

Cheshire West and Chester Council
Housing Management

Redress Policy

1 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Approval Date	February 2022
Next Review Date	February 2024
Responsible Service Area	Strategic Housing and Commissioning
Responsible Director	Gemma Davies, Director Economy, Housing & Policy

Aim of Policy

This policy outlines how we will offer redress (put things right) should a tenant or customer complain to us.

Redress comprises of:

- Offering and delivering a suitable **remedy**.
- **Recognising** the impact the issue has had
- Providing **reassurance** that the breakdown or failure will not happen again.
- Where appropriate, offering **recompense** that compensates the complainant for any harm, cost or inconvenience.

In delivering redress we will:

- Take all expressions of dissatisfaction seriously.
- Initiate a rapid, appropriate and acceptable operational response to the issue.
- Offer a negotiated remedy and timescale for delivery.
- Communicate in a courteous, timely and accurate manner.
- Deliver promises with clear implications should we fail to do so.
- Learn from complaints and put in place actions to make sure that we don't fail again in future

We welcome complaints and actively encourage tenants and customers to express their dissatisfaction to us. All expressions of dissatisfaction and complaints are a positive opportunity to gather intelligence and insight that will help us improve.

Policy

This policy applies to all housing management services and homeless support services delivered on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) Council. Organisations providing services on behalf of ForHousing will be expected to follow this Policy.

This Policy does **not apply** in the following situations:

- Where ForHousing delivers services on behalf of another organisation
- Where legal action has been taken or is planned.
- Issues that would be covered by insurance claims.
- Issues that involve a member of staff that would be covered by HR policies.

In conjunction with this policy we recognise the jurisdiction of the external Housing Ombudsman Service and will implement recommendations resulting from its investigations.

Key terms & definitions

For the purposes of this policy the term **complainant** refers to any tenant or customer including leaseholders, shared owners or waiting list applicants, or any person acting on their behalf, who communicate a complaint to us.

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction received from the complainant about a service, or the failure to provide a service. This includes an action or lack of action, the behaviour of ForHousing staff or contractors working on our behalf, failure to comply with policies or procedures or our performance against service standards.

At the First Response Stage the complaint is known as an **Initial Complaint**.

Triage is the term used to describe the process of understanding the detail of the expression of dissatisfaction, diagnosing the cause and identifying a suitable remedy.

Compensation is a payment made when a complainant has experienced a delay or has incurred additional costs because of a service failure or where we have failed to carry out a service within our published standards.

Overarching Principles

1. The redress process comprises of three distinct stages.

- **First Response** focusses on identifying and agreeing an appropriate remedy to the complainant's Initial Complaint within 2 working days.
- All Initial Complaints will be subjected to initial critical triage in order to establish the details of the complaint, understand the cause and attempt to offer a suitable remedy that meets the complainant's expectations. The person who receives the complaint will take ownership and responsibility for handling it. They will act as the complainant's single point of contact until an agreed remedy has been delivered and/or the Initial Complaint has been escalated.
- **Stage1 Investigation** involves a full investigation into the complaint by a manager from the relevant service area within 10 working days of escalation of the Initial Complaint.

- **Stage 2 Review** comprises of an independent review of the complaint carried out by the Customer Feedback & Improvement Team within 5 working days of escalation or within 21 working days of escalation where a Complaints Panel is required.

2. Complaints will automatically escalate to the next stage if we fail to agree an appropriate remedy or timeframe for delivery, or we fail to deliver the agreed remedy or timeframe.

3. Complainants will be given the option to escalate their complaint should they be dissatisfied with the proposed remedy or the outcome of their complaint.

4. Complainants will be provided with information about their option to refer their complaint to a 'Designated Person' or directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service once they had reached the end of our internal complaints procedure. Complaints can be reported in anyway. This includes by post, in person, by email, text message or via the self-serve app.

5. We will also accept complaints from;

- Third parties who are directly affected by the services we provide or the decisions we make.
- Anyone acting on behalf of a tenant or customer such as a friend, family member or advocate providing that the complainant's consent is provided.
- Designated Persons defined by the Localism Act 2011.

6. In some circumstances we will accept a complaint submitted without signed permission or anonymously.

7. Where complaints have been received via a Councillor, MP or recognised advice agency, we assume consent has been given.

8. We will accept petitions from a group of tenants. We will treat the first signatory as the primary complainant for the purposes of communication.

9. We will accept complaints within six months of the event but we have the discretion to consider cases outside of this timescale

10. Discretionary compensation will be considered on a case by case basis and we will adopt an evidence based approach. Further guidance on compensation can be found in the Compensation Procedure.

11. This policy doesn't cover:

- Requests for service such as first reporting of a repair
- Appeals against an allocation of housing.
- Reports of neighbour nuisance or Anti-Social Behaviour
- Where legal action has already been taken and a determination made
- Insurance claims and appeals including damage to personal possessions and personal injury accidents
- Dissatisfaction with the correct application of policy such as rent increases.

12. A complaint is closed once the agreed remedy has been delivered.

13. All complaints will be treated with confidence. Personal information about the complainant will only be shared internally when strictly necessary to deliver the agreed remedy. Details of the complaint will only be shared externally with the complainants consent.

14. Where a complainant pursues their complaint in an aggressive, abusive or threatening manner, or repeatedly pursues complaints which appear to have no substance or which have already been through and exhausted our complaints handling process consideration will be given to applying the Unreasonable behaviour (redress) procedure.

How the Policy will be delivered

This Policy will be delivered by all departments within ForHousing and co-ordinated by the Business Performance Team.

Staff involved in the redress process will be fully trained.

All complaints will be recorded by service area, aspect, emotion and key demographics so we can learn from complaints and improve.

Complainant satisfaction with complaints handling will be captured on a continuous basis and will be compiled as part of our overall Customer Satisfaction Performance Indicator.

We will publish information about the complaints we receive every year on our website. This will include the number, nature and outcome of complaints and how we learned from complaints and applied that learning to improve our services.

Related documents

Unreasonable behaviour (redress) procedure

Compensation Procedure – FH don't currently have a compensation process – it used to be in the complaints process but was taken out of the new one and is currently being drafted.

[Customer Service Excellence Standard](#) (Awarded January 2020)

Equality analysis

Date of approved Equality Analysis	30.06.2020
Actions taken forward to mitigate any potential negative impact	

Consultation and business intelligence

Involved tenants representing CW&C tenants have contributed to, influenced and given feedback on this policy.

Monitoring arrangements

There will be continuous monitoring of complaints insight through the Power BI Complaints dashboard and quarterly monitoring of the Complaints Summary Report and Customer Feedback Report.

The reports will be looked at by, Service managers, Scrutiny Panel, Cheshire West and Chester Council Place Commercial Management & Delivery Service,

Control data and approval history

Policy Owner:	CW&C: Alison Amesbury Strategic Housing & Commissioning Senior Manager ForHousing Representative: Janet Lawton, Strategic Homelessness and Contract Management Lead
Next review date:	February 2024

Action	Approved By	Date
Approval	ForHousing Operational Management Team	01 October 2020
Approval	CW&C Cabinet Member – Housing, Planning and Climate Emergency	17th February 2022

Document revision history

Date approved	Version number	Version history
	V1	New policy replacing CW&C Complaints, Compliments and Suggestion Policy. Updated to include all properties managed by ForHousing under the CW&C Housing Management contract, and subsequent variations/change notes.
Date amended	Version number	Key Changes
01/12/2020	V2	Amended Unreasonable behaviour Policy to Unreasonable Behaviour procedure in section14 and related documents.