

The Complaint Procedure Explained

At Castle Housing Ltd we have a sustaining commitment to continuous quality improvement. We welcome any feedback and suggestions to help us continually improve our service. Our top priority is to deliver a high-quality housing service which supports value for money.

We would be grateful to receive any suggestions on how we can improve our service. Both the tenant and anyone acting on the tenant's behalf can provide feedback on our services.

If you are not satisfied with the service that you have received from us please let us know. It is important to us that you can easily let us know when you are unhappy with the service you experience, this way, we can put matters right for you and improve our service for everyone.

Compliments

Like anyone else, we like to know when we are doing a good job! We would be delighted to hear from you if you feel we are doing things right. Both negative and positive feedback is extremely useful as it can be used in staff training and to help develop new and existing policies and procedures.

Compliments are a positive measure of tenant satisfaction with colleagues and services. Castle Housing welcome feedback and compliments from tenants and use this information to help shape service delivery.

Priority

Our priority is to resolve your complaint quickly and thoroughly, taking account of your personal situation and ensuring you are kept informed and understand our decision. Following feedback from our engaged residents, we will focus on quality of response rather than just timescales.

Complaints can be made in several different ways. We will make reasonable adjustments for those who need additional assistance. Please contact us if you would like our assistance in making a complaint.

Tenants can log Compliments, Complaints and feedback:

By telephone 01524 824081, emailing: info@castlehousing.co.uk, or write to us, 48 Hest Bank Lane, Lancaster. LA2 6BS. You can do this or a representative (with your permission) can do this on your behalf.

Definition of A Complaint:

Our complaints policy defines a complaint as:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of actions or affecting an individual, customer or group of customers.

You do not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction we will give them the choice to make a complaint.

Exclusions: What is not a Complaint.

1. There are a number of circumstances in which a matter will not be considered a complaint, and which we consider to be fair and reasonable in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code. These are: A comment, or series of comments, where the tenant is suggesting about how we may improve or maintain our service.
2. A question, or series of questions, where a tenant is requesting information about a service we provide.

3. A service request, where the tenant is letting us know about a particular issue for the first time; for example, reporting a repair or an incident of anti-social behaviour.
4. The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago.
5. Legal proceedings have been started.
6. Liability or personal injury claims.
7. A complaint regarding rent reviews as we follow government guidelines
8. Matters that have already been considered under the Complaints and Feedback Policy. When we decide not to accept a complaint, we will provide an explanation setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. Tenants have the right to challenge this decision by taking their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

Misuse of the complaints process

Unreasonable and persistent complainants are defined as “those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation’s consideration of their, or other people’s complaints.”

In a minority of cases some tenants may decide to pursue their complaints in a way that is unreasonable.

They may behave unacceptably or be unreasonably persistent in their contacts with Castle Housing. This behaviour can impede an investigation and have a significant impact on resources. For those tenants who behave in this way or their actions restrict colleagues from carrying out their work and providing services, having regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 Castle Housing may manage this by restricting their access to employees, however we will always maintain at least one point of contact for them and keep this under regular review.

Compliments

are a positive measure of tenant satisfaction with colleagues and services. Castle Housing welcome feedback and compliments from tenants and use this information to help shape the services delivered.

Making a Complaint

We use a two-stage formal complaints process. Our aim is to provide not only a shorter process, but an improved experience overall.

Informal –Stage 1.

If you choose to keep your complaint informal, we will listen to you and try to resolve the problem to your satisfaction.

If our attempts to resolve your issue is unsuccessful, a formal complaint will be recorded and investigated. We will do all we can to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible and agree how we can put things right. You can do this by telephoning 01524 824081 or e-mailing info@castcastlehousing.co.uk

When a complaint is made we will acknowledge, define, confirm your desired outcomes, and log your complaint within 5 working days of your complaint being received.

We aim to issue a full response to your complaint within 10 working days of its acknowledgement.

We will always focus on providing you with a quality resolution and if we need additional time to achieve this, we will agree this with you and aim not to extend this by more than 10 working days. When this occurs, we will always provide you with details of the Ombudsman.

We will provide you with our response to your complaint as soon as we know. If there are outstanding actions, we will continue to track and monitor through to resolution, keeping you informed. Our aim is to discuss our decision with you prior to providing our formal response to your complaint in writing at the completion of Stage 1. We will use clear and plain language and address all issues raised in your complaint.

Where you raise additional complaints during stage 1, investigation, these will be incorporated into the response if related and the Stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the Stage 1 has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonable delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.

Our formal response will include:

- Confirmation of stage 1 of our complaints processes
- An overview of your complaint
- Our decision
- The reason for the decision we have made
- Details of any offers to put things right
- Details of any outstanding actions
- An explanation of how to escalate the matter to Stage 2 if you are not satisfied with our response.

Stage 2. Complaint -Formal

If you are not satisfied with our response at Stage 1 you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 2 of our process. In most cases we'll agree to look again at our decision and to consider any additional information provided. In certain cases, we may not be able to do this and, if so, we will explain why.

Whilst you are not required to explain your reasons for requesting Stage 2 consideration. We will make reasonable efforts to understand why you remain unhappy as part of your stage 2 response.

The Stage 2 formal complaint review is not a repeat of the full investigation. The actions and decisions taken in Stage 1 will be examined to check if they were thorough, reasonable and fair.

Requests for escalation to Stage 2 must be received within 20 working days of receiving Stage 1 response but individual circumstances will be considered if a request to escalate is received outside of timescale.

When a request to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 is made, we will acknowledge, define, confirm your desired outcomes and log your complaint within 5 working days of your request to escalate being received.

We aim to issue a full and final response to your Stage 2 complaint within 20 working days of its acknowledgement.

We will always focus on providing you with a quality resolution and if we need additional time to achieve this, we will agree with you and aim not to extend this by more than 20 working days. When this occurs, we will always provide you with details of the Housing Ombudsman Service.

We will provide you with our response to your complaint as soon as it is known and if there are outstanding actions we will continue to track and monitor through to resolution and keep you informed.

Our aim is to discuss our decision with you prior to providing our formal response to your complaint in writing at the completion of Stage 2 and we will make sure that we use clear and plain language, and we will address all points raised in your complaint.

Our formal response will include:

- Confirmation of conclusion of Stage 2 of our complaints process
- An overview of your complaint Our decision
- The reason for the decision we have made
- Details of any offer to put things right
- Details of any outstanding actions
- Details of any compensation offered to put things right
- An explanation of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with our final response

Please remember you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service (<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>) at any stage for guidance about making a complaint about your landlord.

When should I make a complaint?

As a tenant you have a right to make a complaint any time you wish. A complaint made on your behalf (with your consent) will be acknowledged and acted upon.

We are committed to making our complaints process accessible and easy to use for all our tenants in line with our statutory duties and our commitment to Equality.

All matters will be dealt with confidentially.