

Complaints Policy

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Owner: Eugene Schreider	Next Scheduled Review: 01/03/2028

1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out Flint Housing's consistent and fair approach to managing complaints.
- 1.2 We have developed this Complaints Policy in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, our statutory and legal duties, and residents' feedback.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all Flint Housing residents and any individual or group affected by the services Flint Housing provides, directly and through our housing management partners.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 Flint Housing's number one priority is to provide all its customers with the highest level of customer service and to treat all feedback as a learning opportunity to further improve services and processes.
- 2.2 If there is a problem, Flint Housing, together with our housing management partners, will seek to resolve it in such a way that it restores our customer's trust in Flint Housing and our partners.
- 2.3 Flint Housing is committed to ensuring that residents receive responses promptly and courteously to all expressions of dissatisfaction and that residents receive a high standard of service to ensure that actions are carried out as quickly as possible and that communication is timely and accurate.
- 2.4 If we do not meet our service standards, we will:
 - Apologise
 - Accept responsibility
 - Acknowledge your expectations
 - Put things right when they are in our control within reasonable timescales
 - Keep you updated
 - Listen to your feedback and make improvements where needed
- 2.5 To support our commitment to achieving an excellent customer experience you can expect us to meet these principles when dealing with your complaint:

- We will treat you as an individual and with consideration.
- We want all our customers to be able to access our services equally. Please let us and our housing managers know if you need any reasonable adjustments to be considered to help you with your complaint. Examples include, providing documents in larger print or communicating by telephone in addition to writing.
- We will empathise with your concerns and respond quickly.
- We know your time is valuable, so we will not waste it.
- The person you speak to will be able to help with your complaint.
- We take complaints very seriously. Customer feedback helps us understand where things have gone wrong and gives us the opportunity to put them right. It also helps us to understand where we need to improve our products and services.
- To make sure that we continuously improve the products and services we offer, we monitor complaint trends, review these and act on them.
- We want to be fair to all our customers, and if we cannot resolve your complaint we will tell you why and tell you what other options you have.

2.6 We view all feedback, whether raised through the complaints process or in the normal course of raising service requests, as critically important information from which we will be able to derive lessons to drive continuous improvement plans. Residents will not be treated differently in the event a complaint is raised.

3. Complaints

3.1 We define a complaint as:

“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, including its housing management partners, affecting an individual resident or group of residents”

3.2 The word ‘*complaint*’ does not have to be used for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative will be handled in line with the complaints policy.

Who can make a complaint

3.3 Flint Housing positively welcomes feedback in the form of complaints from anyone who is affected by a service we provide or decision taken by us including:

- Residents named on a Flint Housing tenancy for any of our properties.
- Any person acting on behalf of a resident with their consent for example a family member, neighbour, advice agency, member of parliament, councillor or the Housing Ombudsman. Authorised representatives can accompany the resident to any meeting with Flint Housing or our housing management partner.

- Any third party adversely affected by our actions or decisions.
- 3.4 A complaint may also be made in the form of a petition. The complaint will be dealt with following the normal complaints process, on the address of the first signatory only. The petition will be treated as one complaint and all correspondence will be addressed to the first signatory. If the complaint reaches stage two of our complaints process and a panel meeting is convened, the first signatory may attend the complaints panel with one other signatory. Details of the outcome of the complaint will be copied to each signatory on the petition once it has been resolved.

Service requests

- 3.5 The Housing Ombudsman Service defines a service request as ‘a request from a resident to their landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right’.
- 3.6 When you first let us know about your concern, as a starting point we will ask you what you would like us to do to put things right. We can often resolve service requests, such as a missed appointment or repair delay, immediately with an apology and by providing another appointment. We may be able to resolve this outside of our complaints process, recording it as a service request and monitoring it to completion.
- 3.7 If we need to make further enquiries to resolve the matter, you are dissatisfied, or if you ask us to at any point, we will log it as a complaint. We will still continue our efforts to address the service request in the event a complaint is logged.

Surveys

- 3.8 An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey will not be defined as a complaint, however, wherever possible, the person completing the survey will be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint should they wish to do so through links to websites and the complaints email address.

