



Compliments and Complaints Policy

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Creating thriving rural communities
www.berwickshirehousing.org.uk

Berwickshire Housing Association is a Registered Society. Registration No.: SP2482RS
Scottish Charity No.: SC042342 Registered Office: 55 Newtown Street, Duns, TD11 3AU

Compliments and Complaints Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 BHA aims to provide a high quality, effective and fair service in all areas of operation.
- 1.2 Feedback from customers, potential customers and other sources provides an excellent source of information on the strengths and weaknesses of BHA services.
- 1.3 Compliments provide validation of areas of BHA services that customer's value.
- 1.4 Complaints and suggestions can be used to challenge and develop existing policies and procedures feeding into the planning process for continuous service improvement.

2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to provide a fair, consistent and structured two stage process for our customers if they express any dissatisfaction, whether justified or not with a service they have received. The policy will be widely publicised and accessible in a variety of formats.
- 2.2 BHA views feedback from customers as a valuable tool in maintaining and improving service standards. We welcome and encourage feedback from our customers and we view complaints as a valuable source of information to help us to:
 - 2.2.1 Improve the standard of the services we deliver
 - 2.2.2 Put things right when they have gone wrong
 - 2.2.3 Learn from our mistakes
- 2.3 In order to maximise the amount of feedback that reaches the Association, BHA aims to make the process for customers to make complaints, suggestions and compliments as open and accessible as possible.
- 2.4 Emphasis will be placed on resolving complaints as quickly as possible by an officer from the Service area concerned. We will ensure our staff are equipped to deal with complaints efficiently and effectively and lessons learnt from complaint investigations will be used to directly inform and improve delivery of services.

3.0 Complaints

- 3.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not made about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Association affecting any individual or group of people.
- 3.2 An initial report of a neighbour problem, request for a repair or similar routine service query, is not a complaint. An issue of this nature would become a complaint if a customer reports that the matter has not been dealt with to their satisfaction by the associated BHA team.
- 3.3 Anyone who receives or is requesting a service from the Association or is affected by the activities of the Association can make a complaint. This includes:
- 3.3.1 Tenants, leaseholders, licensees, ex-tenants
 - 3.3.2 Advocates or representatives of any of the above
 - 3.3.3 Registered applicants
 - 3.3.4 Neighbours of BHA properties who are not tenants of the Association
 - 3.3.5 Groups of tenants
- 3.4 Complaints can also be made anonymously although in some instances this will impact on the effectiveness with which BHA can deal with the issue. Depending on the content the issue may also be retained by the Association with no formal action taken.
- 3.4.1 – Any complaint must be made to BHA within 6 months of the date the issue arose. This will allow time for the agreed BHA Two-Stage complaint process to be completed within the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman stated 12 month deadline period. See paragraph 4.3
- 3.4.2 - Complaints relating to Care Services in Sheltered Housing will be managed in accordance with the Care Inspectorate deadline periods. Any complaint regarding a Care Service may also be raised at any time directly with the Care Inspectorate and the contact details are noted in section 5.3 below.
- 3.5 What issues can be raised?
- 3.5.1 Any service provided by the Association
 - 3.5.2 The way requests for information have been handled
 - 3.5.3 The way staff or other agents or contractors acting on behalf of BHA have conducted themselves
 - 3.5.4 The way that housing applications have been handled.
- 3.6 In order to make it as easy as possible for issues of concern and expressions of dissatisfaction to be raised with BHA, complaints can be accepted by any BHA staff in any format including:
- 3.6.1 Verbally, over the phone, at a BHA Office or any other location
 - 3.6.2 In writing, by letter, fax or e-mail

