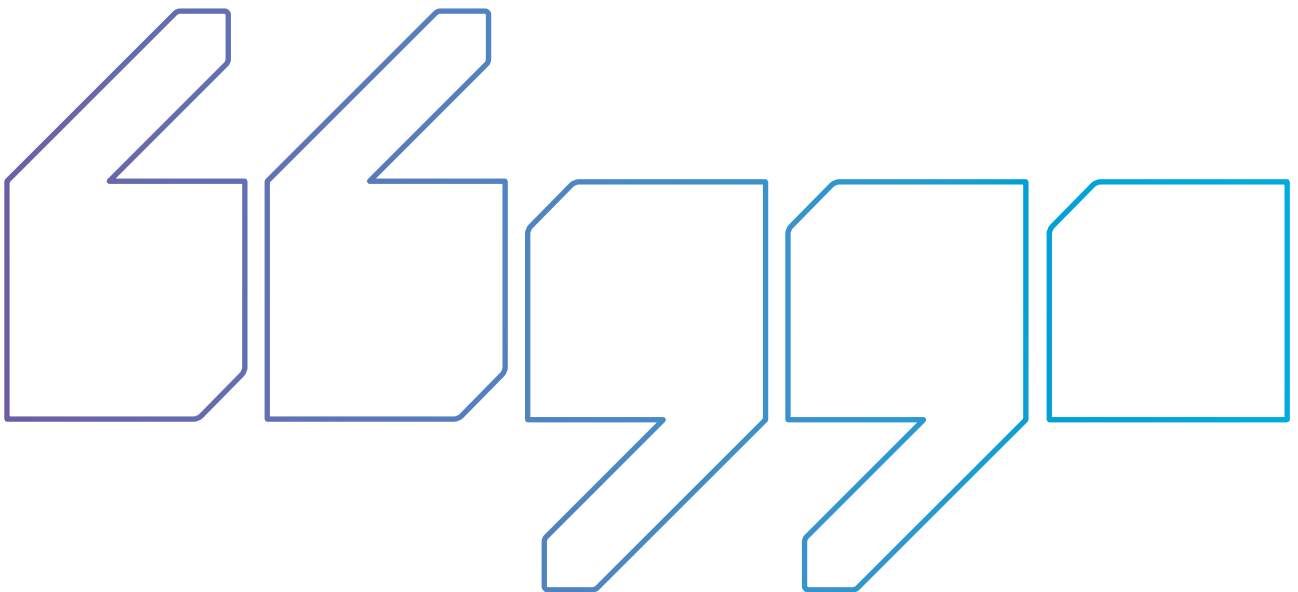


Complaints Handling Procedure

We're here
to listen



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We are committed to providing high-quality Customer services. We value complaints and use this information to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

➔ **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about our actions or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

➔ **What can I complain about?**

You can complain about things like:

- ✓ failure or refusal to provide a service
- ✓ inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- ✓ delays in responding to enquiries or requests
- ✓ unfairness, bias or prejudice in service delivery
- ✓ lack of provision, or the provision of misleading, unsuitable or incorrect advice or information
- ✓ a repair that has not been carried out properly or in an agreed timeframe
- ✓ dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual
- ✓ failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- ✓ failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- ✓ conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (**except** where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves)

- ✓ disagreement with a decision, (**except** where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).

Your complaint may involve more than one service or be about someone working on our behalf.

➔ **What can't I complain about?**

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure.

These include:

- ✗ a routine first-time request for a service
- ✗ a request for compensation only
- ✗ issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process)
- ✗ disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector
- ✗ a request for information under the Data Protection Act
- ✗ a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment

- ✗ a concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)
- ✗ a concern about a child or an adult's safety
- ✗ an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- ✗ abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our Behaviour and Caution Policy; or
- ✗ a concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf)
- ✗ a request for information or explanation of our policies or procedures
- ✗ where the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

If we are unable to accept your complaint, we will tell you the reason why. You have the right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman Service and we will provide you with contact details.

→ Who can complain?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser). If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent.

Please also read the section on **Getting help to make your complaint**.

→ How do I complain?

You can complain in person at our office, by phone, in writing, by email or our online complaints form.

It is easier for us to address complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve the issue.

When complaining, please tell us:

- your full name and contact details
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong; and
- what outcome you are seeking.
- you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point for advice and guidance.

