

Compliments & Complaints Policy

SUBJECT: Compliments & Complaints Policy SECTIONS: All departments REVIEWED BY: Director of Customer, Homes & Tenancy Services	Policy No: 303	HCA Regulatory Code: QAF
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. BCHA is a major provider of a diverse range of housing, support and learning services for socially excluded people. This policy supports BCHA to offer the highest standards of support to help people take control of their own lives. We aim to continuously develop our services, resources and partnerships and deliver an ever-improving quality of service.
- 1.2. We aim to provide excellent standards in service delivery at all times and welcome any comments and compliments. However, from time-to-time things may go less well and this may lead to complaints. This policy ensures all comments and compliments are acknowledged and all complaints are handled fairly, promptly and consistently. Our priority is to both resolve and learn.
- 1.3. BCHA welcome all feedback from our customers, good and bad, as an opportunity to learn from any mistakes and make any necessary changes to improve the service we provide. We also want our customers to be involved in, and be part of, any improvements implemented from solving issues together. Your opinion is valued.
- 1.4. Comments and compliments are a way of helping us identify what we are doing well. We will acknowledge all feedback and use suggestions to build on our successes and further improve the service that we offer.
- 1.5. In responding to complaints we aim to:
 - Deal with, and reply to, all complaints fairly, promptly and consistently, within the agreed time-scales (Section 7.1)
 - Ensure that all customers have access to the complaints process, by offering an on-line, email, mail, phone and face-to-face service
 - Provide support to anyone who needs help with the process
 - Ensure that all issues are resolved to the complainant's satisfaction before closing the complaint
- 1.6. To achieve these aims BCHA will:
 - Consult with complainants to discover how we can improve our services
 - Ensure complainants are involved in resolutions
 - Learn from events resulting in complaints to reduce the risk of reoccurrence
 - Provide training to relevant staff in the execution of this Policy
 - Analyse all information gathered to make appropriate service improvements
 - Develop and enhance 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.

2.0 Equality and Diversity and Inclusion

- 2.1 BCHA is committed to ensuring that all customers have equal access to the complaints process irrespective of their age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, sexual orientation, race, 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 also ensure that all staff handling complaints treat complainants in a fair, courteous and sensitive manner, in line with their Values, Customer Care and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policies.
- 2.3 Complaints of discrimination or harassment will be dealt with under the **Equality, diversity & Inclusion Policy** or **Harassment & Discrimination Policy**, as appropriate.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1. Our Complaints Policy is available to everyone in contact with BCHA and/or its Subsidiaries. This includes:
 - All customers
 - All tenants
 - Those using Outreach or Floating Support Services
 - Applicants of accommodations and services
 - Employability and Skills participants
 - Members of public
- 3.2. Complaints about abuse or neglect will be dealt with immediately under our **Safeguarding Policy**, but may be dealt with later, under this Policy, where applicable.
- 3.3. All business disputes will fall outside of this Policy and will be governed by the Terms & Conditions set out in the appropriate Contract.
- 3.4. Petitions will be dealt with as a complaint using the same process and timescales.
- 3.5. BCHA follows strict guidelines regarding the correct handling of personal information as confidence and trust between our employees and our customers is paramount. These guidelines are outlines in the Data Protection Policy, following GDPR rulings.
- 3.6. BCHA will acknowledge and use all learnings to improve the service provided to its customers.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 BCHA will recognise the difference between raising a concern (either by email or survey feedback) and a formal complaint (via the Complaints Process) and take appropriate steps to resolve the issue for Customers, as soon as possible.

Types of feedback include:

- **Raising a Concern** – feedback about our service(s). Our frontline staff are empowered to resolve issues (where appropriate) directly and informally with the complainant. All information to be recorded
- **Complaint** – a formal complaint (expression of dissatisfaction) 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
- **Compliment** – letting us know if we did something really well or if a member of our staff exceeded expectations
- **Comment** – giving us your views, for example, - suggestions on how we could improve our service

4.2 We welcome all kinds of feedback on our services. Comments and compliments help us to keep our service standards high. We will know what is working well and what we need to improve on, and which of our staff are exceeding customers' expectations. You can make a complaint or give us a compliment or comment by:

- Telephone [01202 410 500](tel:01202410500)
- In person
- Letter [St Swithun's House, 21 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH1 3NS](#)
- Email: customerservices@bcha.or.uk (for compliments) or complaints@bcha.org.uk (for complaints)
- Social media posts and messages, e.g. Facebook, etc.
- In our suggestions box (if applicable)
- By any third party acting on a customer's behalf (with customer's written consent)

5.0 Compliments & Comments

5.1 If you are particularly happy with the service that you have received from BCHA we would like to know. Positive feedback is always an opportunity for us to learn and Improve.

