA employees will ensure that customers can voice specific concerns whenever they arise, all employees are empowered to resolve service requests on behalf of the customer.

8.1 Examples of causes of complaints include:

- Failing to do something we should have done or doing something we should not have done.
- Giving unclear, unsuitable, or unhelpful information or advice
- Failing to fulfil statutory or contractual responsibilities (not doing something we said we would do in the Tenancy Agreement or Service Contract)
- Delays in our processes (not calling back when we said we would) or failing to keep appointments.
- Attitude of staff or our contractors
- Poor workmanship
- Dissatisfaction with the way BCHA reached a decision or what has happened after a decision has been made.
- Unequal or biased treatment or discrimination

8.2 When a complaint is received from a customer or member of the public that raises concerns about employee's conduct this must be logged under the customer complaints procedure and customers responded to formally. The investigating manager must also follow the procedures set out in the Disciplinary Policy and Safeguarding Policy as these procedures run in parallel to secure a robust outcome for both customer and staff. All complaints around staff conduct will be dealt with via the DP and/or SG policy but initially recorded as a complaint.

8.3 There are some circumstances that are not covered by this policy, including:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases where the complaint is about someone else's behaviour, not the service we provide (this is covered by the **ASB Policy**)
- First-time service requests, such as a repair
- Challenges to Policies and Procedures rather than how they are used.
- Events that occurred over 12 months ago, unless the issue has continued since the first occurrence.
- Situations where either legal action is being taken, they have been referred to insurers or they are being dealt with by the Housing Ombudsman
- Complaints that fall outside of BCHA's direct responsibility (as an example those relating to services provided by the Local Authority)
- Vexatious complaints as described in section 3.8.

8.4 BCHA will offer a clear, staged approach to achieve a mutually satisfactory resolution.

8.5 The procedure will be open and accountable, to ensure the customer receives fair, courteous, and impartial consideration in the investigation of their complaint. The customer will be kept informed of the progress of their complaint, involved in resolution, and notified of the outcome.

- 8.6 BCHA will respond to complainants within set deadlines at each stage (as detailed in [Section 9.1](#)) and advice of resolutions, proposed actions, and timelines. All written communication will include the appeals process and other options available (seeking independent advice and/or pursuing with external organisations, where applicable). All information must be forwarded to Customer Services to be added to Rubbix from 1st April 2024.
- 8.7 BCHA may seek external mediation or arbitration services at any stage, with written consent from all parties concerned, should this action improve the chances of a satisfactory outcome for all concerned.
- 8.8 **Complaints to Commissioners, Funders, Enforcement Agencies and Regulators:** Customers have the right to take their complaints directly to a Service Funder or Commissioner (Local Authority or Health Authority), an Enforcement Agency (Health & Safety Executive) or a regulator (CQC, Ofsted or the Regulator of Social Housing) without needing to use BCHA's procedure. However, the receiving agency may require internal investigation by BCHA first. Where the agency investigates, BCHA will co-operate with the investigation and will endeavour to abide by any findings made by such bodies. All complaints notified to BCHA by commissioning or regulatory bodies must be referred to the relevant Head of Service or Director.
- 8.9 Compensation/redress will be part of the resolution process and reviewed at each stage so the **Compensation Policy** must be referred to, as required.
- 8.10 A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.

9.0 The Process

9.1 BCHA Stages & Timescales

		Acknowledge and Log within	Respond, offering resolution within
STAGE 1	Assigned to a Business Operations/Department Manager	2 working days	10 working days
STAGE 2 Appeal	Referred to BCHA Director or Chief Executive	2 working days	15 working days
External Adjudication only for Occupants/Former Occupants of BCHA Accommodation and Applicants to such Accommodation			
Independent Appeal	Appeal to Housing Ombudsman	external	external

Any changes to the above timescales will be agreed/notified with the complainant at the earliest opportunity. Changes to timescales may be appropriate where an investigation is complex or additional information is required.

- We must respond to the complaint **within 10 working days** of the complaint being logged. Exceptionally, we can provide an explanation to the customer containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.
- If an extension beyond 15 working days is required to enable us to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.
- Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the customer can challenge our plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of our response.
- Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1/ Stage 2 response if they are related, and the stage 1/ Stage 2 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1/ Stage 2 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.