Complaint inclusions and exclusions

- 3.9 You can complain about our standard of service, actions or lack of action by us within 12 months of the issue happening or of you becoming aware of the issue. We may use our discretion to accept older complaints if there is good reason you had not raised it before or if a problem is a reoccurring or ongoing issue. However, we would encourage complaints to be made as soon as possible after the resident thinks that something has gone wrong, as this gives us and our housing management partners the best chance to find out what happened and address the issue swiftly.
- 3.10 If you make a complaint and we complete our process, we are unlikely to accept another complaint about the same issue unless you provide new information.
- 3.11 We will not accept new complaints that have already been investigated or are under investigation by the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 3.12 There may be some circumstances where your complaint is better dealt with outside our complaints process and should be raised with us or our housing management

partner through other contact channels. Examples of where we and our housing management partners would advise alternative action are outlined below, noting that this list is not exhaustive:

- The first request for a service or where we have been given insufficient time to deliver that service according to our service standards.
- A general request for information or a service.
- An explanation of, or challenge to, a Flint Housing or housing management partner's policy or procedure; although we can look at how that policy or procedure has been applied.
- Any matter that can be appealed to an outside body, so for example, the Housing Benefit Tribunal, the Planning Inspectorate and the Parking Adjudicators.
- A challenge to a decision, although we can look at how that decision was reached
- A complaint about another resident, as part of a neighbour dispute, for example
- Where legal action is in progress. However, if a solicitor is acting as an advocate for a customer, this will be logged as a complaint and it will be dealt with in the usual way
- Insurance claims

3.13 We will continue to use the Complaints Policy when any pre-action protocol has commenced and until legal proceedings have been issued to maximise the opportunities to resolve disputes outside of court.

3.14 In cases where legal action is in progress, instigated either by the complainant or the landlord, separate consideration will be given as to whether a formal complaint will be raised.

3.15 Complaints about a service provided by an external provider will be considered dependent upon the contractual relationship of the external provider, our housing management partner and Flint Housing.

3.16 Any dissatisfaction raised concerning Flint Housing or our housing management partner's policies, procedures or responsibilities will not be raised as a complaint but will be recorded, escalated and utilised as feedback when the relevant policy, procedure or responsibility is due for review.

3.17 We will consider the individual circumstances of each complaint. If we decide not to accept a complaint, we will provide an explanation setting out the reason why and provide details of the Housing Ombudsman Service for additional advice.

Range of ways you can raise a complaint

3.18 You can raise a complaint by contacting our housing manager partner:

- By phone

- Via their Online Customer App (contract dependant)
 - Email or Letter
 - In person
- 3.19 Contact information for the relevant housing management partner and information regarding the complaints procedures will be provided to residents as part of the initial tenancy agreement or engagement with the housing management provider. Alternatively, you can email customercare@flint-housing.co.uk or submit the contact form on our website to obtain the relevant housing manager's contact details.
- 3.20 You can also raise a complaint by contacting Flint Housing through the contact form on our website www.flint-housing.co.uk or by emailing complaints@flint-housing.co.uk
- 3.21 We will take residents needs into account when communicating through all channels and we will make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

4. Complaints Process

Overview

- 4.1 Our complaints process is comprised of two stages. Complaint investigations managed by our housing management partner will be reviewed by the Operations Director of Flint Housing to ensure that our customers are receiving a quick and effective resolution. Flint Housing's Complaints Officers will have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve any issues promptly and fairly in close liaison with our housing management partners.

Stage One

- 4.2 Stage One complaints will be reviewed by our housing management partner's Complaint Officer and Flint Housing's Complaint Officer. When we receive a complaint at Stage One, we will:
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days
 - Establish full details of your complaint, clarifying with you anything that is unclear and which aspects of your complaint we are, and are not, responsible for.
 - Find out how you would like us to resolve it.
 - If multiple complaints are raised at the same time, we will provide you with one point of contact, where possible. If you raise further concerns when we have already issued a response, or it would unreasonably delay our response, we will log it as a new complaint.
 - Aim to give you a full response within 10 working days of the acknowledgement date.

