



Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 LRHA considers that the way in which complaints are managed is an important strategic function for the Association, providing valuable intelligence regarding the opinion of our residents, performance, and reputation. The aim is to manage any complaint fairly, efficiently and in an appropriate timeframe depending on the complexity and circumstances of each complaint.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This policy is intended to provide a clear and straight forward explanation of the complaints process.
- 2.2 The complaints process is available to every resident and anyone who receives a service or comes into contact with LRHA. This includes residents, shared owners, contractors, housing applicants and anyone else affected by LRHA's activities.
- 2.3 Making a complaint should be simple and reported through a variety of communication methods. The methods of reporting and process will be widely advertised and available to all.
- 2.4 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by LRHA, its staff or those acting on behalf of LRHA, affecting an individual resident, person or group of residents or people.
- 2.5 Someone making a complaint does not have to use the word complaint when they contact LRHA for their expression of dissatisfaction to be treated as a complaint.
- 2.6 There are some instances where the report will not be treated as a complaint:
 - 2.6.1 Where the issues occurred over six months ago;
 - 2.6.2 The exclusion of over six months will not apply for issues regarding health and safety, or safeguarding;
 - 2.6.3 Where legal proceedings have started; and
 - 2.6.4 When reported anonymously, if it is clear a thorough investigation into the circumstances will not be possible, or where we are unable to contact the complainant. The right will be reserved not to investigate.
- 2.7 Where an issue is not accepted as a complaint, the reasons will be explained to the complainant and an alternative solution will be identified and agreed.
- 2.8 Complainants have the right to challenge this decision by raising their concerns directly with the Housing Ombudsman.

3. Complaints Process

- 3.1 LRHA has a two-stage complaints process.

Stage 1

- 3.2 A complaint will be acknowledged within three working days and logged at stage 1 of the process. The complainant will be contacted to make sure we have all the relevant details, to ensure that we fully understand the circumstances and how it has affected them.
- 3.3 We will acknowledge the complaint in writing and identify the outcomes being sought.
- 3.4 The complaint will be thoroughly investigated, all points responded to and a stage 1 position with a response for the complainant established within ten working days. If this is not possible, and more time is needed we will contact the complainant to explain why and agree a date for when they will receive a full response.

Stage 2

- 3.5 If after stage 1 the complaint has not been resolved it can be escalated to stage 2. The work completed will be reviewed with the process, evidence, and outcomes evaluated.
- 3.6 The stage 2 review should take no longer than twenty working days. Should this not be possible, an explanation will be provided and a date for a full response agreed, which will be no longer than a further ten working days.
- 3.7 At any stage, the complainant can contact the Housing Ombudsman,
- 3.8 This completes the LRHA complaints process.

4. Communicate with Residents and other Stakeholders

- 4.1 LRHA will communicate with our residents and stakeholders using plain language appropriate to them, there will be no barriers to accessing the complaints process, methods including but not limited to:
 - 4.1.1 Complaints Leaflet;
 - 4.1.2 Website;
 - 4.1.3 Social Media channels;
 - 4.1.4 Annual Report; and
 - 4.1.5 Tenants Matters magazine.
- 4.2 At the completion of each stage of the process, LRHA will write to the complainant advising them of the following:
 - 4.2.1 The complaint stage;
 - 4.2.2 The outcome of the complaint;
 - 4.2.3 The reasons for any decisions made;
 - 4.2.4 The details of any remedy offered to put things right;
 - 4.2.5 The details of any outstanding actions; and
 - 4.2.6 The details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied with the outcome.

5. Putting Things Right

- 5.1 LRHA is committed to resolving disputes fairly and quickly.
- 5.2 Where something has gone wrong LRHA will acknowledge this, setting out the actions that it has already taken or intends to take to put things right. These will include:
 - 5.2.1 There has been an unreasonable delay;
 - 5.2.2 Inadequate or inaccurate advice was provided;
 - 5.2.3 LRHA's policies were not followed correctly without good reason;
 - 5.2.4 There was a factual or legal error that impacted on the outcome for the resident; and
 - 5.2.5 There was unprofessional behaviour by staff.
- 5.3 LRHA will acknowledge and apologise for any failure identified, explain and where applicable inform the resident of any changes made or actions taken to prevent the issue from happening again.
- 5.4 Where things have gone wrong, LRHA will:
 - 5.4.1 Acknowledge that something has gone wrong, provide an explanation, assistance or reasons;
 - 5.4.2 Apologise;
 - 5.4.3 Take action if there has been a delay;
 - 5.4.4 Recognise or change a decision;
 - 5.4.5 Amend a record;
 - 5.4.6 Provide a financial remedy; and / or

5.4.7 Change policies, procedures, or practices.

5.5 Remedies offered will reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the resident.

5.6 When offering a remedy, LRHA will set out what will happen, by when, agreeing this with the resident.

6. The Housing Ombudsman

6.1 When a resident remains dissatisfied at the end of LRHA's complaints process, they may bring their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

6.2 LRHA will cooperate with the Housing Ombudsman's requests for evidence and provide this within 15 working days.

6.3 If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, LRHA will provide the Housing Ombudsman with an explanation for the delay and if reasonable both parties will agree a revised date.

6.4 The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman are:

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000 E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

7. Continuous Learning and Improvement

7.1 LRHA will proactively use learning from complaints to revise policies and procedures, train staff and contractors and to improve communication and record keeping.

7.2 LRHA will ensure that staff are supported and have the skills to effectively deliver to the complaints process.

7.3 LRHA will report learning outcomes and improvements to services as a result of resident feedback through the performance framework, website, newsletters, annual report, and resident involvement structures.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

8.1 We are committed to fairness and equality for all regardless of their colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history. Our aim is to ensure that our policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.

8.2 We will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and will adapt our process or make reasonable adjustments to accommodate an individual's needs wherever possible and reasonable.

9. Monitoring and Review

9.1 LRHA will record and monitor every complaint, take ownership of it, and seek to find solutions that meet resident expectations.

9.2 Feedback will be used to:

9.2.1 Report performance to residents, staff and Board;

9.2.2 Engage with and involve residents in shaping services;

9.2.3 Review policies and procedures; and

9.2.4 Develop the capabilities of staff.

- 9.3 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years. A review may be conducted earlier if there are significant changes to either legislation or LRHA's operating practices.

10. Associated Documents/ Policies

- 10.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with:
 10.1.1 Complaints procedure flowchart.
 10.1.2 Complaints Handbook

Document Control	
Document Title	Complaints Policy
Author	Head of Operations
Version	1.0
Release Date	January 2023
Next Review Date	January 2026
Document Type	Policy
Reviewed by Audit & Risk	N/A
Approved by Operations	January 2023
Approved by the Board	N/A
Approved by the LT	December 2022
EIA Completed (Where Required)	No
Resident Consultation (Where Appropriate)	February 2023
Employee Handbook Amends (Where Appropriate)	No
External Consultation Required?	No