



Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out LRHA's approach to managing complaints. We sometimes fail to carry out stated actions or deliver a service that we are responsible for, and when these things happen this policy sets out how we will act.
- 1.2 LRHA considers that the way in which complaints are managed is an important function as a landlord, that residents in the event of something going wrong, can expect a prompt response, they can hold LRHA to account and their concerns will be taken seriously.
- 1.3 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 how a resident can register their dissatisfaction with a service provided by LRHA, and to clarify if they would like it dealt with as a service request. This is called a 'service recovery' with immediate action to resolve the problem. Alternatively, if the resident prefers it then a formal complaint is registered and the complaints process followed.
- 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 formal 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. An issue can be reported in different ways including via the website, email, WhatsApp, telephone, letter and / or social media. Any complaint received via social media such as Facebook will be directed offline for interaction, personal privacy will always be protected.
- 2.5 A resident 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 A resident can have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and has the right to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with LRHA to discuss the matter.
- 2.7 There are some instances where the report will not be treated as a complaint:
 - 2.7.1 A request for service, such as the first report of a repair;
 - 2.7.2 The first report of anti-social behaviour (ASB) or ongoing nuisance as part of an ASB case. Only complaints regarding the handling of an existing ASB case by LRHA staff will be logged as a complaint.
 - 2.7.3 Where the issues occurred over twelve months ago;
 - 2.7.4 The exclusion of over twelve months will not apply for issues regarding health and safety, or safeguarding;
 - 2.7.5 Where legal proceedings have started; and
 - 2.7.6 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.
- 2.8 When discussing an issue with a service request, such as a missed appointment, the problem and source of dissatisfaction can often be resolved by a proactive member of staff taking responsibility and action with a 'there and then' apology, and by providing another appointment that is convenient for the resident. The issue may then be resolved to the resident's satisfaction and may not need to enter the complaints system. Commonly, such issues will be dealt with via good customer service and the service recovery process.

- 2.9 All records of issues resolved using the service recovery process will be stored and recorded as complaints are, these will be reported to the Management Team. If further problems occur or the resident requests it then the issue will be logged as a complaint.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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 complaint must be acknowledged, defined, and logged within five working days of the escalation request being received.
- 3.6 The work completed at stage 1 will be reviewed with the process, evidence, and all outcomes evaluated by a member of the Executive Team within LRHA
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 At any stage, the complainant can contact the Housing Ombudsman.
- 3.9 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 issues fairly, efficiently and in a transparent manner. We seek to build trust in LRHA from its residents by always acting in line with our corporate values and in an ethical manner.
- 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 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET
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 A Board Member will be appointed as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), who will be responsible for ensuring the Board of Management receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the complaint handling performance. The MRC will have suitable experience and knowledge to undertake the role, and have access to suitable information and staff to enable them to perform the role and report on their findings.
- 9.3 Feedback will be used to:
 - 9.3.1 Report performance to residents, staff, and Board;
 - 9.3.2 Engage with and involve residents in shaping services;
 - 9.3.3 Review policies and procedures; and
 - 9.3.4 Develop the capabilities of staff.
- 9.4 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 Residents Handbook
 - 10.1.3 Service Recovery Flowchart

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