- If, for any reason, we need more than 10 working days to respond to your complaint, we will explain why and inform you of the expected timescale for our response, and include contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.
- 4.3 You can contact the Housing Ombudsman for advice at any point. We will continue with our investigation and provide a response within the extended timeframe.
- 4.4 We will email our formal response (unless you have requested a different communication method). Our response will confirm:
- The complaint stage
 - Definition of your complaint
 - Our decision on the complaint and reasons for our decision
 - Clear details of any remedy offered to put things right, including timescales
 - Details of any outstanding or further actions required and how we will monitor progress
 - How you can contact us to discuss our findings
 - If, for any reason, we need more than time to respond to your complaint, we will explain why and inform you of the expected timescale for our response
 - Details of how to escalate your complaint to stage two if you are not satisfied with the outcome.
- 4.5 We may close your complaint if you refuse to engage with us to resolve the complaint, for example, by:
- Failing to respond to contact for a prolonged period
 - Refusing to allow access to your home if required
 - Failing to provide information when requested within agreed timescales.

Stage Two

- 4.6 You can ask us to escalate your complaint to stage two if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of stage one. A Senior Manager from our housing management partner together with a Flint Housing senior management team member with no previous involvement in your complaint will conduct a review. You must request this within 20 working days of the date of our formal stage one response. We may consider requests after this time at the discretion of the manager responsible for the service.
- 4.7 When we receive a stage two complaint we will:
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days
 - Confirm our understanding of the issues and outcomes you are seeking.
 - Clarify any details of your complaint that are unclear. We will confirm which aspects of your complaint we are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.

- Aim to contact you with our decision within 20 working days of our acknowledgement of your complaint.
- If, for any reason, we need more than time to respond to your complaint, we will explain why and inform you of the expected timescale for our response, and include contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

4.8 We will email a formal response (unless you have requested a different communication method). Our response will confirm:

- The complaint stage
- Definition of your complaint
- Our decision on the complaint
- Reasons for our decision
- Clear details of any remedy offered to put things right, including timescales
- Details of any outstanding or further actions required and how we will monitor progress
- How you can contact us to discuss our findings
- Your right to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service if you remain dissatisfied.

5. Complain to a Regulatory Body

5.1 Once you have exhausted our complaints process at stage two, you may ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to mediate or investigate the case on your behalf.

5.2 The Housing Ombudsman Service may not consider complaints that fall within the jurisdiction of other parties, such as:

- Another Ombudsman
- Complaints-handling body (such as the Information Commissioner)
- Regulator (such as the Regulator of Social Housing or Building Safety Regulator)

5.3 You can contact The Housing Ombudsman using the following contact information:

The Housing Ombudsman
Housing Ombudsman Services
PO Box 152
Liverpool L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

5.4 Please be aware that you have up to 12 months from the date you receive our final response to refer your complaint to the Ombudsman in writing, although it is preferable that you do so as soon as possible if you wish to pursue your complaint further.

- 5.5 You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point during the complaint process. The Housing Ombudsman Service cannot investigate your complaint whilst your complaint is going through our internal complaints procedure however the Ombudsman may be able to help you and your landlord reach a resolution.

6. Additional Considerations

- 6.1 This complaints policy will be available on our website and can be requested directly from Flint Housing or the relevant housing management partner. Information on the complaints policy and relevant contact information will also be made available in start of tenancy welcome packs.
- 6.2 Confidentiality and data protection apply to the complaints process. Our housing management partner will not share personal, or property information gathered as part of the complaint investigation with any third party who is not entitled to receive it, in line with data protection legislation but will share it with Flint Housing.
- 6.3 Flint Housing will retain an active approach to monitoring and resolution of complaints. Our housing management partners will inform Flint Housing as soon as a complaint is made and will discuss plans for resolution. The nature and status of all formal complaints raised will be reviewed by Flint Housing's Board of Directors at board meetings irrespective of whether complaints are made directly to Flint Housing or to our housing management partners.

7. Monitoring, reporting and continuous improvement

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years – unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise – to ensure that it continues to meet the stated objectives and take account of good practice developments.
- 7.2 Flint Housing will publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints.