

# **Complaints, & Compliments Policy**

## Control box

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## Scope of Policy

This policy sets out how Two Rivers Housing (TRH) will deal with complaints, comments, and compliments to ensure a fair and consistent approach and that feedback is utilised to deliver continuous improvements in our service delivery. This policy lays the foundation for us to build a positive complaints culture that enables our procedures to be achieve maximum impact.

## Applicability

This policy applies to all Two Rivers Housing employees.

## Policy Statement

Complaints and compliments are forms of feedback that help organisations improve services and recognize superior performance.

Compliments are positive feedback recognising good service, helpful staff, or effective decisions. They help organisations understand what is working well and motivate staff by acknowledging their efforts. We aim to meet the needs of our existing and future customers by providing a continually improving, excellent service.

TRH is committed to ensuring that all its employees take responsibility for delivering its services in line with this policy. Every Two Rivers colleague is empowered to embrace complaints, comments and compliments and support the earliest resolution, by putting things right, and learn from the outcomes. This will avoid issues escalating with potentially prolonged detriment to the customer.

Colleagues must handle all comments and complaints professionally, positively, and effectively in accordance with this policy.

## Aims and Objectives

We are committed to making it easy for customers to share their feedback, whether this is a comment, compliment, or complaint. We aim to ensure our process is clear, accessible and encourages customers to contact us.

We will:

- Provide a simple and transparent process for handling complaints that complies with all relevant legislation, regulatory requirements, the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code, and recognised best practice.
- Ensure complaints are handled efficiently, fairly, and consistently through a streamlined process, which puts things rights and learn from outcomes.

- Where a complaint is upheld, offer a sincere apology and provide appropriate compensation where applicable.
- Use feedback and investigation outcomes to identify trends, learn from issues, and drive continuous improvement in our services.
- Publish our performance annually so customers can see how we are doing.
- Ensure our employees are trained and equipped to manage complaints effectively and professionally.
- Make this policy, along with clear guidance on how to make a complaint, available on the complaints section of our website.
- Seek your feedback on the complaints process at the resolution of the complaint, to identify any learning on the complaints process. You will receive a satisfaction survey 5 calendar days following the resolution of your complaint. You will receive this through your chosen method of communication.

## Policy Outline

We will manage all complaints in line with this policy and supporting procedures, ensuring a consistent and high-quality approach at every stage.

We will:

- Act in accordance with all legal and regulatory requirements, and in line with our published performance targets, handling all feedback in a courteous, fair, and systematic manner.
- Provide customers with clear, accessible guidance outlining every stage of our complaints process, including how we manage unreasonable or persistent complaints.
- Handle all complaints confidentially and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and associated procedures.
- Accept complaints from customers directly or from a representative acting on their behalf. Where a representative is used, we will seek written authority from the customer. Customers can be represented or accompanied at any meetings with us.
- Where we receive an enquiry from a Member of Parliament (MP) on behalf of a customer, we will record this as a formal contact and then contact the customer directly to confirm whether they wish to raise a formal complaint, where eligible, if they have not already done so. We will also establish whether the issues raised have previously been considered through our formal complaint's procedure.
- Keep complainants informed throughout the process and provide a formal response that clearly sets out the outcome of our investigation, any actions taken, and what we have learned as a result.
- Recognise and celebrate compliments by ensuring the relevant individuals or teams are acknowledged, with achievements shared through our internal communications.
- Produce and publish an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, which will include a summary of key trends, actions taken, and lessons learned

over the year, demonstrating how customer feedback has driven improvements in our services.

## What is a Complaint?

A complaint is defined as *'a complaint is 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'*.

It is important to differentiate between a complaint that requires intervention via the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and those issues not requiring formal investigation. Each complaint will be considered on its own merit.

## What is not considered a Complaint?

We do not consider the following to be complaints under this policy:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago. We will consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.
- Legal proceedings have started –this is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.
- An initial request for service. This is a request from a customer to us requiring action to be taken to put something right. (Service requests can become complaints if we fail to deal with the initial request appropriately).
- An information request.
- A service that Two Rivers Housing do not provide.
- If dissatisfaction has been raised in a customer survey, we will contact the customer to discuss the dissatisfaction, if the customer has given us permission to do so. During the discussion we will handle the feedback as a service request and try to resolve the matter as soon as possible. If the customer remains dissatisfied, we will provide them with the option to make a formal complaint.
- Chasing up of defects within the first twelve months for new build properties, complaint investigations would only be undertaken to look at the way the requests had been handled.

- Request for clarification of a situation and/or policy or procedures.
- Insurance claims or issues that will be subject to an insurance claim.
- Allegations of anti-social behaviour (as defined by our anti-social behaviour policy), we will respond to the issue but will pass the issue onto our Neighbourhood Managers or Safety & Wellbeing Leads who are best placed to resolve these issues. We will, however, consider complaints in respect of the failure in the delivery of our antisocial behaviour service.
- Previous complaints that have already been investigated and determined.
- Anonymous letters. We may still investigate at our discretion, but it will not be registered as a formal complaint.
- Issues that are not TRH's responsibility or are outside our control. This will include issues such as the collection of refuse or estate maintenance not on TRH land.
- Disputes about service charges (for example, whether they are reasonable), unless the complaint is about how we dealt with the dispute. For example, we will consider complaints about how charges are calculated, communicated, and consulted on, as well as our process for granting access to inspect accounts. However, if the complaint is specifically around the level of service charge, then this will not meet the criteria of a formal complaint.
- Claims for damages of over £5,000 (we will handle these in line with our insurance procedures).
- Any claim or complaint relating to personal injury, including those involving a detrimental impact on mental health (these will be handled in line with our insurance procedures).
- We may not consider it a complaint if we have applied the 'unacceptable behaviour policy.

This policy will not apply where matters are being dealt with via other more appropriate channels and may include:

- Where an appeal body or tribunal has been arranged to consider the specific service issue e.g., Lettings Appeals Panel.
- Complaints previously considered by a court or tribunal.
- Where legal proceedings have started
- Submissions of a Subject Access Request (SAR) or complaints regarding your personal data (GDPR). These will be handled by our Data Governance Team.

- Complaints About How We Use Personal Data

If your complaint is about how we collect, use, or look after your personal information, we will deal with it in line with data protection law (UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018).

When you raise a complaint about your personal data, we will:

- Aim to acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days
- Look into what has happened
- Aim to provide a response within one month

If a complaint is not Two Rivers responsibility, we will try to support customers by signposting them to the correct external body where TRH is not responsible.

## Who can make a complaint?

We will accept complaints from:

- Any of our customers (tenants, shared owners, or leaseholders).
- former customers.
- People who have applied for housing.
- non-residents.
- Members of the public.
- a group of customers, where there is a single representative, and issues are affecting all customers equally. If a customer gives us express permission, we will accept complaints on their behalf from:
  - Anyone acting as their representative.
  - Third parties.
  - Family members. We will accept complaints from anyone who is a formal representative of any of the above, including:
    - MPs.
    - Councillors.
    - Citizens Advice Bureau.
    - Community Legal Service.

Anyone who makes a complaint is permitted to be accompanied or represented at any meetings with Investigating Officers.

## If You are Still Not Happy

If you remain unhappy following our response, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

Where TRH decides not to accept a complaint, the customer will be provided with a written explanation detailing the reasons and advised of their right to refer the matter to the HOS.

TRH handles all complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code, more information on the code is available on the Housing Ombudsman Service website here: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/) We subscribe to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) and produce an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement for scrutiny and challenge. This must include the annual self-assessment against the HOS Code to ensure this complaint handling policy remains in line with the HOS requirements, details of which can be found on the Complaints section of our website here: [www.tworivershousing.org.uk](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk).

Customers can contact the HOS if they remain unhappy with our final response on their complaint. Any customer can consult with the HOS at any time before, or during, the complaints process for advice. The HOS will not usually consider a case where the complaint is brought to the attention of them more than twelve months after going through a landlord's complaints process.

The HOS can be contacted as follows:

Housing Ombudsman Service  
PO Box 1484 Unit D  
Preston  
PR2 0ET  
Tel : 0300 111 3000  
Email : [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

## Compliments

### Making a comment or compliment

- Are you pleased with our service?
- Has someone gone the extra mile for you?

We want to know when we provide excellent services to our customers.

It is helpful for us to know what you think of our service so that we can either praise the people involved and note the success of a particular course of action or put things right for the benefit of others.

We value the importance of feedback when things have gone well. We recognise the importance of compliments in helping us to continue to get things right for our customers.

When we get a compliment, it is notified to the Chief Executive and passed on to the individuals concerned, who are delighted to know their efforts have been appreciated.

## How to make a complaint or compliment

We will make it easy for customers to make a compliment, or complaint.

We will accept these in a way that suits you, including:

- Phone: 033 33 55 44 33
- Email a compliment to: customerservices@2rh.org.uk
- Email a complaint to: complaints@2rh.org.uk
- Via our website: www.tworivershousing.org.uk
- Face-to-face, to any member of Two Rivers staff.
- Through social media (using our official pages only, as we are unable to monitor any other feeds). Any complaints initially highlighted by social media will be direct messaged from the platform for confidentiality purposes.
- At our office: Two Rivers Housing Rivers  
Meet Cleeve Mill Lane,  
Newent  
Gloucestershire  
GL18 1DS

## Complaint Stages

TRH's Customer Experience Team will acknowledge both stage 1 and stage 2 complaints **within 5 working days of the complaint being received**, and we will confirm the name of the Investigation Manager responsible for handling the complaint. The five-day period begins on the next working day after the complaint is received (with the day of receipt counted as Day 0).

The acknowledgement will:

- Confirm our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes sought, as agreed with the complainant.
- Provide the name and role of the individual responsible for managing the investigation.

- Set out the expected timeframe for providing a formal response.

The submission of a complaint will not delay, impede, or otherwise affect the progress of any existing service requests, which will continue to be managed in line with standard procedures

## Stage 1 Complaints

All stage 1 complaints will be considered by a Service Manager or Head of Service.