- 5.2 Most compliments concerning staff members, are generally given to the staff themselves, so it is important that this information is relayed to the Customer Service Team to enable BCHA to recognise their staff members and to measure Customer Satisfaction levels.
- 5.3 BCHA will record and acknowledge all feedback, positive and negative, from our customers to gain insight and use the feedback to make improvements to our services and processes

6.0 Complaints

- 6.1 BCHA aims to provide all customers with a high standard of service. Performance is regularly monitored to ensure that this is the case. However, should standards fall below acceptable levels, our customers have the right to make a complaint.

Examples of causes of complaints include:

- Failing to do something we should have, or doing something we should not have done
- Giving unclear, unsuitable or unhelpful information or advice
- Failing to fulfil statutory or contractual responsibilities (as per the Tenancy Agreement/Service Charges)
- Delays in our processes (not calling back when we said we would) or failing to keep appointments without reasonable explanation
- Attitude of staff or our contractors
- Poor workmanship
- Dissatisfaction with the way we reached a decision or what has happened after a decision has been made
- Unequal or biased treatment or discrimination.

- 6.2 There are certain circumstances that are not covered by this Policy. These include:
 - Anti-social behaviour cases where the complaint is about a behaviour, not the service we provide (the is dealt with under our **ASB Policy**)
 - First-time service requests, such as a repair
 - Challenges to Policies and Procedures rather than how they are used
 - Events that occurred more than 6-months ago, unless they have been continuous over that period
 - Situations where either legal action is being taken, they have been referred to insurers or they are being dealt with by the Housing Ombudsman
- 6.3 All complaints are logged onto our OPENHousing, Customer Management system and all associated documents will also be stored there.
- 6.4 If a complaint is received by BCHA about actions of external personnel or organisations, over which we have no control, we will help the complainant to find the right contact or act on their behalf.

- 6.5 Anonymous complaints will also be dealt with (as far as possible) using the Complaints Policy and the outcome held on our OPENHousing system, and used as part of our learning process.
- 6.6 All customer-facing staff will receive training on complaint handling, and resolution, to ensure they understand the Policy and importance to our customers and the business. This training will include identifying persistent and vexatious complaints.
- 6.7 We will always acknowledge, record and respond to every complaint

7.0 Process

7.1 BCHA Complaint Timescales

		Acknowledge within	Respond within
STAGE 1	Assigned to a Business Operations/Department Manager	2 working days	10 working days
STAGE 2	Referred to BCHA Director or Chief Executive	2 working days	15 working days
STAGE 3 (Optional)	Referred to BCHA Panel (which will include member(s) of Exec Team/Board)	2 working days	20 working days
STAGE 3 (Optional)	Referred to Designated Person (local MP, local authority, Ombudsman)	external	external
STAGE 4	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

- 7.2 All complaints will be acknowledged within **two (2) working days** by the Customer Services Team
- 7.3 **STAGE 1** - complaint will be assigned to the appropriate Business Operations or Department Manager. They will be responsible for working with the complainant to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. The assigned Manager will respond within **ten (10) working days** and provide the complainant with details of an update or outcome. All case notes and agreements will be recorded on our OPENHousing system. Once agreement is reached regarding resolution, we will follow up with a letter or email outlining actions and resolutions.

7.4 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, they have the right to appeal. The complaint will then be escalated to **STAGE 2** and assigned to a BCHA Director or the Chief Executive. The Director or Chief Executive will make contact within **fifteen (15) working days**, either with the outcome of their investigation of the handling of the complaint, or and update letter regarding the progress on investigation. Both the above will be confirmed by letter. All case notes, agreements or action plans will be recorded on our OPENHousing system.