- 9.2 All complaints will be acknowledged within **two (2) working days** by the Customer Services Team and assigned a Complaint Reference Number.
- 9.3 **Stage 1** - complaint will be assigned to the appropriate Business Operations or Department Manager. They will be responsible for working with the complainant (this task may be delegated to a member of their team to investigate) to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. The assigned Manager will be responsible for the responding within **ten (10) working days** and provide the complainant with details of any update or outcome. All correspondence, case notes, phone call discussions and agreements will be recorded on Rubbix by the manager or by customer services if requested. Complaints will be dealt with on their merits, confidentially and independently.
- 9.4 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, they have the right to Appeal, either by letter, email or phone call within 14 days. The appeal should detail what points you are escalating from the Stage 1 Outcome. The complaint will be escalated to **Stage 2** and assigned to the relevant Director/ Head of Service. This will be logged on Rubbix by the Customer Services Team, and an acknowledgement letter sent to the Complainant. The Director will make contact, to discuss the complaint handling, reasons for dissatisfaction and resolutions expected, within **fifteen (15) working days**. The Director will respond, in writing, with details of their investigation and proposed outcome to close Stage 2. All correspondence, case notes, telephone calls, agreements and action plans will be recorded on Rubbix by the managing investigator or by Customer Services if requested.
- 9.5 If the complainant responds or submits an appeal after the 14-day deadline, BCHA will have discretion to deal with the matter either as an appeal, or as a new complaint and refer it back to the appropriate member of staff, to start the process again.

- 9.6 If the complainant does not respond to BCHA within 14 days (of the last outcome letter), BCHA will assume that the customer is satisfied with the outcome - or does not wish to progress their complaint further. At this stage, the complaint will be closed on Rubbix, by the Customer Services Team
- 9.7 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, **at Stage 2**, their options will depend on the nature of the service they receive/have received from us.

Occupants/Former Occupants of (and Applicants to) BCHA Accommodation

These customers can choose to escalate their complaint to the **Housing Ombudsman**. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Contact details: **Housing Ombudsman Service**
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Telephone: **0300 111 3000**

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
 Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

The **Housing Ombudsman** may judge some types of complaint to be “out of scope” so reference should always be made to guidance published on their website.

The **Housing Ombudsman** has a code of conduct and BCHA will annually submit a complaints self-review against the ombudsman’s code. A copy of the Housing Ombudsman’s code of conduct can be found on their website.

BCHA complaints self-Assessment and complaints policy can be found on the BCHA website.

Customers of Support-only Services (e.g. floating or outreach support services)

These customers may be able to escalate their concerns to the funder of the service they receive from BCHA provided that such a right exists in the funding contract. When providing the Stage 2 outcome response, the outcome letter should confirm whether such an appeal process exists for the service concerned.

If there is no such mechanism in the funding contract, then there are no further rights of appeal.

Customers of BCHA Learn

These customers may be able to escalate their concerns to the funder of the service they receive from BCHA provided that such a right exists in the funding contract. When providing the Stage 2 outcome response, the outcome letter should confirm whether such an appeal process exists for the service concerned.

If there is no such mechanism in the funding contract, then there are no further rights of appeal.

Neighbours of BCHA Accommodation & Members of the Public

Generally, these customers will have no right of appeal to any external agency as there is no direct service provision to them. In this case, it should be made clear in the Stage 2 outcome that the Association's decision is final although opportunities to discuss and understand the outcome further should be provided where feasible.

- 9.8 BCHA agrees to be bound by the findings of the Housing Ombudsman or any other external regulating, contracting or commissioning agency to which customers may appeal.
- 9.9 Nothing in this complaints process prevents any customer from taking legal action against the Association at any time. Correspondence from solicitors or other legal representatives must be passed to the Company Secretary without delay for handling outside of this policy.
- 9.10 Customers may choose to contact their elected representatives (MP or local Councillor) at any time for support.

10 Quality Assurance

10.1 When handling complaints we will

- Deal with all complaints quickly, politely and within the time scales listed in [section 9.1](#).
- Record all complaints on Rubbix from 1st April 2024
- Provide support to any customer who requires assistance with understanding or completing of the complaints process.
- Consult with complainants to involve them in how they would like the situation to be rectified.
- If found to be at fault, offer appropriate redress (in line with the Compensation Policy), and seek to ensure that the complainant is satisfied with the outcome.

