



Complaints & Feedback Policy

Our Mission

We co-design and deliver services that offer innovative social care solutions and support people to thrive.

Our Values

We are **caring** and **compassionate**.

We are **inclusive** and **trusted**.

We focus on **excellence** and **innovation**.

We work in **partnership** and are **one team**.

King's Building
16 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HQ
T: 0333 010 4600

lookahead.org.uk

Supporting Procedures, Documents and Guidance

[Housing Ombudsman - Contact Us](#)

[Complaints Handling Code](#)

[Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#)

[Online Feedback Form](#)

Look Ahead [Complaints Standards](#)

[Managing Unreasonable Complaints](#)

[Compensation Policy](#)

[Compensation Procedure](#)

Copies of these documents can be supplied on request

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We encourage our customers to tell us when we fall short of their expectations to give us the opportunity to put things right as quickly as possible.
- 1.2 We view all customer feedback, including complaints, as a valuable resource to help us improve customers' experience of our services. We know that we can only do this if we listen to and act on what our customers tell us.
- 1.3 We will offer to support customers through the complaints process and, where the complaint relates to a different landlord or another organisation, we will offer to advocate on their behalf and support them to ensure that their complaint is resolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.4 Our overarching complaint handling standards ensure that all staff will:
 - Ensure that all customers – or their advocates if they lack capacity - have access to a complaints system that is clear, simple and accessible.
 - Support customers to report complaints or make comments, where required.
 - Listen and respond to all customer feedback and use it to improve services.
 - Focus on resolving issues leading to complaints quickly.
 - Provide staff with the tools and knowledge to resolve complaints promptly and appropriately.
 - Use appropriate forms of redress when we have done something wrong and learn from our mistakes.
 - Reduce the impact of any identified unsafe or inappropriate care or treatment.
- 1.5 Our approach to managing complaints reflects the expectations in the Housing Ombudsman's [Complaints Handling Code](#). Throughout the process we will remind customers of their right to approach the [Housing Ombudsman](#) (and/or Ofsted in regulated young peoples' services) directly at any point to seek their advice and guidance.

- 1.6 This policy applies to all services and departments and sets out our approach to acknowledging, responding, resolving, and learning from complaints and feedback.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 A **complaint** is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions of lack of action by the organisation, its own staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

Anyone can submit a complaint. All complaints, including complaints submitted by a third party or representative will be managed in line with this policy.

- 2.2 **Feedback** is defined as information provided that lets us know when we've done something well; a compliment about our services or colleagues; a suggestion about how we could improve a service, procedure or process; or constructive criticism that the customer may not wish to formalise as a complaint.

- 2.3 A **service request** is a request from a customer asking us to take action to put something right. We record and monitor service requests and will raise a complaint if the complainant is dissatisfied with our response. We recognise that most chasers on a service request can be resolved immediately by apologising and remedying the situation, for example re-arranging a missed appointment. However, if further action is required – or the customer requests it – the issue will be acknowledged as a complaint.

- 2.4 The term **disrepair** relates to any damage that makes a property unsafe or unhealthy to live in. Examples of disrepair may include leaks, damp and mould or non-working heating systems.

3. Complaints

- 3.1 We will accept complaints - as defined above - relating to incidents or issues that have occurred within 12 months of raising the complaint and which relate to:

- A failure to deliver a service or standards of service delivery relating to support.
- A failure to deliver a service or standards of service delivery relating to accommodation owned or managed by us.
- Concerns or legal claims raised regarding disrepair, including damp and mould.
- Failing to comply with our policies and/or procedures.
- The behaviour of staff, volunteers or contractors working on our behalf, including neglect or abuse.

021.00_Complaints-Feedback

- A disagreement with decisions made by us in the course of our work which the complainant feels are unfair or unclear to them.
 - Poor quality of repairs and/or maintenance – repairs, cleaning, gardening services etc.
 - Delays in responding to enquiries and requests.
- 3.2 We will accept complaints from our customers and anyone representing or advocating on their behalf, eg MPs, family or friends. We will always seek a customer's permission to share information and confirm that they agree to be represented by that person or persons in line with our [Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy](#).
- 3.3 We will not record enquiries from legal representatives as a complaint.
- 3.4 Where a customer expresses dissatisfaction when responding to a survey, we will contact them to ask if they want to make a formal complaint or to determine what action we can take to resolve the issue.
- 3.5 The following matters will not be considered as a complaint:
- The issue occurred more than 12 months before a complaint was made unless there is a pattern of concern, a potential breach of the Equalities Act or the complaint is linked to a regulated care activity (Social Care activity).
 - A request for a service.
 - A report of anti-social behaviour – which will be managed in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
 - Raising a safeguarding concern – which will be managed in line with our Safeguarding Policies and Incident Reporting Policy.
 - Complaints made by employees – which will be managed in line with our Grievance Policy.
 - Complaints relating to another organisation (unless this it relates to our contractors or others working on our behalf).
 - Appeals against warnings, notices to quit or evictions.
 - Legal proceedings that have started, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim have been filed at court.
- 3.6 Where we do not accept a complaint, we will write to the person seeking to make a complaint giving them a detailed explanation of why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. We will advise them of their right to approach the [Housing Ombudsman](#) (or Ofsted in regulated young peoples' services) to ask them to review our decision.

4. Access to our Complaints Process

- 4.1 We take every, reasonable, opportunity to promote customers' right to make a complaint and how they can do this. We employ a dedicated Customer Services Manager to be responsible for:
- handling complaints and co-ordinating a response/remedy.

021.00_Complaints-Feedback

- ensuring complaints receive the necessary – and appropriate – attention.
- reporting on performance in relation to complaints and any trends or patterns to our Board.

4.2 We make sure our customers are aware of how to access the service via:

- posters and information leaflets in services
- at sign-up
- via our [website](#)
- requiring employees to promote the service and support customers to make a complaint
- Customer Handbook

4.3 Complaints can be made in several ways, including:

- By phone or in person to their individual service
- Calling our customer contact centre – during office hours - on 0333 010 4600
- By email to feedback@lookahead.org.uk
- Using our online [feedback form](#)

4.4 We will offer the support of an interpreter if this assists a customer to make a complaint. All information relating to a complaint will be made available in a format that meets the individual customer's needs, e.g. large print, braille, bionic font etc

4.5. Where complaints are received from MPs, colleagues should be aware these are managed centrally by the Chief Executive's office. The complaint should be initially directed to the Customer Services Manager as soon as possible on the same working day to ensure the correspondence can be acknowledged and responded to within 5 working days by the Chief Executive.

4.6 The Chief Executive will reserve the right to delegate the response to his/her executive team and extend the response time frames (to reflect the complaints handling code timeframes) where the nature of the complaint is complex.

5. Complaint Handling

5.1 All employees are trained to handle complaints and to:

- be able to act sensitively and fairly
- deal with potentially distressed and upset customers
- have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly

5.2 The Customer Services Manager provides support for employees and managers in handling complaints and to co-ordinate a response with staff at all levels to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

- 5.3 Our focus is on early and local resolution wherever possible. There will be occasions when action can be agreed with a customer and taken immediately to resolve a problem. These actions must be recorded on our case management system as “Local Resolution” (formerly referenced as “Informal Complaints”) However, where the issue is more complex or requires more than one action, we will make sure that the complaints process does not delay the action being taken.
- 5.4 We offer a 2 stage complaints process and offer complainants the opportunity at Stage 1 to discuss their concerns in person as appropriate and escalate at Stage 2 if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint.
- 5.5 When a complaint is made, we will log it at Stage 1 of the process and acknowledge this within five working days of receipt. The Day 1 will start on the next working day of the complaint being acknowledged.
- 5.6 The complaint acknowledgement will set out:
- our understanding of the complaint and the outcome the customer is seeking. Where this is not clear we will ask the customer for clarification.
 - whether the desired outcome is reasonable and, if not, what they might realistically expect
 - their right to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf and to be accompanied at any meeting
 - their right to approach the [Housing Ombudsman](#) at any time to seek their advice/guidance or a young person’s right to complain direct to Ofsted in relation to Ofsted regulated services
 - any urgent actions that will be taken immediately, for example to make a situation safe or to prevent further damage
- 5.7 The Customer Services Manager will identify an impartial manager to lead an investigation. The Customer Services Manager is responsible for maintaining regular contact with the complainant to update them on progress – at times/dates agreed with them.
- 5.8 The Customer Services Manager will ensure that customers are given a fair chance to set out their position and comment on any findings from the investigation before a final decision is made.
- 5.9 The investigation manager must have completed Look Ahead Managing Complaints Investigations E-learning and adhere to our complaint handling quality standards throughout.

