

# Complaints, Compliments, Comments and Compensation Policy

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## 1 Aims of policy

This policy aims to set out the standards of service that customers can expect when making a complaint, compliment or comment. It also sets out how customers can claim compensation in the event of service failure.

## 2 Scope of the policy

This policy is applicable to all customers of Chorley Community Housing (CCH), including leaseholders.

## 3 Monitoring, review and consultation

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of our customers.

Customers will be involved in full policy reviews via the mechanisms set out in the Participation and Consultation Policy. They will also be consulted on any changes to the policy.

Performance against the targets in this policy will be monitored monthly and will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Board.

In addition to the targets set out in this document, complaints will be monitored by ethnic origin.

## 4 Responsible Officer

Director of Customer and Neighbourhood Services

## 5 Contact details

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**Date: 10 October 2007**

## Executive Summary

This policy sets out the standards of service that customers can expect when making a complaint, compliment or comment. It also sets out how customers can claim compensation for a service failure.

## 1 Introduction

It is a regulatory requirement for Chorley Community Housing as a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) to have an effective and efficient complaints and compensation policy and procedure. Chorley Community Housing seeks to continuously improve and therefore embraces customer complaints and sees them as a source of information that identifies gaps and weaknesses in its services. Chorley Community Housing also encourages any comments or compliments from our customers as these aid us in the improvement of our services too.

## 2 Policy

### 2.1 Complaints

Chorley Community Housing aims to provide high quality services but recognises that there may be instances when standards are not achieved which could lead to inconvenience or financial loss.

This policy aims to treat customers fairly when they incur any financial or proven material loss through failure in service whilst also seeking to keep Chorley Community Housing's overall costs at reasonable levels by avoiding excessive compensation payments.

With regard to compensation, Chorley Community Housing must also comply with the Housing Corporation Circular R3-33/94 regarding Right to Repair and Right to Compensation for Improvements.

This policy also covers compensation for the following service delivery failures which are not covered by legislation but will focus attention on providing excellent customer care:

- Failure to deliver the promised service in relation to response targets to all stages of the complaints process.
- Failure to meet requests for published documents in the following formats:
  - Large print
  - Audio tape
  - Alternative language.
- Failure to meet requests for an oral translation or interpretation service.

### What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a stated standard of service provided by Chorley Community Housing or a failure by Chorley Community Housing to provide an agreed service.

## What is not a complaint?

A complaint is not a request for service i.e. reporting a repair, contacting Chorley Community Housing regarding a neighbour dispute.

## Who can complain?

All our customers are welcome to complain about our services and challenge decisions through our complaints system.

Chorley Community Housing will investigate and respond to complaints made by anyone who directly or indirectly receives or requests a service from us. This includes:

- Tenants
- Tenants and Residents Groups
- Leaseholders
- Waiting list applicants
- Neighbours of Chorley Community Housing properties
- Visitors to our properties and offices
- Board Members
- Councillors
- Members of Parliament
- Solicitors
- Citizens Advice Bureau and other similar advocacy agencies

*This list is not meant to be exhaustive.*

Other stakeholders, such as the Housing Corporation, contractors and funders may also follow our complaints procedure to express their dissatisfaction.

Chorley Community Housing will also investigate anonymous complaints.

Chorley Community Housing takes all complaints seriously and all complainants will be treated fairly. All complaints will be dealt with impartially, objectively and professionally. Customers will not receive adverse treatment because they have made a complaint.

## How can a complaint be made?

A complaint can be made in any format. Customers can make a complaint face to face, by phone, fax, letter, e-mail, on the website or by filling in our Customer Complaints, Comments and Compliments Form.

There are different stages to the complaints procedure which will be followed for all complaints. All correspondence relating to a complaint will be in Plain English and will be jargon-free. The correspondence will have a professional and polite tone and will include a contact name and a direct dial telephone number for the person that is dealing with the complaint.

The procedure is set out below:

### **Resolving a complaint at source**

CCH will make every attempt to resolve a complaint at source within 5 working days of the complaint being made. If the complaint is not resolved to the complainants satisfaction at this stage then the complainant should notify CCH that they would like their complaint to be advanced to Stage 1 of the process.

If a complaint is not dealt with at source within 5 working days it will automatically be advanced to Stage 1 of the process.

### **Stage 1 - Unresolved complaint**

Unresolved complaints will be referred to the section responsible for providing the service against which the complaint is made.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days.

A full investigation will be undertaken into the issues raised in the complaint. A full response will be sent within 10 working days, addressing all the points raised in the complaint and notifying any action that has been undertaken as a result of the complaint.

If it is likely that it will take more than 10 working days to investigate the complaint in full, the complainant will be notified of this as soon as possible and given an indication of when they are likely to receive a full response.

### **Stage 2 – Service Director Review**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the way in which the complaint has been dealt with at Stage 1 then they should notify Chorley Community Housing that they would like the complaint to be advanced to Stage 2.

The complaint will be acknowledged by a Director of Service within 3 working days.

A full investigation will be undertaken by a Director of Service into the issues raised in the complaint. A full response will be sent within 10 working days, addressing all the points raised in the complaint and notifying the complainant of any action that has been undertaken as a result of the complaint.

If it is likely that it will take more than 10 working days to investigate the complaint in full, the complainant will be notified of this as soon as possible and given an indication of when they are likely to receive a full response.

### **Stage 3 – Managing Director Review**

If the complainant does not feel that the complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily at Stage 2 of the process they can request that the complaint is advanced to Stage 3.

The complaint will be acknowledged by the Managing Director within 3 working days.

A full investigation will be undertaken by the Managing Director into the issues raised in the complaint. A full response will be sent within 10 working days, addressing all the points raised in the complaint and notifying the complainant of any action that has been undertaken as a result of the complaint.

If it is likely that it will take more than 10 working days to investigate the complaint in full, the complainant will be notified of this as soon as possible and given an indication of when they are likely to receive a full response.

#### **Stage 4 – Appeals Panel**

If the complainant still does not feel that the complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily at Stage 3 of the process they can request that the complaint is advanced to Stage 4.

Stage 4 gives the complainant the opportunity of a final and personal hearing with members of Chorley Community Housing's Board of Management. The Panel consists of at least 2 Board Members. If a Board Member has a conflict of interest relating to a particular complaint they will be unable to sit on the Appeals Panel. The Panel has full delegated authority from the Board to hear and adjudicate over complaints.

The Panel is the final stage within our complaints procedure and will be convened within 15 working days of a complainant indicating their dissatisfaction with Stage 3.

A final response confirming the outcome of the appeals hearing will be sent to the complainant within 5 working days of the hearing.

#### **Independent Housing Ombudsman**

If the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome of the complaint following the exhaustion of Chorley Community Housing's complaints procedure, they have the right to refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent service which considers complaints against organisations when asked to by a complainant who is not satisfied with the outcome. The Ombudsman normally asks that customers go through the organisation's complaints procedure before any complaint is referred to them for investigation.

Their details are set out below:

Housing Ombudsman Service  
81 Aldwych  
London WC2B 4HN

Tel: 020 7421 3800  
Minicom: 020 7404 7092  
Fax: 020 7831 1942  
E-mail: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)  
Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

Lo-Call: 0845 712 5973

## Feedback

Chorley Community Housing will provide feedback to a complainant on any actions taken to avoid a recurrence of the complaint (or a similar complaint) in the future.

## Customer satisfaction

Chorley Community Housing regularly reviews the way it handles complaints and all complainants are asked for feedback following the closure of the complaint.

### 2.2 Comments

Chorley Community Housing welcomes comments on all aspects of the services it provides.

Comments can be received in any format.

Customers will be notified of any changes to policy or procedure following a comment they have made.

### 2.3 Compliments

Chorley Community Housing welcomes compliments as well as complaints. Compliments help Chorley Community Housing to understand the areas in which it is doing well. This in turn helps to determine the areas where improvements could be made and helps to develop best practice across the service.

Compliments can also be received in any format and will be acknowledged within 10 working days.

### 2.4 Compensation

#### Compensation for service failure

If Chorley Community Housing fails to meet its target times for responding to customer complaints and the complainant has not been notified previously of a delay in the process, a graduated scale for compensation will be awarded as follows:

Service failure	Compensation amount
Failure to respond to Stage 1 of complaint within 10 working days	£5.00
Failure to respond to Stage 2 of complaint within 10 working days	£10.00
Failure to respond to Stage 3 of complaint within 10 working days	£15.00
Failure to respond to Stage 4 of complaint within 20 working days	£20.00

Failure of service will be monitored and payments will be made automatically where targets have not been met.

### Ex-gratia payments

A Service Director investigating a complaint may agree to make compensation at their discretion in the following circumstances:

- A customer suffers loss due to service failure
- Failure of service causes distress
- Customers have to spend excessive time and trouble achieving a solution to a complaint.

The result may be:

- A payment of compensation
- Compensation in kind (i.e. decorating materials)

### Compensation for failure to provide information in other forms when requested

Chorley Community Housing will also offer compensation for failure to provide, on request, information to customers in other forms within target times. The size and nature of the document and the workload of the contractor may affect the ability to meet the targets but the customer will be informed if this occurs and will be given a revised target date. If this date is not met, then compensation will be paid.

Requested format	Target for provision	Compensation Amount
Large print	3 working days	£10.00
Audio tape	5 working days	£10.00
Alternative language (written and text only)	5 working days	£10.00
Oral translation or interpretation service (by telephone)	Within 24 hours of request (excluding weekends)	£10.00

### Compensation for failure to carry out repairs

Under the Right to Repair, tenants may be entitled to compensation when Chorley Community Housing does not complete repairs within the target response times.

To qualify the repair should:

- Be the responsibility of Chorley Community Housing
- Remain incomplete after being reported twice
- Affect health, security or safety

- Cost between £25 and £300 to complete.

Chorley Community Housing will pay a flat rate one-off payment of £10 plus £2 a day up to a maximum of £50 for each day the repair remains outstanding.

To claim compensation tenants must:

- Allow the Repairs and Maintenance Team or contractors reasonable access to their home
- Make the claim within one month of the completion date
- Not have had a temporary repair that requires a return visit
- Not have received notification that the completion date has been put back due to circumstances outside Chorley Community Housing's control.

### **Compensation for improvements made by tenants**

If a tenant has made certain improvements to their home and then decide to leave they may have the right to compensation.

To qualify for compensation they must follow the guidance set out in the Guide to Compensation for Home Improvements. The Guide also sets out the improvements that Chorley Community Housing will consider compensation for.

To calculate compensation Chorley Community Housing will look at the cost incurred for the improvement and the current value of that improvement. The condition of the improvement at the time the claim is made is also taken into consideration. Compensation claims will be made up to a maximum of £3,000. Chorley Community Housing will not pay compensation for claims valued below £250.

Where a tenant who is to receive a compensation payment is in rent arrears, they will be given the option of the payment being made direct to their rent account.

## **3 Monitoring, review and consultation**

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of Chorley Community Housing's customers.

Customers will be involved in the reviews via the mechanisms set out in the Participation and Consultation Policy. They will also be consulted on any changes to the policy.

Performance against the targets in this policy will be monitored monthly and will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Board.

In addition to the targets set out in this document, complaints will be monitored by ethnic origin.

## **4 Jargon Buster**

N/A