10.2 To achieve these aims BCHA will:

- Monitor the quality of outcome letters to ensure clarity, fairness, and consistency.
- Learn from events which have resulted in complaints and take steps to reduce the risk of reoccurrence as part of ongoing reflective practice.
- Provide training to staff regarding the Complaints Policy and these Procedures.
- Analyse information gained from complaints to make service improvements.
- Develop a "You Said, We Did" approach to demonstrate how we are applying the learning from our complaints. This will be published in Tenant Talk, and on the website.
- Review Complaint cases and any actions taken, because of learnings, at Quarterly Board reporting.

10.3 Complaints Log, Process and Procedures will be monitored regularly to ensure compliance and effectiveness, and will be reviewed by the Executive Team and Board to include the following:

- Number of complaints received, and if dealt with within timescales.
- Type of complaints
- Number of complaints upheld at each stage.
- The number of cases referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service and the outcome of these.
- Lessons learned and service improvements recommended/agreed.
- Compensation payments awarded, amounts and reasons.
- Results of Customer Satisfaction Surveys sent with final resolution letter.

10.4 In cases where other Policies apply, (such as Safeguarding or ASB) the customer will be informed. In cases where a complaint is not recognised as a service complaint, is out of time (section 8.2) or is subject to litigation, the customer will be advised in writing.

10.5 When we receive a complaint regarding actions of external people or organisations, over which we have no control, we will help the complainant to find the correct contact and/or act on their behalf (with their verbal or written consent).

11 Compensation

11.1 If BHCA's service does not meet the expected standards, or loss/inconvenience is incurred by a customer, due to a failure on the part of BCHA or its staff, we will consider payment of compensation which reflects the extent of service failure and level of detriment caused. This will be in line with BCHA Compensation Policy which is available on the BCHA website.

11.2 Compensation will be considered if:

- BCHA have failed to provide an essential service set out in Tenancy Agreement or Lease
- We have failed to keep an appointment and not made reasonable attempts to keep customers advised.
- We failed to provide correct information or advice, caused an unreasonable delay or were discriminatory or treated the customer unfairly.
- The complaint involves loss e.g., damage to belongings, or charges from a bank or service provider (Photographic or other evidence should be sought)
- Customers have spent excessive time, or effort, in achieving a solution to their complaint.

The level of payment for minor issues (such as missed appointments, without reasonable notification) is a standard £10.00.

In more serious. or long-term cases of sub-standard service, BCHA will consider the payment of goodwill compensation based on individual circumstances, and the financial loss or inconvenience suffered.

11.4 When compensation payment is not applicable.

- A lack of service or loss of facility that were beyond the control of BCHA or its staff members.

A lack of service or loss of facility is experienced due to customer negligence or failure to allow access.

- Compensation will not be payable for nuisance or inconvenience caused by neighbours, noise caused by contractors or general stress (unless this is recommended by an independent arbitrator)

Where compensation is payable, and there are rent arrears (or other outstanding debts), BCHA reserve the right to deduct the amount before compensation is paid.

12.0 Standard Letters

All letters must be copied to the Customer Services Team to properly document outcomes and monitor quality.

Standard letters should be adapted to suit circumstances, and those handling complaints are advised to seek peer review from an appropriate colleague or their line manager if in any doubt about how the complaint should be responded to.

13.0 References

- Tenant Empowerment and Involvement Standard 2017
- Data Protection Act 2018
- BCHA Business Plan 2020 -2025 Summary
- Compensation Payments to Service Users
- Equalities and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Procedure for Handling Vexatious & Persistent Complaints
- Raising Serious Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy

14.0 Plain English Leaflet

A summary of the policy in plain English is given in Appendix 7

This should be used in conjunction with this policy and is available in customer sign up packs and should be displayed in services and offices for both staff and customers.

Appendix 1

Role of the Board Champion (From the Complaints Handling Code Section 7)

A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes, the quality of the service provided, and the ability to learn and improve, and the relationship with their residents. The Ombudsman encourages landlords to use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.

Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints in their annual report and more frequently to their residents, staff and scrutiny panels.

A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture.

This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.

