



# **COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY**

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## **Complaints Policy**

### **1 Introduction**

Leeds Jewish Housing Association (LJHA) is committed to the provision of a high quality of service to our customers, and every member of staff is responsible for delivering our service.

We welcome complaints, comments and compliments and we use customer feedback as an opportunity to learn about what we are doing well and where we need to improve. This helps us to improve the services we deliver.

### **2 Scope**

This policy covers occasions when customers are dissatisfied with the level or type of service they have received, and wish to make a complaint.

### **3 Purpose**

To have a system in place that is clear, simple and accessible so complaints are resolved promptly, consistently and fairly, in compliance with all regulatory and statutory requirements. We will learn from each complaint to help us improve services to tenants and applicants.

### **4 What is a Complaint?**

A **complaint** is when a LJHA customer contacts us to tell us that they are dissatisfied with a service we have provided or the way in which the service was delivered. A complaint is different from an enquiry or a request.

An **enquiry** is when a customer contacts us to ask about something concerning their home or tenancy. For example, a customer might ask for information about their rent account, or to query or clarify something on their rent statement. This is not a complaint. If we fail to provide or clarify this information, then this could become a complaint.

A **request** is when a customer contacts us to do something to their home or tenancy. For example, a customer may ask for a repair to their home. This is not a complaint. If we fail to carry out the repair, then this could become a complaint.

Issues that are not dealt with as a complaint include: -

- disputes between neighbours;
- report of nuisance and anti-social behaviour;
- rents and service charges;
- requests for a service;
- problems with other organisations we do not have the power to deal with.

## 5 Making a complaint

We will always attempt to resolve complaints at the first point of contact. The majority of customers approaching the association with an issue want their issue resolved swiftly, rather than being directed down a formal complaints process to resolve the issue. Therefore, we will always encourage an informal process in order to resolve the issue. This would involve a member of staff having a discussion with you regarding how we can resolve the issue.

As part of the informal process the member of staff dealing with the complaint should:

- clarify what did happen
- ascertain what should have happened
- identify what was the cause of any identified failings
- identify what can be done to resolve the problem.

Informal complaints either are face to face, in writing or via the telephone and will be logged in the Complaints Register in note form and recorded as an informal complaint. The aim is to provide a quick, informed response to a complaint without the need for a detailed investigation of the points raised. Ideally a resolution should be achievable within a short period of time, and the Association aims to resolve the majority of cases within 24 hours and no longer than 5 working days.

If the complaint is not resolved at an informal stage then there are two stages to the formal process. These are:

- Stage 1: the complaint will be investigated by a manager or Director with a target response time of within 10 working days of receiving the complaint
- Stage 2 (Appeal): if the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved at stage 1, the complaint investigation and response will be reviewed by either a Director not involved at stage 1 or the Chief Executive. An appeal should be received within 10 working days of the outcome letter at stage 1 being received. There is then a target response time of 10 working days of receiving the request to progress to Stage 2.
- Stage 3 (Panel): if the complaint remains unresolved after the second stage, then it will be referred to stage 3. At this stage, the complaint will be heard by a panel made up of at least three people, including one formally engaged tenant. The panel will then consider the complaint and make a formal recommendation to the Chief Executive or Board (dependant on the circumstances) who will have ultimate decision making authority. Any decisions will be issued in writing and detail the full rationale for the final decision, along with the recommendation of the panel.

As a small Housing Association, we reserve the right to go directly to stage 3 after stage 1 where there are not sufficient levels of hierarchy, depending upon the nature of the complaint and who it is directed at.

At the end of the complaint stages, if the complainant does not think that their complaint has been fully resolved after stage 2 and if the complainant is a tenant, leaseholder or housing applicant of LJHA, they will be advised that they can refer their complaint to their local Councillor or local MP, as per government guidance. The local Councillor or MP will try and resolve their complaint locally, or refer the complaint immediately to the Housing

Ombudsman Service (HOS). Alternatively, the complainant can wait for 8 weeks from the date of their stage 3 decision letter and go directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) who can be contacted at: -

**Housing Ombudsman Service**  
**81 Aldwych**  
**London**  
**WC2B 4HN**  
**Tel: 0300 111 3000**  
**Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)**

Anonymous complaints are not dealt with through this complaints policy. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be necessary to investigate the matter to protect the Association's interest.

Complaints from groups of tenants will be accepted. The response will be sent to all members of the group who are named in the complaint.

When we have failed to deliver a service to our normal standard and a complaint is upheld, we will offer appropriate redress.

We reserve the right to deal with complaints in an alternative way (outside the normal procedures) if circumstances require this. In such a rare case, the Association records why the complaint has been dealt with differently and informs the complainant accordingly.

## **6 Compliments**

We welcome compliments from customers who wish to make a point of complimenting either an individual, or the organisation, on a particularly good service. We will ensure that where the compliment is about an individual, their line manager will provide them with this feedback.

Compliments form part of our system of feedback. These help us to understand what matters to our customers and informs us what is working effectively.

## **7 Frivolous or Vexatious complaints**

We reserve the right to refuse to deal with complaints that are pursued unreasonably or in an aggressive or abusive manner. The Housing Ombudsman Service's document "Unacceptable User Actions and Behaviour" is appended to this policy to give guidelines on how to handle such complaints.

On occasion, we receive complaints that may be frivolous or vexatious, and it is not possible to reach a reasonable solution, or where the complainant will not accept a reasonable solution. Such complaints may be due to a medical condition, mental illness, or learning difficulty which makes effective communication difficult. In these circumstances, the person dealing with the complaint may liaise with any support/external agencies involved. The

person dealing with the complaint will agree on how to deal with the complainant, based on their individual circumstances, and may apply a different means of communicating.

## **8 Persistent Complainants**

We will class unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complaints as those complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts, hinder our consideration of their or any other people's complaints.

Actions and behaviours of unreasonable or persistent complainants are: -

- refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint;
- refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refusing to accept that issues are not within the remit of the complaints policy;
- changing the basis of their complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- making unnecessary and unreasonable demands and resources of staff whilst the complaint is being investigated;
- submitting repeat complaints after the complaints process has been completed essentially about the same issues;
- refusing to accept the decision and repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision;
- combination of some or all of the above.

The Director of Operations or Chief Executive will make the decision to deem someone a persistent or unreasonable complainer. Once this decision has been made the complainant will be given a warning in writing and informed of any restrictions that have been placed on them.

Options and restrictions placed on a persistent complainant should be for a specified period and not exceed six-months before being reviewed.

Options and restrictions may include: -

- Placing restrictions on contacts to LJHA via telephone, email or in writing;
- Informing the complainant that where communication in writing is received it will be read but not acknowledged;
- Refusal to take phone calls from the complainant;
- Refusing to register and process complaints about the same matter.

## **9 Confidentiality**

The Association will, as far as possible respect the confidentiality of complaints. In normal circumstances the identity of the complainant will only be known by those dealing with the complaint, all of whom are not at liberty to inform others of who has lodged the complaint. It should be noted, however, that in cases where a complaint refers to a particular resident, it may be necessary to disclose the identity of the complainant to allow a fair assessment to be carried out.

## **10 Compliment**

We often receive compliments on the services we provide and it is important to collect this information so that we can recognise and celebrate our employees achievements.

Compliments are logged on the 'Compliment Register' and the relevant member of staff will receive feedback regarding this.

## **11 Monitoring and reporting**

We will monitor our performance on complaints, compliments and compensation and report this to Senior Staff meetings the relevant Sub Board or Board of Management.

On an annual basis we will publish information where complaints or compliments have been used to inform service reviews or used to make improvements or changes to our policies and processes.