

SECTION 7

7. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

7.1 FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

7.1.1 THE COMPANY'S CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Company takes feedback and complaints seriously. Complaints provide the opportunity to put things right and the lessons learned can be used to improve practice. All complaints are handled consistently according to this policy and procedure.

The complaints process is for all complaints and/or expressions of dissatisfaction whether from residents, clients, people who have tried but failed to access the services of the Company, neighbours, partner agencies, and the general public.

For complaints that are connected to Derventio Housing Trust's supported housing, the Company is bound by the terms of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

7.1.2 WHY INVITE FEEDBACK OR COMPLAINTS?

The Company needs feedback on its services from individuals and stakeholders and is continually striving to make improvements in all services. All legitimate complaints, suggestions and comments are considered when planning future services and making improvements within the Company.

Comments and suggestions, both positive and negative, have an important part to play in ensuring that services meet needs appropriately. Complaints also have a positive role in maintaining and improving standards, as well as providing an essential right to people who have, or feel they have, been given a poor or inappropriate service.

Complaints should be seen by everyone concerned as part of the Company's overall policy of inviting comments from people it works with and stakeholders, gaining useful feedback on actions and inactions.

7.1.3 RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLAINTS

The Complaints Officer has overall responsibility for dealing with, and monitoring complaints that the Company receives. However, all teams are expected to work collaboratively to resolve complaints, and to improve their own practice as necessary.

The Complaints Officer updates the Senior Management Board at regular intervals, and ensures that Board Directors are kept appropriately informed and updated on complaints received. The Board is ultimately responsible for all

operations of the Company, including complaints, and has allocated a Member Responsible for Complaints.

The Complaints Officer is Phil Rowland, Strategic Operations Director.

7.1.4 WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action, by the Company, its Direct Personnel, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or person the Company works with, or a group of such individuals.

It does not have to be called a complaint.

There is a difference between a service request, where a resident may be unhappy about a situation they wish to have rectified, and a complaint about a service that they may or may not have received. If there is any doubt as to whether something is a complaint, the Complaints Officer should be consulted.

If a complaint is made, we will still make every effort to address any service requests.

7.1.5 THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE IS NOT FOR

If the Company does not accept a complaint, the reason will be explained in writing to the individual expressing their dissatisfaction. The reason could be:

- The issue happened more than six months ago (although some matters may be considered as background, in the case of a recurring issue).
- Matters where legal proceedings are already in progress.
- Matters that have already been considered under this policy.
- Making a request for a service.
- Making a complaint regarding neighbours (this is classed as anti-social behaviour).
- Disagreeing with Company policies.

Each complaint will be considered on its own merits. If the Company does not accept a complaint, the Company will provide a written explanation, inform the resident that they can take the matter to the Housing Ombudsman, with contact details provided.

7.1.6 WHO CAN COMPLAIN?

The Complaints Procedure deals with external complaints received. Any stakeholder of the Company's services can complain. This includes:

- Residents and clients in Company projects.
- Representatives, friends, or family members of an individual.
- Members of the public applying for services directly.

- Organisations or groups who contact, or work with the Company.
- Funders or partner agencies.

Anyone who make a complaint will not be treated differently because they have expressed dissatisfaction with the Company.

7.1.7 PUBLICISING THE COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

It is particularly important that residents and clients of the Company are aware of this policy, and that we encourage their involvement in developing and shaping the services we provide. Suggestions for improvements are always very welcome and can be made through a range of channels.

The Company publicises its Feedback and Complaints Policy in:

- Information and handbooks provided to people the Company works with.
- Leaflets.
- At Company premises.
- On the Company website.

7.1.8 COMPLAINTS LOG AND FILE

Everything related to a complaint will be kept confidential and separate from any other files or notes held for the individual. All correspondence, or notes, contemporaneous or other details relating to the complaint, will be attached to this separate file.

The Complaints File is strictly private to the Company and is kept in a locked cabinet and/or on a secure section of digital storage. The file is not shared with anyone without permission of the Managing Director or the Chair of the Board of Directors.

7.1.9 USING COMPLAINTS TO IMPROVE SERVICES

The Company uses all feedback to improve services. Feedback comes from comments made, suggestions and complaints received, and the annual Satisfaction Survey. Everything is anonymised and no names of individuals are ever used.

Senior management consider all feedback received at least once a year. They look at how many complaints are received, whether timescales were met, outcomes, what sort of issues are raised, and trends.

The Company shares any findings once a year in a complaints annual report. This includes a summary of complaints received, and actions taken to learn and improve. It goes to the Board.

Senior management will also make sure, where complaints regarding housing are concerned that the Company is complying with the Complaints Handling Code, and the Housing Ombudsman requirements.

All learning and any improvements made are shared with appropriate employees in the relevant teams within the Company. This is included in reports to senior management and the Board. The aim is to see where the Company can improve systems and processes and ensure best practice throughout the Company.