As a minimum, governing bodies should receive:

- Regular updates on the volume, categories, and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders.
- Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling
- The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable
- Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge.

Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training.

Appendix 7

Making a Complaint to BCHA

Plain English summary & complaint form

BCHA provides a range of services (including housing, support services, employability and skills support, mental health services and much more). We are committed to providing high-quality customer services wherever we are working. Sometimes, however, we may not meet all your expectations or our own high standards. This leaflet will help you to make a complaint when things go wrong, or you are not satisfied with the service you have received.

We value all complaints and will use them to improve how we do things in the future. Please let us know if you think we could do something better.

This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We use the definition that the Ombudsman prefers which is:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction (however it is received – in person, by phone, by email or some other method) 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 customer or group of customers.

What is not a complaint?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaint's procedure.

These include:

- An initial request to put something right such as a repair – if you feel that we have not resolved a request to put something right to your satisfaction you can make a complaint.
- Complaints involving abuse or neglect will be dealt with immediately under our **Safeguarding Policies**
- Complaints about the conduct of neighbours, visitors etc will be handling under the **Anti-social Behaviour policy**.
- A situation that is over 6 months old
- A situation where legal action has started.
- Vexatious complaints (complaints that are without foundation, repetitive and unreasonable or that are malicious or vexatious)

Full details are in our complaints policy.

How to make a complaint

You can complain in person to a member of staff or by any of the following methods.

Phone: 01202 410500 (Customer Services)

Email: complaints@bcha.org.uk

Letter: Customer Services, The Factory, 14 Alder Hills, Poole, BH12 4AS

Contact: Your support worker/tenancy officer or other member of the BCHA team.

If we can, we will try and resolve your complaint when you make it but sometimes you will want to take it further.

It is helpful, and most likely that you will get a satisfactory outcome, if you can tell us the following information:

- Your name and address, a telephone number and if possible, an email address. If you want us to contact, you via your support worker / tenancy officer or someone else that is fine – just let us know the best way for us to get in touch.
- What are you complaining about and what went wrong?
- What you want us to do (it is good for us to know what you want although we cannot guarantee that this will always be possible)

There is a form attached to this to help make this easier.

What happens next?

We will be in touch within 2 working days to let you know that we have received your complaint and to let you know which manager will be seeking a resolution of the complaint with you. We will let you know what we think **you** want to happen as a result of your complaint.

Our complaints process has 2 stages:

Stage 1

We will get back to you in 10 working days or less (but may be in touch earlier if we need more information or if we think it may take a little longer to resolve). If you want to know how things are progressing, then please contact our customer service team (01202 410500).

When we have reviewed the complaint, the manager who has been looking into the complaint will write to you to confirm what we are proposing to do (or have done already) to make things right.

We hope that after this time you are happy with the outcome, and we can close the complaint.

If you do not think that we have found an acceptable solution to your complaint, then you can ask us to take the complaint to stage 2. This needs to be done within 28 days.

Stage 2

We will explain in our letter at Stage 1 how to move to Stage 2 if you are not happy with the outcome of our Stage 1 investigation.

Investigations at Stage 2 will be directed to one of BCHA's directors. Your request to move to Stage 2 will be acknowledged in writing. We will:

- Outline our understanding of why you think that the complaint has not been resolved
- Identify what outcome you are looking for

The investigating director will contact you and aim to resolve the complaint within 15 working days, if it is likely to take any longer than you will be contacted before then. We will agree with you a date by which we will resolve the complaint, and we will keep you informed on how things are progressing.

We will write to you with a proposed solution letting you know what we intend to do (or have already done) to make things right.

What if I am still not happy with the outcome?

If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint after it has been investigated by a manager (Stage 1) and a director of BCHA (Stage 2), or if you are concerned about the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Ombudsman to investigate.

The Ombudsman will generally only investigate a complaint once it has completed our in-house complaints procedure at both Stages 1 and 2 and if it not the subject of any court action.

Getting help to make your complaint

If you need help let us know and we will do what we can to make things easier. For example

- We can provide information in another language.
- We can provide information in large print.
- We can work with you and a representative (e.g., a friend, relative, or other advocate) if you would like support during the process

The Housing Ombudsman



Phone: 0300 111 3000



Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk



Write: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ



On-line www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk