



Camden Living Housing Association

Limited Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. At Camden Living Housing Association Limited (“**CLHA**”), we are committed to high standards of customer service. However, there may be occasions when we do not meet those high standards which we set for ourselves. We welcome feedback and we also take any form of complaint seriously. We will try wherever possible to resolve a complaint to the customer’s satisfaction.
- 1.2. This policy explains how residents can make a complaint if they are not satisfied with our services and how their complaint will be processed.

2. Legal and Regulatory Requirements

- 2.1. This policy has been developed in line with the 2020 Housing Ombudsman Service’s Complaint Handling Code.
- 2.2. We will operate our Complaints Policy in compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing’s standards as set out in “The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012” as updated in 2015 and 2018 and associated guidance documents.
- 2.3. This policy also meets any legal obligation outlined in the following legislation:
 - Housing Act 1996
 - Localism Act 2011

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all residents of CLHA who have a legal relationship with us (i.e. are an applicant, tenant, leaseholder or licensee) and to any managing agents or contractors working with or on our behalf.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Complainant:** any resident who makes a 'complaint' about CLHA.

- 4.2. **Complaint:** we use the Housing Ombudsman definition and define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, 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 resident or group of residents. Our complaints procedure includes two kinds of complaints:

- **Informal (Priority Response) complaint:** Negative feedback where CLHA's response is much quicker than in the case of a formal complaint. These complaints do not normally require an investigation or sending of formal letters but will involve ensuring the problem is resolved as quickly as possible. Informal (Priority Resolution) complaints are dealt with through a response within 5 working days of the complaint being lodged.
- **Formal complaint:** complaints which require some degree of investigation and / or follow-up and cannot therefore be resolved quickly.

- 4.3. **Complaints Officer:** The person responsible for complaints at CLHA.

- 4.4. **Housing Ombudsman Service:** a service provided to all residents of registered providers of social housing which can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint and also be used if complaints should be escalated.

5. Exclusions

- 5.1. We will not consider a matter a complaint if:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months before the complaint was lodged. Where the problem is a recurring issue, we will consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident;
- Where legal proceedings have been started, we will take steps to keep the complainant informed (e.g. by letter) but will not consider a new complaint

or

- Where matters have already been dealt with as part of the policy.

6 | Accessibility and Awareness

- 6.1. Complaints can be made by phone, by email or by letter. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, CLHA will make reasonable adjustments to ensure residents may make a complaint
- 6.2. We do not currently operate social media channels or accept complaints through social media. This may be reviewed in the future.
- 6.3. The CLHA website will (once established) include information on how to raise a complaint. This Complaints Policy and process shall be easily found and be downloadable.

7 | Complaints Officer

- 7.1. We will have a dedicated “Complaints Officer”, whose role may or may not be dedicated to complaints handling. The Complaints Officer will:
 - Act sensitively and fairly;
 - Be trained to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents;
 - Have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints; and
 - Have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

8. Complaints Procedure

- 8.1. Our complaints procedure is designed to be fair and transparent and aims to resolve the complaint quickly by putting things right. It comprises of an informal stage (priority response) and two formal complaints stages. This ensures that residents can challenge any decision we make by correcting errors or sharing concerns via an appeal process.

8.2. Informal – Priority Response

- 8.2.1. Where we receive negative feedback, our representative will contact the complainant within 2 working days of their complaint being raised and will work to agree a suitable resolution in a mutually agreeable timeframe.

- 8.2.2. If the complaint is determined to be an informal (Priority Response) complaint and no further clarification is required to understand the nature of the complaint, CLHA will log the complaint and provide a response confirming its understanding of the complaint and the resolution within 5 working days.
- 8.2.3. The response is much quicker than a formal complaint as we will not normally carry out an investigation or send formal letters but will look to get the problem resolved as quickly as possible. Complainants are still eligible to then proceed to a formal complaint if they wish.

8.3. Formal Complaints

- 8.3.1. Where we are unable to resolve a complaint through our priority response process, or a resident request to make a formal complaint we operate a two stage formal complaints process.

8.4. Stage One

- 8.4.1. We will refer the complainant to our 'complaints officer' who will investigate the complaint and provide a written response within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. The complainant will be informed of the progress until resolution.
- 8.4.2. We aim to fully resolve the complaint within 20 working days where it is the responsibility of CLHA or one of our contractors. If longer is required where there is good reason, we will contact the resident to agree a new timescale.
- 8.4.3. If a complaint is received where actions are required by a third party e.g. any servicing of grounds or common parts for example, we aim to fully resolve the complaint within 30 working days.

8.5. Stage Two

- 8.5.1. If a resident is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint review at stage one, the resident can make a request for their complaint to be escalated to stage 2 (appeal panel).
- 8.5.2. If the complaint is escalated to the appeal panel the customer or those acting on their behalf will be given the opportunity to provide additional written information to the panel.
- 8.5.3. The appeal panel will consist of an independent CLHA board member, and another board member who were not previously involved with the case. The appeal panel will review the case and provide a written response to the resident within 20 working days of the request to escalate. If longer is required where there is good reason, we will contact the resident to agree a new timescale. This is the final stage of our complaints process.

8.6. Beyond the Three Stage Process

8.6.1. If a complainant has escalated their complaint through the two-stage process and the issue has still not been resolved to their satisfaction, they can contact the following:

- **Designated Person** – A Designated Person can be a Councillor or an MP. The Designated Person will help resolve the complaint themselves or refer the complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- **Housing Ombudsman Service** – If a complaint has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction eight weeks after the completion of our two-stage process, the complainant can contract the Housing Ombudsman Service directly, or can be referred to the service by a Designated Person. We will cooperate with The Housing Ombudsman's requests for information (including providing evidence within 15 working days of it being requested if possible). The Housing Ombudsman Service can be accessed here: <http://www.housingombudsman.org.uk/home/>

9. Guidance for Contractors

9.1. This policy requires any contractor providing services on our behalf to:

- Record and respond to customer complaints within the timescales detailed in our internal complaints process;
- Provide us with any information relating to a complaint upon request; and
- Assist us with investigating complaints where appropriate.

10. Learning from complaints

10.1. We aim to learn from complaints and use this information to improve how we work. CLHA will record and monitor every complaint and will regularly review the register of complaints received in order to identify recurring subjects and continuously improve how the organisation handles complaints. Where possible, CLHA will share with residents how learnings are being applied.

10.2. The board will receive regular reports about the volumes of complaints received, at which stage they were resolved, and any trends or themes within the complaints.

10.3. In addition, CLHA will proactively monitor the effects of its complaint's procedure. Areas to be monitored will include:

- Total number of Informal (Priority Response) and Formal complaints;
- Nature of complaints (e.g. ASB, estates issues, contactor issues);
- Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage of the internal process;
- Percentage of complaints resolved at the second stage of the internal process; and
- Percentage of complaints escalated beyond the internal process.

11. Training and Promotion

11.1. We will publicise this policy to our staff, third party agents and tenants through:

- Our website when available; and
- Policy briefings and training.

12. Policy Management

12.1. The board is responsible for ensuring this policy is kept up to date, implemented, monitored and evaluated.

12.2. The board is responsible for appointing a Complaints Officer.

12.3. This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently when there is a change in circumstances, in work practices or the introduction of new legislation.

13. Background Documents

13.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the regulatory documents listed below:

- The Regulator of Social Housing's Regulatory Standards
- The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (2020)