7.2 FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

7.2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is easy to give feedback or make a complaint about the Company's services. You do not have to fill in a special form or even put it in writing. The various channels are:

- Over the phone, in person or by email. Any Company employee can record your feedback or complaint.
- By writing to us at 33 Boyer Street, Derby DE22 3TB. You can also hand deliver your letter to any Company employee.
- Using the form on the complaints leaflet.
- Via the Contact Form on our website.
- Through any of the Company's social media accounts. In this case, we will offer you the opportunity to set out the details of your complaint to us privately so that we can keep it confidential. This may be in a private message or by letter, email, or phone. Your complaint will then be dealt with using this Complaints Procedure.
- You can make your views known yourself, or someone else can do this on your behalf. This can be a friend or family member, or someone who works for an organisation. The process is the same.

If we arrange a meeting, you can be accompanied by anyone you choose.

We will make any required reasonable adjustments for you, under the Equality Act 2010.

We expect you to behave in a reasonable manner. If you do not, we will respond accordingly, which is set out below at 'unreasonable complainant behaviour'.

Our aim is to repair and rebuild the relationship between you and the Company.

7.2.2 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE MAKES A COMPLAINT?

Stage One

When you let us know that you are dissatisfied with a service, we will always try to fix things straight away. If the person taking the complaint can resolve things for you, we will always attempt to do this.

Employees must record all complaints. If they are in doubt whether it is a complaint or a service request, they should seek guidance from a manager. All complaints must be reported to their manager, or a more senior manager, if their manager is unavailable.

When the Company is unable to solve the problem immediately, or if it is a serious complaint, your complaint will go to the Complaints Officer.

The following are the service standards you can expect at Stage One. The Company will:

- Acknowledge your request in writing within 5 working days.
- Confirm that your complaint is being considered at Stage One of our procedure.
- Let you know the name and position of the person who will investigate the problem for you.
- Keep a full record of everything you say and write and keep this strictly confidential.
- Discuss your complaint with you and/or your representative, to make sure we understand all the details, why you are not happy, and what outcome you would prefer. However, you should be aware that we may not be able to do everything that you want.
- Look into all matters carefully and thoroughly and seek information from all parties involved. We will look at each one individually, including other matters that are raised during the investigation. We will be careful about any conflict of interest.
- Write to you within 10 working days, to let you know the outcome of any investigation, and offer a decision or resolution. We will explain the reasons for our decision(s).
- Please note, some actions may take longer than this to complete, but we will let you know our decision within this timescale.
- If this target will not be met, we will telephone or write to you, detailing the reasons why and letting you know when you can expect a full response. We will tell you how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.
- Tell you what you can do if you are still not satisfied.

Stage Two – Senior Manager

If you are dissatisfied with the response you have received at Stage One, let us know within 28 days of the date of response, and what you feel you would like us to do. Your complaint will be reviewed by a Senior Manager previously unconnected with the complaint.

The following are the service standards you can expect at Stage Two. The Company will:

- Acknowledge your request in writing within 5 working days.
- Confirm that your complaint is being considered at Stage Two of our procedure. If we will not consider it at Stage Two, we will explain why.
- Let you know the name and position of the person who will investigate the problem for you.
- Offer you the opportunity for a personal telephone conversation or meeting about your complaint.

- Aim to respond to you in writing within 20 working days, to let you know whether the original action, or response given, is supported or outlining any new or additional proposals.
- Please note, some actions may take longer than this to complete, but we will let you know our decision within this timescale.
- If this target will not be met, we will telephone or write to you detailing the reasons why, and let you know when you can expect a full response. This should not be more than an extra 10 working days.
- This will be our final response.

Responses to complaints

The Company will include in our response to you:

- If it is Stage One or Stage Two.
- What the complaint is about.
- Our decision and reasons. We will acknowledge where things have gone wrong and may apologise. At Stage Two, if we uphold the original decision, we will explain why.
- Any remedies we are offering or have already completed, with timescales. These may include a financial remedy. These will reflect the impact on you, in line with Ombudsman guidance. We will also tell you if we have change our policies or procedures.
- How to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

7.2.3 HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

If you are a resident in Company housing, or made an application for housing, and are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can appeal to the Housing Ombudsman Service. You can do this at any stage, whether you have been through the Company's complaints process or not.

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service on 0300 111 3000 or <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

7.2.4 UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT BEHAVIOUR

We may decide to exclude or not to escalate a complaint if there is 'unreasonably persistent behaviour', which is usually a build-up of incidents or behaviour over a longer period.

The Company uses the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's definition, as follows: *Unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are 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.*

The Company must ensure that in using the Complaints Procedure, individuals who demonstrate unreasonable behaviour or are unreasonably persistent are

still dealt with fairly, honestly, and correctly. The resources of the Company must be used as effectively as possible, and other people the Company works with, or employees must not suffer any detriment because of the behaviour of others.

When someone repeatedly telephones, visits the office without appointment, sends irrelevant or duplicate documents, or raises issues that have already been considered, the Company may decide to:

- Only take telephone calls from the individual at set times on set days or put an arrangement in place for only one employee to deal with calls or correspondence from the complainant in the future.
- Require the person to make an appointment to see a named employee before visiting the office, or require that the individual only contacts the office in writing.
- Return the documents to the individual or, in extreme cases, advise them that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed.
- Take other action considered appropriate. The Company will, however, always say what action it is taking and why.

We will take account of the Equality Act 2010 when making decisions about whether to exclude complaints.

If the Company decides not to accept a complaint, we will give a clear explanation in writing to the person making the complaint.