→ Our contact details

- submit an online complaint:
Places for People - make a complaint
- email your complaint to:
customerfocusteam@placesforpeople.co.uk
- contact our Customer Service Centre on:
01772 667 002
- tell us in person
- message us on social media (we are mindful of data protection when responding, and will contact you offline)
- send your complaint in writing to:
The Complaints Team
Places for People
PO Box 2070
Preston
PR5 9BY

→ How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within 12-months of:

- the event you want to complain about; or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

→ What happens when I have complained?

In line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, we support the earliest resolution of complaints and try to resolve any service requests quickly. A service request is a request requiring action to be taken to put something right. For example, an appointment has been missed, or an Operative arrived late. Service requests are not complaints, but are recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.

If you tell us you're unhappy with our service, we want to work with you to resolve it quickly. We will contact you to triage your complaint. This helps us to confirm all elements of your complaint, and the resolution you are seeking. If we are unable to agree a resolution, or the matter needs further investigation, you have the choice to log a complaint at Stage 1.

Stage 1

You will be assigned a complaint handler to complete a detailed investigation of your complaint. We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days. If you need to raise additional complaints during the Stage 1 investigation, we will incorporate these into our Stage 1 response, if they are related and the Stage 1 has not been issued.

Where the Stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, we will log the issues as a new complaint.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in 10 working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If we need to extend the response timescale, this will be for no more than 10 working days.

We will explain why we need to extend, keep you updated, and give you contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.

If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to Stage 2.

You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2 either:

- Within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain.
- Or within two months of receiving your Stage 1 response (if this is later).

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a Stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

Stage 2

A different complaint handler will be assigned to your complaint at Stage 2. They will review the adequacy of the Stage 1 response, as well as an opportunity to consider any relevant, new information.

You are not required to explain your reasons for a Stage 2 review, but we will make all reasonable efforts to understand why you remain unhappy.

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days.

- We will confirm our understanding of why you remain unhappy and what outcome you are looking for.
- We will try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation); and
- We will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days. If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you our reasons why, keep you updated and give you contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.

→ What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have given you our final decision, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask this to be investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent organisation that investigates complaints. They are not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

You can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to look at your complaint if:

- you have gone all the way through the complaints handling procedure
- it is less than 12-months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and
- the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

The Housing Ombudsman Service will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint.

You can do this online at:

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents

or call them on:

Freephone **0300 111 3000**.

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint.

See the section on **Getting help to make your complaint**.

The Housing Ombudsman Service contact details are:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET

The Housing Ombudsman (HO) and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) are working closely together under a revised Memorandum of Understanding. This means when the Housing Ombudsman carries out an investigation, if there is evidence of a service failure or systemic failing, the HO will refer the matter to the RSH.

→ Care complaints

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose whether to complain to us or the Care Quality Commission. You can find out more about their complaints procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them via their website:

www.cqc.org.uk

→ Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate if you have given them your consent in writing to complain for you.

→ How do I find an advocate?

Advocacy Alliance is a national charity and has advocates in many areas. You can find their details online or ask us and we will provide contact details for your local branch.

You can also find out about advisers in your area through Citizens Advice:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

→ Reasonable adjustments

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the Community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services.

If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please tell us in person, contact us on:

01772 667 002

or email us at:

customerfocusteam@placesforpeople.co.uk

We may share your name and contact details with In House Research, an external company who we have appointed to carry out surveys so that we can obtain feedback from you on our complaints service. The appointed company will work on our behalf and will never use your information for any other purposes.

Quick guide to our complaints procedure

ON RECEIPT OF A COMPLAINT

A complaint handler will triage your complaint to make sure we understand what went wrong, and the resolution you are looking for.

They will contact you to confirm what will happen next, and if they can, try to resolve it straight away.

For example, if you tell us:

- An appointment was missed.
- An Operative was late to arrive.
- A Colleague didn't call you when promised.

We will usually treat this as a service request. We will log it and try to resolve it for you quickly. We log and monitor all service requests.

If the issue is more complex, or you remain dissatisfied, it's easy to make a complaint.

If we are not able to accept your complaint, we will tell you why.



You are dissatisfied with our response to your service request and want to make a complaint.



Stage 1

- We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days.
- We will contact you to discuss the complaint.
- We will provide a final outcome letter within 10 working days, unless complaint extended.
- We will tell you how you can escalate your complaint to Stage 2.



Stage 2

- We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days.
- We will contact you to discuss the complaint further.
- We will provide a final outcome letter within 20 working days, unless complaint extended.
- We will tell you how you can progress your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.