



Complaints, Comments and Compliments policy

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TWO RIVERS HOUSING

Complaints, comments and compliments policy

1.0 Statement of Intent

- 1.1 Two Rivers Housing's (TRH) aim is to be an excellent, customer focussed organisation and is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its customers. TRH is keen to obtain feedback, good or bad, from customers about its services, in order that it can review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them.
- 1.2 TRH is committed to learning from service areas that are performing well and to putting things right quickly when they go wrong. TRH intends to ensure that service delivery as a whole is improved as a result.
- 1.3 TRH will operate clear and well publicised procedures for receiving and responding to complaints, comments and compliments. These procedures will set out clear stages for the progression of a complaint and the terms of redress for dissatisfied complainants.

2.0 Complaints, Comments and Compliments

- 2.1 Two Rivers Housing defines 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, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

- 2.2 TRH will ensure that all its employees take responsibility for delivering its services in accordance with this policy. All of TRH's employees will be responsible for resolving customers' problems as far as possible before they become complaints and dealing with comments, compliments and complaints professionally, positively and effectively in accordance with this policy.
- 2.3 TRH will ensure that all its employees receive training to enable them to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently, in line with this policy.
- 2.4 As a result of this policy, Two Rivers Housing will:
 - 2.4.1 record all complaints that it receives.
 - 2.4.2 publish information about its performance on handling comments, compliments and complaints.
 - 2.4.3 publish this policy on the website.
 - 2.4.4 include details on the website of the Housing Ombudsman Service and how tenants can contact them.

- 2.4.5 Include details on the Housing Ombudsman Service and how to contact them on all formal complaint acknowledgements, extensions and formal responses.
 - 2.4.6 use comments, compliments and complaints positively to identify where it can improve its services.
 - 2.4.7 address problems for customers when they go wrong and to their satisfaction whenever possible.
 - 2.4.8 keep customers informed of the progress of their complaint and the result of any investigation of a comment or complaint.
 - 2.4.9 learn from each complaint to try to prevent it from happening again.
- 2.5 TRH will keep up to date records of all comments and compliments it receives and it will ensure that customers are thanked for their feedback.

3.0 How our complaints process works

- 3.1 TRH's Customer Insight team will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days of receipt. If the complaint is received after 3pm, this will not count towards a working day and the acknowledgement timescales will start from the next working day.
- 3.2 TRH's Customer Insight team will offer an Early Resolution Service and attempt to resolve the issue within 4 working days with the express permission of the complainant. If the resolution cannot be reached within 4 working days, a stage 1 complaint will automatically be raised.
- 3.3 Should the customer refuse the option for Early Resolution, a stage 1 complaint will be registered and acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt in line with 3.1.
- 3.4 Acknowledgements will include the understanding of the complaint and outcomes sought as agreed with the complainant.
- 3.5 TRH has 2 stages in its formal complaint process.
- 3.6 All stage 1 investigations will be managed by the appropriate departmental Manager or Head of Service.
- 3.7 The investigating manager will contact the complainant to discuss the complaint in full and check the reasons for the complaint escalation and give them a fair opportunity to set out their position and establish the resolution they are seeking.
- 3.8 The investigating managers will check if any reasonable adjustments are required to support customers during the complaint process, taking into consideration any vulnerabilities within the household.

- 3.9 The investigating managers will contact customers to discuss the outcome of the complaint investigations and to explain our decision before we confirm this in writing.
- 3.10 A response with a clear outcome will be sent within 10 working days of the acknowledgement of the complaint. Where there are future actions needed to resolve a complaint, we will agree this with customers and provide clear timescales wherever possible.
- 3.11 The investigating managers will communicate with customers clearly and regularly, in a way that is agreed with them, throughout the investigation process.
- 3.12 All stage 1 letters will include the opportunity to escalate the complaint to stage 2 within 20 working days of the stage 1 response should they remain dissatisfied with the response.
- 3.13 Some stage 1 complaints require a more detailed investigation, and we may not be able to respond within ten working days. If this is the case, we will contact the complainant to confirm this and may extend the timescales initially by a further ten working days. If more time is needed beyond this to investigate a complaint, we will contact the complainant to discuss this and confirm the reasons why. Any extension will be confirmed in writing and contact details for the Ombudsman service will be provided.
- 3.14 All stage 2 investigations will be acknowledged within 5 working days and managed by an Assistant Director or Executive Director who have had no prior involvement. A response with a clear outcome will be sent within 20 working days of the acknowledgement of the stage 2 escalation. Where there are future actions needed to resolve a complaint, we will agree this with customers.
- 3.15 Some stage 2 complaints require a more detailed investigation, and we may not be able to respond within 20 working days. If this is the case, we will contact the complainant to confirm this and may extend the timescales initially by a further 10 working days. If more time is needed beyond this to investigate a complaint, we will contact the complainant to discuss this and confirm the reasons why. Any extension will be confirmed in writing and contact details for the Ombudsman service will be provided.
- 3.16 As part of resolving a complaint, we will consider whether any redress or compensation should be awarded in recognition of any service failures that are identified. This will be considered and awarded in line with our Compensation Policy.
- 3.17 TRH also recognises the customers right to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) at any stage they choose, and proactively advises this information.

- 3.18 TRH will only refuse to escalate a complaint to stage 2 where there is valid reason to do so and/or the stage 1 response represents TRH's final position on the matter.
- 3.19 Where TRH decides not to escalate a complaint to stage 2, the customer will be provided with a written explanation detailing the reasons and advised of their right to refer the matter to the HOS.
- 3.20 The TRH complaint process will remain fully compliant with the HOS Complaint Code.