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- 3.6.3 Through the BHA website; BHA will not respond to you through social media but will contact you by an alternative method
- 3.7 The customer should never be asked to contact another member of staff to make their complaint or be asked to phone back at a time when the appropriate staff member is available or put their complaint in writing. Any member of staff can take details and can be taken verbally.
- 3.8 When a customer wishes to complain about a service they have received, they can expect:
- 3.8.1 Their complaint to be dealt with immediately if possible, or if further investigation is required within a maximum of five working days.
 - 3.8.2 Their complaint to be progressed to the next stage of the procedure if they remain dissatisfied after the initial response
 - 3.8.3 An acknowledgement of their complaint two working days, informing them of who will be dealing with their complaint and when they can expect a response
 - 3.8.4 To be kept informed if the investigation into the complaint falls outside of the agreed timescales
 - 3.8.5 A full response within timescales specified in this policy
 - 3.8.6 Appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- 3.9 When dealing with complaints we will:
- 3.9.1 Treat all complaints seriously and confidentially
 - 3.9.2 Maintain an accurate database of all complaints received
 - 3.9.3 Monitor the nature and location of complaints to identify any weakness in service delivery
 - 3.9.4 Learn lessons from complaints to continually develop and improve our services
 - 3.9.5 Monitor and report our performance in complaint handling against agreed targets
- 3.10 BHA is committed to equal opportunities and our aim is to make our Compliments and Complaints Policy easy to use and accessible to all our customers. It will be widely publicised, available in a variety of formats and customer compliments/complaints leaflets containing a feedback form will be available on request.
- 3.11 Staff will provide information on the complaints procedure for customers wishing to make a complaint and provide any assistance they may require, for example:
- 3.11.1 Assisting with a completion of a customer feedback form

- 3.11.2 Completing a customer feedback form on behalf of a customer
- 3.11.3 Making appropriate arrangements for customers who may have specific requirements

4.0 Complaint Stages

A customer that raises dissatisfaction will have their issue dealt with by the relevant team/ officer. The tenant will be contacted immediately and an appointment will be made to deal with the matter preferably face to face.

- 4.1 **STAGE 1** - Customers will be able to log their complaint with any member of staff. Investigation and response to the complaint will be co-ordinated by the Business Improvement and Performance Officer. A response will be offered within five working days. If this is not achievable then the customer will be informed as to the reason why and with a proposed date for completion. There are four potential outcomes resulting from detailed investigation from investigating officer, these are; **Upheld, Partially Upheld, Not Upheld and Not a Complaint.**
- 4.2 **STAGE 2** - If the Customer is not satisfied with the proposed resolution to the complaint at Stage 1 then the complaint will be reviewed by the relevant departmental Director. A response will be offered within 20 working days. If this is not achievable then the customer will be informed as to the reason why and with a proposed date for completion.
- 4.3 If the customer still remains dissatisfied with the situation following the response of Stage 2, then they have the option to contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
- 4.4 If a complaint has been referred to the Ombudsman, the Corporate Services Manager will be assigned to liaise with the Ombudsman to ensure that BHA meets all requirements and timescales in respect of requests for information.
- 4.5 All responses at whichever stage of the process should include details of any remedial action that has been taken or that is planned, (if it has not yet been undertaken the customer should be advised when it will be taken). If the complaint is not upheld the customer should be advised of this along with the reason for the decision.
- 4.6 If a complaint is made by a customer who is also a BHA member of staff or Board member, special consideration will be given to who handles the complaint at each stage in order to ensure impartiality in the investigation.

5.0 Complaint Stages – Care Services

- 5.1 **STAGE 1** - Customers will be able to log their complaint with any member of staff. Investigation and response to the complaint will be co-ordinated by the Relevant Manager or the Service /Corporate Services Manager. A response will be offered within five working days. If this is not achievable then the customer will be informed as to the reason

why and with a proposed date for completion.

5.2 **STAGE 2** - If the Customer is not satisfied with the proposed resolution to the complaint at Stage 1 then the complaint will be reviewed by the appropriate Director. A response will be offered within 15 working days. If this is not achievable then the customer will be informed as to the reason why and with a proposed date for completion.