The Investigating Manager will contact the complainant to review the complaint, understand any reasons for escalation to a formal complaint, and agree the issues and desired outcome.

Investigating Managers will:

- Identify and implement any reasonable adjustments, taking account of customer vulnerabilities.
- Maintain clear and regular communication throughout the investigation.
- Use the customer's preferred contact method to explain the outcome and follow up in writing.

The Investigating Manager will issue a full response to the stage 1 complaint **within 10 working days** of the complaints being acknowledged.

There may be occasions where an extension to this timeframe is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint. If this happens, we will inform the customer of the expected timescale for response. Any extension will not be more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) will be clearly explained to the customer. The reasons will be in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Housing Ombudsman contact details will also be provided.

At the completion of stage 1, the response will confirm the following in writing:

- The complaint stage
- The complaint definition
- 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
- Any learning identified from the complaint
- Details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 (within 20 working days) if the customer is not satisfied with the response.
- Include the Housing Ombudsman's contact details for advice and guidance.

## Stage 2 Complaints

All requests for stage 2 will be acknowledged, defined, and logged at stage 2 of the complaint's procedure **within 5 working days of the escalation request being received**.

The stage 2 will be considered by an Assistant Director or Executive Director with no prior involvement in the complaint.

A final response to the stage 2 will be issued **within 20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.

At the completion of stage 2, the response will confirm the following in writing:

- The complaint stage
- The complaint definition
- 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
- Any learning identified from the complaint
- Details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the customer remains dissatisfied.

There may be occasions where an extension to this timeframe is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint. If this happens, we will inform the customer of the expected timescale for response. Any extension will not be more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) will be clearly explained to the customer. The reasons will be in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Housing Ombudsman contact details will also be provided.

Customers have the right to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service at any stage, and we will proactively provide this information.

We will only refuse to escalate a complaint to stage 2 where there is a valid reason or where the stage 1 response represents our final position. In such cases, we will provide a written explanation and advise the customer of their right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

Our complaints process will remain fully compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.

## Putting Things Right

Where something has gone wrong TRH will acknowledge this and set out the actions it will take, or intends to take, to put things right.

These can include:

- Apologising
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons,
- Acting if there has been a delay
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Amending a record, adding a correction, or addendum
- Providing a financial remedy
- Changing policies, procedures, or practices.

Remedies proposed will be discussed and agreed with the customer. This will be clearly set out; what will happen and by when and followed through to completion.

TRH will take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.

## **Learning from Complaints**

TRH is committed to using complaints as a valuable source of feedback to improve our services. Complaints provide important insight into where things may have gone wrong, where expectations have not been met, and where changes can be made to improve outcomes and experiences.

All complaints are analysed to identify themes, trends, and root causes. This includes looking beyond individual issues to understand whether there are wider service, process, communication, or policy matters that need to be addressed. Learning is shared with relevant teams and managers to ensure that improvements are considered and implemented where appropriate. We also regularly meet with the Member Responsible for Complaints to provide assurance to the Board of TRH that we are learning from the complaints we receive.

The Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) is a designated member within the Board of TRH responsible for overseeing the handling of complaints and ensuring accountability.

Where a complaint highlights a failure in our systems or processes, we will take action to put things right and reduce the likelihood of similar issues occurring in the future. This may include reviewing procedures, updating guidance or training, changing ways of working, or improving communication with service users.

## **Equality, Diversity & Reasonable Adjustments**

We are committed to ensuring people have equal access to our services whatever their circumstances and one of the ways we do this is through reasonable adjustments to remove barriers or reduce any disadvantage.

In addition to above we recognise that some customers who make a complaint may have specific needs that means they may require additional support through the complaint investigation. We are committed to fairness, equality, and inclusion for all, regardless of colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances, or offending history, in line with TRH policies. In our approach to make reasonable adjustments we will work with customers who may need this and we will gather relevant information that might help us to work with them. We may work with support workers, advocates, family members, or other professionals with a disclosure authority to ensure a person-centred approach to how we handle complaints.

Professional translation services and/or customer advocates will be considered with a customer may need this.

We will monitor all feedback (complaints, comments, and compliments) across protected characteristics to identify and address any potential inequalities.

### **Policy Monitoring**

The Head of Customer Experience is responsible for monitoring this policy to ensure it is applied correctly.

TRH will regularly analyse records to ensure that actions taken are reasonable, consistent, and in line with this policy.

### **Review**

The Head of Customer Experience will ensure the policy is reviewed as required and whenever there are relevant changes to legislation, case law, or good practice that may affect it. In the absence of other triggers, the policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or as determined by the Board.

Controlled procedures supporting this policy will also be maintained and periodically reviewed, taking account of operational issues, legislative changes, case law, or good practice updates.

### **Associated Documents**

List of documents - associated policies, procedures, and publications:

- Complaints Policy/Procedure
- Compensation Policy and Guidance
- Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Regulations
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- Regulator of Social Housing: Consumer Standards - Transparency, Influence and Accountability
- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- **STAIRS Legislation**