4.0 Who can make a complaint?

- 4.1 We will accept complaints from:
- any of our customers (tenants, shared owners, or leaseholders).
 - former customers.
 - people who have applied for housing.
 - non-residents.
 - members of the public.
 - a group of customers, where there is a single representative, and issues are affecting all customers equally.
- 4.2. If a customer gives us express permission, we will accept complaints on their behalf from:
- anyone acting as their representative.
 - third parties.
 - family members.
- 4.3. We will accept complaints from anyone who is a formal representative of any of the above, including:
- MPs.
 - Councillors.
 - Citizens Advice Bureau.
 - Community Legal Service.
- 4.4. All complainants are permitted to be accompanied or represented at any meetings with Investigating Officers.

5.0 How to make a complaint

- 5.1. We will make it easy for customers to make a complaint and to tell us that they are not happy with something about their home or our services.
- 5.2. We will accept complaints made in any way, including:
- Phone.
 - Letter.
 - Email.
 - Via our website.

- Face-to-face.
 - Through social media (using our official pages only, as we are unable to monitor any other feeds). Any complaints initially highlighted by Social Media will be direct messaged from the platform for confidentiality purposes.
- 5.3. Complainants have the right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point of their complaint. They can be contacted via:
- **Post** – Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0EY.
 - **Phone:** 0300 111 3000 (Mon-Fri from 9:00am to 5:00pm)
(Please note that telephone lines will be closed for staff training every Thursday from 3:30pm-5:00pm)
 - **Email:** info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

6.0 Complaint Exclusions

- 6.1 TRH will only refuse to accept a complaint where there is valid reason to do so.
- 6.2 This will be judged by an appropriate manager on a case-by-case basis but may include matters such as:
- An initial request for information or a service. This will include initial reports of a repair or damage to a property, initial requests for a copy of a tenancy agreement, or an initial enquiry seeking clarification on information included in a service charge budget or accounts. These will be handled as service requests.
 - Has previously been considered as a complaint and completed the process.
 - Legal proceedings have started.
 - The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago.
 - Cases older than 12 months may be considered where there is good reason to do so.
 - Feedback gathered through proactive customer surveys such as our transactional satisfaction surveys.
 - Allegations of anti-social behaviour (as defined by our anti-social behaviour policy), we will respond to the issue but will pass the issue onto our Neighbourhood Housing Advisors or Tenancy Compliance Officers who are best placed to resolve these issues. We will, however, consider complaints in respect of the failure in the delivery of our antisocial behaviour service.
 - Anonymous letters. We may still investigate but it will not be registered as a formal complaint.
 - Issues that are not TRH's responsibility or are outside our control. This will include issues such as the collection of bins or estate maintenance not on TRH land.
 - Disputes about service charges (for example, whether they are reasonable), unless the complaint is about how we dealt with the

dispute. For example, we will consider complaints about how charges are calculated, communicated, and consulted on, as well as our process for granting access to inspect accounts. However, if the complaint is specifically around the level of service charge, then this will not meet the criteria of a formal complaint.

- Claims for damages of over £5,000 (we will handle these in line with our insurance procedures).
- Any claim or complaint to do with personal injury (we will handle these in line with our insurance procedures).
- Where the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy has been applied.

6.3 Where TRH decides not to accept a complaint, the customer will be provided with a written explanation detailing the reasons and advised of their right to refer the matter to the HOS.

7.0 Implementation

7.1 The Head of Customers is responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented.

7.2 It is the responsibility of all of TRH's employees to ensure that their work is carried out in line with this policy and the procedures attached to it.

7.3 TRH will ensure that it trains all of its employees so that they fully understand this policy and the procedures attached to it.

7.4 TRH will ensure that this policy and the procedures attached to it are implemented in accordance with TRH's Equality and Diversity Policy.

8.0 Monitoring

8.1 The Head of Customers is responsible for monitoring this policy to ensure that it is correctly applied.

8.2 TRH will regularly analyse the information that is held on its records to ensure that actions that have been taken are reasonable and consistent and in line with this policy.

9.0 Review

9.1 The Head of Customers will be responsible for ensuring that reviews of this policy are carried out.

9.2 TRH will undertake a review of this policy whenever there are relevant changes to legislation, case law or good practice that may impact on it.

9.3 In the absence of any other trigger for a review, the policy will be reviewed at three yearly intervals or such other period as the Board may from time to time determine.

9.4 The controlled procedures relating to this policy will also be maintained and periodically reviewed, taking into account any operational issues that arise or changes to legislation, case law or good practice.

Version	Date	Author	Change Description	Approved by	Date Approved
1.0	10 th November 2020	Andrew Smith	Updated in line with new HOS code	Leadership Forum	1 st December 2020
2.0	30 th December 2021	Andrew Smith	Updated to reflect Complaints Business Partner role	Leadership Forum	1 st February 2022
3.0	1 st August 2022	Andrew Smith	Updated in line with 2022 revised HOS code and self-assessment	Leadership Forum	2 nd August 2022
4.0	1 st August 2023	Matthew Dunne	Updated with new structure and amended in line with HOS code to reflect timescales	Leadership Forum	August 2023
4.1	25 th March 2024	Matthew Dunne	Social Media GDPR details updated	Executive Team	March 2024
4.2	12 th December 2024	Matthew Dunne	Updated in line with the Housing Ombudsman Code	Executive Team	16/12/2024