6. Stage 1 Complaints

- 6.1 When a complaint is received we will acknowledge receipt and log it on our complaints management system within 5 working days of receipt. We will respond to the complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

- 6.2 Day 1 of the process starts from next working day of the complaint being acknowledged. This allows for complaints received late in the afternoon or outside of core office hours and Bank Holidays.
- 6.3 Where it is not possible for us to respond within 10 working days, – for example due to the complexity of the complaint or the absence of a key member of staff/witness/complainant – we will contact the complainant to agree an extension of time to respond. Any extension will not exceed 10 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where it is not possible to agree an extension period, the complainant will be advised to contact the [Housing Ombudsman](#) to ask for support in challenging the proposed timeline.
- 6.4 Complaint extensions can only be made by the Customer Services Manager and the Head of Customer Services. All extensions must be recorded along with the reason, extension date and complainant’s agreement.
- 6.5 Where the complaint is a recurring issue, we reserve the right to consider older reports as part of the background to the complaint; where appropriate.
- 6.6 We will close the complaint when the resolution has been agreed. This may result in agreed actions taking place after the date the complaint is closed. We will still maintain contact with the complainant to update them on progress.
- 6.7 Where a complainant raises additional complaints or concerns during the investigation, these will be added to the Stage 1 complaint. Where this would unreasonably delay the response to the original complaint, the additional issues will be raised as a new complaint.
- 6.8 At the end of the Stage 1 investigation we will write to the complainant setting out:
- the complaint stage
 - the definition of the complaint
 - the decision on the complaint
 - the reasons for any decisions made
 - the details of any remedy offered to put things right
 - details of any outstanding actions
 - how to escalate the matter to Stage 2 if they remain dissatisfied
 - their right to contact the [Housing Ombudsman](#) for advice and guidance – of Ofsted in the case of regulated young peoples’ services
- 6.9 The outcome letter will include a link to our complaints handling satisfaction survey.

7. Stage 2 Complaints

- 7.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response at Stage 1 of the process, they can ask for their complaint to be escalated to Stage 2. The request to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 of the process must be received within 15 working days of the date of the Stage 1 outcome letter.

- 7.2 Stage 2 complaints will be managed by the Customer Services Manager. If there are no apparent reasons for the appeal and the complainant has no apparent reasons or grounds for the appeal, we may decide not to investigate the complaint at Stage 2 but will make every effort to support the complainant. This may include mediation. A decision not to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 must be authorised by the Executive Director of Customer Experience and Quality or, in their absence, the Executive Director of Group Operations.
- 7.3 Where the decision is taken not to escalate the complaint, we will write to the complainant setting out the reasons for not escalating as well as their right to approach the [Housing Ombudsman](#) to review the decision. Young people living in supported accommodation regulated by Ofsted will be advised of their right to complain to Ofsted directly.
- 7.4 Complaints will only be escalated to Stage 2 of the process when they have completed Stage 1 and at the request of the complainant. A request for Stage 2 will be logged and acknowledged within 5 working days of the request being received. We will aim to respond to Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.
- 7.5 Day 1 of the process starts from next working day of the complaint being acknowledged. This allows for complaints received late in the afternoon or outside of core office hours and Bank Holidays.
- 7.6 Where this is not possible, for example the absence of a key individual or the complexity of the complaint, we will write to the complainant with an explanation and setting out a clear timeframe for the response. This will not exceed a further 20 working days without good reason and must be agreed with the complainant.
- 7.7 Where agreement on the extension cannot be reached, we will advise the complainant of their right to approach the [Housing Ombudsman](#) for support in challenging this.
- 7.8 On completion of the Stage 2 investigation we will write to the complainant setting out:
- the complaint stage
 - the definition of the complaint
 - the decision on the complaint
 - the reasons for any decisions made
 - the details of any remedy offered to put things right
 - details of any outstanding actions
 - their right to approach the [Housing Ombudsman](#) (or Ofsted in relation to regulated young peoples' services) to ask them to review their complaint

8. Complaint Decisions & Remedy

- 8.1 We aim to resolve most complaints at Stage 1 of the process. On occasions a complaint may be completely or partially upheld. The following descriptions will be used to determine the outcome of a complaint at each stage.

Decision	Description
Upheld	The customer was fully justified in making their complaint. The Compensation Policy should be used to decide what, if any, form of remedy or redress should be offered to the complainant.
Partially Upheld	Some, but not all the customer's complaint was justified. This can sometimes happen where a customer has made a complaint covering multiple issues. Where the complaint is justified, the above steps apply.
Not Upheld	The customer's complaint was not justified. This might occur where it is found, following investigation, that the complaint is groundless.

- 8.2 The investigating manager should consider the impact and potential risks to the complainant in the event the complaint is not upheld. They should consider the best way to communicate the outcomes of the complaint prior to the formal written response being sent.
- 8.3 Where a complaint is partially or fully upheld there may be several ongoing or outstanding actions that need to be completed to resolve the complaint. The investigating manager is responsible for agreeing these with the relevant manager, ensuring that they are completed and progress is communicated to the complainant outside of the formal complaints process.
- 8.4 Some remedies will require a commitment to longer term actions, for example the replacement of a kitchen or bathroom:
- a) This should not delay the complaint been responded to within the policy timeframes; and
 - b) In these circumstances the investigating manager/panel should clearly set out and confirm the actions and timescales as part of the resolution. There should be an assigned lead responsible for monitoring longer term actions and communicating with the complainant.
- 8.5 The investigation manager should also consider whether any compensation or discretionary good will gesture should be made as part of their final decision-making process. The complainant does not have to directly request compensation but may be entitled to such under our [Compensation Policy and procedures](#).