5.3 If the customer still remains dissatisfied with the situation following the response of Stage 2, then they will be referred to the Care Inspectorate. Contact details to include the National Enquiry Line: 0845 600 9527), the website address www.careinspectorate.com and the postal address:

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

5.4 If a complaint has been referred to the Care Inspectorate, a member of BHA Leadership team or the Corporate Services Manager will be assigned to liaise with the Care Inspectorate to ensure that BHA meets all requirements and timescales in respect of requests for information.

5.5 All responses at whichever stage of the process should include details of any remedial action that has been taken or that is planned, (if it has not yet been undertaken the customer should be advised when it will be taken). If the complaint is not upheld the customer should be advised of this along with the reason for the decision.

5.6 If a complaint is made by a customer who is also a BHA member of staff or Board member, special consideration will be given to who handles the complaint at each stage in order to ensure impartiality in the investigation.

6.0 Compensation

6.1 Where the case merits it, an appropriate form of compensation may be offered. The BHA compensation policy sets out in detail the situations in which compensation is payable.

7.0 Suggestions

7.1 Customers may have suggestions to make to BHA about how a service area can be improved. Tenants can contact the Association at any time to make any suggestions or feedback. There is a range of ways in which comments of this nature can be gathered through consultation processes. However some of the most pertinent ideas may arise on an ad-hoc basis as customers are actually experiencing a particular service process. Contact can be via our website; social media; face to face contact in offices; letter or through a member of our Tenant Volunteers.

7.2 In order to ensure that ideas of this nature are captured all suggestions relating to service delivery made by customers should be logged in our system and passed on to the relevant service area for action.

7.3 A satisfaction survey will be carried out after completion of the process to collate information from customers on how they perceived the process. The outcome of the complaint will not be taken into consideration.

8.0 Service Improvement

8.1 A primary function of handling complaints or suggestions is to consider whether the issue provides scope for service improvement. This could be immediate amendments to policy or practice, or identifying an issue to feed into the service improvement planning process. The individual dealing with the issue is responsible for progressing any necessary amendments or passing them to the responsible service manager for implementation.

8.2 The Business Improvement and Performance Officer will monitor and manage the complaints database. This will ensure staff are adhering to timescales and the correct level of service is being offered by the Association.

9.0 Compliments

9.1 Positive feedback from customers is also beneficial to BHA. It provides documentary evidence of the value that customers attach to specific service areas and boosts staff morale to know that compliments are being officially recognised and recorded.

9.2 Compliments will be recorded and analysed on a monthly basis by the Leadership Team in conjunction with the recording and reporting of complaints.

10.0 Recording, Analysing and Monitoring

10.1 All complaints, compliments and suggestions are to be recorded on the Complaints database by the officer dealing with the information.

10.2 The database will be monitored by the Business Improvement and Performance Officer on a weekly basis to ensure that all issues which require a response to customers have been completed.

10.3 On a monthly basis the Operations Director will analyse all of the issues recorded on the database. This analysis will be reported at performance meetings and to the Operational Committee and within BHA Best Group reviews.

10.4 The Operations Director will identify any underlying trends in the issues reported which necessitates a review of a process or service area.

10.5 A summary of complaints, compliments and suggestions received and any resulting service improvement action taken will be regularly reported to all customers through our media channels.

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10.6 Customer Satisfaction with the complaints process will be monitored through a rolling survey of those customers who have made a complaint.

11.0 Summary

11.1 In order to ensure we continue to provide the best possible complaints handling service for our customers, this policy will be subject to ongoing evaluation to comply with the latest best practice guidelines issued by SPSO and the Care Inspectorate.

11.2 Tenant Scrutiny Panel will be consulted for their views and suggestions on how the policy may be improved.

11.3 BHA compliments and complaints policy provides a framework to maximise the capture of customer feedback and ensure that it is used to improve both service standards and the service improvement process.

12.0 Review

12.1 The policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required.