7.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied they can choose to either escalate to a **BCHA Panel**, a **Designated Person** and/or to the **Housing Ombudsman** [section 7.1](#)

BCHA Panel will include one of the following:

- Board Member
- Director
- Chief Exec

Designated Panel/Persons could include any of the following:

- A Member of the House of Commons (complainant’s local MP)
- A Local Authority Councillor
- An Ombudsman

The **Housing Ombudsman** can be contacted at:

General Needs Housing

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

Supported Housing

Contact details:	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Postal address	PO Box 4771 Coventry CV4 0EH
Telephone:	0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983 (Lines open Mon-Fri 8.30am – 5pm) Text 0762 481 1595 with message “ call back ” for call back service
Website	www.lgo.org.uk/complaint-form - online complaint form should only be used if complaint has already been registered with and processed by BCHA

NB: If a complainant does **NOT** wish to appeal using the process outlined in **Section 7.1**, they are not obligated to, however, it is a legal requirement for the complainant to wait at least 8-weeks following the exhaustion of BCHA’s procedure before they can submit their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

- 7.6 On occasions where persistent complaints are made by one person, that are without foundation, repetitive and unreasonable or are of a malicious or vexatious nature, they will be reviewed (with all evidence) to decide how these complaints will be managed, taking into consideration clauses within the Tenancy Agreement/Service Charges, Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and/or the Procedure for Handling Persistent and Vexatious Complaints.

8.0 Compensation

- 8.1 Where a complaint is relating to services that do not meet our usual standards, or customer incurs inconvenience, or loss, due to a failure on the part of BCHA or its agents, BCHA will consider the payment of compensation. (Full details in BCHA **Compensation Policy**)
- 8.2 Compensation will be part of the resolution process and reviewed at each stage
- 8.3 Compensation claims will be considered where BCHA have:
- Failed to provide an essential service set out in the Tenancy Agreement/Service Charges
 - Failed to keep an appointment and not made reasonable attempts to advise
 - Failed to provide correct information or advice
 - Treated a customer unfairly, shown discrimination or in cases of unreasonable delay

Also

- The complaint includes loss, due to damage to belongings or charges from a bank or service provider
- The complaint is regarding damage to goods/property by a BCHA contractor or member of staff. (Photographic evidence will be required, from both contractor and customer detailing time and date of issue/incident and damaged item needs to be retained for inspection by BCHA)
- When customers have spent an excessive time in achieving a solution to a complaint.

8.4 Compensation will not normally be paid for:

- Lack of service or loss of facility due to circumstances beyond the control of BCHA or agents acting on BCHA's behalf.
- Lack of service or loss of facility due to customer negligence, or failure to allow access.

8.5 The level of payment for minor one-off service delivery issues (such as missed appointments) will be at the standard one-off rate of £10. 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.

8.6 Compensation will not be payable for nuisance or inconvenience caused by neighbours, noise caused by contractors or general stress unless recommended by an independent arbitrator.

8.7 If compensation is paid, any arrears outstanding in relation to rent/services charges will be deducted before payment made.

9.0 Monitoring

9.1. All complaints are recorded on the OPENHousing system, by the Customer Services Team and kept updated until they are resolved and closed.

9.2. Our Executive Team will monitor the Complaints Process, including:

- Number of complaints received
- Compliment details
- Number handled/resolved within timescales
- Number of complaints upheld at each stage
- Number of cases referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Outcome of cases referred to the Housing Ombudsman
- Customer Satisfaction Survey results
- Lessons learned and service improvements actioned
- Compensation payments awarded and the reasons.

- 9.3. BCHA will publicise details of our compliments and compliments performance, lessons learned and improvements made, on our website, in Tenant's Magazine and in the Annual Report.
- 9.4. Complaints learning will be a standing agenda item at Team/Department Meetings and review at relevant staff 1:1 session.

10.0 References

- Equality Act 2010
- Tenant Empowerment and Involvement Standard 2017
- Data Protection Act 2018
- BCHA Business Plan
- Compensation for Service Users Policy
- Raising Serious Concerns Policy
- Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy
- Estate Management Policy
- Procedure for Handling Persistent and Vexatious Complaints.