9. Other Landlords

- 9.1 We provide a wide range of care and support services in other landlords' buildings. The local management teams must ensure they display and support customers to

access the landlord's complaints policy where customers are not satisfied with the service, facilities or repairs and maintenance etc provided by the landlord.

- 9.2 The service should record dissatisfaction, signposting to advocacy or support under our complaints' management system "Local Resolution – Other Landlords".
- 9.3 Where the landlord is not responding to the customer's complaint in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code, the support team should contact our Customer Services Manager for support or the Agency Partnership Team and/or support the customer to escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.
- 9.4 Where the customer is not satisfied that we have fulfilled our responsibilities as a managing agent, the complaint should be acknowledged as a Stage 1 complaint and managed as per our complaints' procedure.

10. Unreasonable Complaint Behaviour

- 10.1 We have adopted the Housing Ombudsman and Local Government definitions of unreasonable complaint behaviour and unreasonable persistent complaints.
- 10.2 We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complaints as those that, because of the frequency or nature of a complainant's contact with us, it is hindering our consideration of their (or other people's) complaints. Please refer to [Managing Unreasonable Complaint Behaviour procedural guidance](#) on how to manage complaints that have been deemed unreasonable or vexatious.

11. Monitoring & Reporting

- 11.1 The Customer Experience & Quality Directorate will assume day to day responsibility for monitoring complaints' performance and compliance with the policy.
- 11.2 The Customer Services Manager will work with local services and departments in relation to the quality of case management, compliance with procedural deadlines, investigations and communication.
- 11.3 The Customer Services Team will undertake quality dip sampling monthly and put in place improvement plans with managers.
- 11.4 The Quality Audit Team will monitor adherence with the policy in operational services through the Quality Management Framework.
- 11.5 Central Services' customer service standards audits will monitor adherence to the policy across Central Services Teams.

021.00_Complaints-Feedback

- 11.6 The Head of Customer Services will review customer satisfaction with the complaints' process and outcomes.
- 11.7 Reports will set out performance against procedures, trends, actions, learning, satisfaction and outcomes.
- 11.8 Reports to the Senior Leadership Team and Board will include both complaints and feedback.
- 11.9 The Customer Experience & Quality Directorate will oversee a Complaints and Feedback Service Improvement Plan and report against progress.

12. Governance

- 12.1 The Customer Experience & Quality Directorate is responsible for reporting on complaints' performance to the Senior Leadership Team, Board and customer scrutiny groups.
- 12.2 The Senior Leadership Team and the Board are responsible for overseeing compliance against the regulatory code of conduct, annual review, action plan and publication.

Record Keeping

We will comply with our Retention & Disposal Schedule which can be found by clicking [Here](#) or visiting our website at www.lookahead.org.uk

Policy Sign Off and Ownership	
Document Name	021.00_Complaints
Version	2.0
Who was consulted?	N/A
Approved By/Date	Policy Group - 2 February 2024
Date for Review	February 2027
Author	Head of Customer Service
Owner (if different)	Executive Director, Customer Experience & Quality

Document Location	SharePoint
Compliance Measures	Board Monitoring and Review
Related Policies/Procedures	Compensation Reasonable Adjustment Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy Managing Investigations Policy Contractor Code of Conduct Customer Service Standards
Relevant Legislation and Regulatory Requirements	Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code The Charter for Social Housing Tenants in England Regulation 19 of the Health & Social Care Act 2020 (Regulated Activities) GDPR Data Protection Act 2018 Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023

Version History			
Version	Date	Description of Changes	Author
2.0	02/02/2024	<p>Changed job titles in line with organisational role changes</p> <p>Added Disrepair and Damp and Mould examples of complaints.</p> <p>Removal of “Informal Complaints”</p> <p>Changes to complaint handling timeframes to meet housing Ombudsman Complaint handling code at stages 1 and 2.</p> <p>Made clear that day 1 of the timeframe starts on the next working day</p> <p>Reference to consideration of compensation and goodwill as part of decision-making process. Link to policy and procedure</p> <p>Remedies – Long term actions should not delay communicating the outcome of the complaint and a lead to oversee the actions</p>	Nicole Njie – Exec Director Customer Experience & Quality

021.00_Complaints-Feedback

		<p>should be agreed and hold responsibility for keeping the complainant updated</p> <p>Reference to complaint management where customers live in other landlords' buildings.</p> <p>Updated complaints standards</p> <p>Removed stage 3 in line with new code</p>	
--	--	---	--