

## Compliments and Complaints

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<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jessica Hyland, Executive Assistant
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<b>Formal Review of Policy by:</b>	Board
<b>Policy Links:</b>	Compensation Policy Vexatious and Persistent Complainants Policy Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Customer Participation Policy Performance Management & Assurance Framework Code of Conduct of Staff, Board Members and Involved Customers

### Brief Policy Summary:

It is LHP's aim to provide the highest quality services to its customers. However, we realise that we do not always get things right. When this happens, we want to find out what went wrong, put things right and apologise.

We value feedback from complaints and compliments as an opportunity to learn and continually improve the services we provide to our customers.

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## 1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out our commitment to offering a simple and easy to access complaints service which will:

- view the service from the customers' point of view and to encourage all our customers to compliment, comment on or criticise the actions of the Company;
- ensure customers are assisted whenever necessary to communicate their feedback effectively via which ever method a customer prefers;
- deal with complaints confidentially, fairly, impartially and consistently
- attempt to resolve complaints as soon as possible and find a satisfactory solution for the customer
- offer alternative approaches to resolving a complaint when needed such as mediation
- advise customers on how to escalate a complaint to the next stage of our process
- help us to learn from complaints and feedback to improve our services
- not be afraid to own up to our mistakes and apologise
- involve our customers in reviewing and monitoring what we do

## 2.0 Scope

2.1 The complaints procedure is available to anyone who receives a service from the Company, i.e. its tenants, leaseholders, contractors, housing applicants or others affected by the Company's activities.

2.2 Issues, which can be raised under the policy, are wide ranging and include the following examples:

- any services provided by the Company
- the way in which requests for information are handled
- the way staff or other representatives have conducted themselves
- the way in which housing applications are dealt with

## 3.0 Definition

3.1 **Compliment** - The Company defines a "Compliment" as positive feedback from a customer that a service has been provided well or an employee has been helpful.

We will record all compliments as positive praise and share this feedback with the team or relevant member of staff.

3.2 **Complaint** - A "Complaint" is defined by LHP as:

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

3.3 Examples could include:

- Length of time taken to conduct a service e.g. complete a repair,
- Staff not followed through on promised actions,
- Quality of service conducted by staff or contractors e.g. repair not fit for purpose,
- Unprofessionalism of staff when carrying out a service e.g. staff being rude or offensive.

3.4 The following table shows the type of complaints that cannot be pursued through this policy:

Not progressed through the Complaints Procedure	Action or Team Responsible
An initial request for service or information	Dealt with by the relevant team
Neighbourhood issues and Anti-Social Behaviour	These are dealt with under the Neighbourhood Policy and the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
Complaints by Staff	Human Resources Team / Grievance Procedure
Insurance Claims including Personal Injury	Finance Team
General Correspondence from Councillors and MPs not directly related to a complaint	Appropriate Head of Service
Petitions - We will treat a petition as a general enquiry and respond where the group clearly identifies a spokesperson.	Dealt with by the relevant team
Claims for Compensation	Dealt with under the Compensation for Service Failure Policy
Complaints already being processed through legal channels (e.g. disrepair)	Dealt with by the relevant team

3.5 Complaints that have not been brought to the attention of staff within six months of the incident will only be progressed at the discretion of the relevant Head of Service.

3.6 **Anonymous Complaints**

LHP may receive a complaint where the complainant wishes to remain anonymous. We reserve the right not to investigate anonymous complaints where it is clear that a full investigation is not practical.

## 4.0 Service Standards

- 4.1 When dealing with a complaint, we promise to:
- view the service from the complainant's point of view,
  - be polite, empathetic, fair and consistent,
  - be solution orientated,
  - keep complaints confidential,
  - ensure that making a complaint does not jeopardise any service received by the complainant, and
  - investigate the complaint thoroughly and respond in full within our agreed timelines.
- 4.2 Our timeline commitment when dealing with a complaint is:
- where possible, resolve the complaint within 3 working days,
  - if not resolved, complaints to be escalated and acknowledged within 3 working days,
  - contact complainants via telephone within 2 working days of the date of the acknowledgement to discuss the complaint
  - provide a detailed response after investigation within 10 working days of the date of the acknowledgement.

## 5.0 Our Complaints Process

- 5.1 At **Stage 0** we will aim to resolve a complaint at first point of contact by our Customer Service Centre Team or the relevant team.
- 5.2 At **Stage 1**, if we have not resolved a complaint to a customer's satisfaction within 3 working days, the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate Senior Line Manager for investigation and a detailed response provided to the customer within 10 working days.
- 5.3 If a customer is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint from Stage 1 the customer can ask for the complaint to be escalated to **Stage 2** and reviewed by a Head of Service.
- 5.4 If a customer remains dissatisfied with the detailed response from a Head of Service, they can request that their complaint is considered by an Appeal Panel at **Stage 3** which is made up of a Board Member, a tenant representative from the Customer Scrutiny Panel and a member of the Executive Team.
- 5.5 **Escalating a Complaint**
- 5.5.1 Escalation of a complaint to Stage 2 or to our Appeal Panel is not automatic. The complainant must state the reasons why they believe it should be escalated to the Complaints Team. The decision regarding escalation will be made taking into consideration the nature

of the complaint and the complainants' reasons for requesting further investigation.

5.5.2 To refuse escalation of a complaint to the next stage, refusals must meet one of the criteria below:

- The complainant has refused to reasonably engage with the complaints investigation process or with the service of which is being complained about
- The issues raised are not within the remit of the complaints policy
- The issues raised are not within the power of LHP's ability to investigate, change or influence
- The basis of the complaint is changed or subsidiary issues are raised which were not part of the initial complaint
- Refusal to accept documented evidence as factual

## 5.6 Taking a Complaint Further

5.6.1 Once a customer has exhausted the complaints process, the customer can either be referred to a recognised designated person or panel or wait 8 weeks and contact the Housing Ombudsman directly.

5.6.2 In all cases we will provide advice to a complainant about the options available to them and liaise between the complainant and the designated person or panel. The role of the designated person or panel is to give an independent view on whether we have acted reasonably during the handling of a complaint.

5.6.3 A designated person is either:

- The local Member of Parliament
- The local Councillor
- A recognised tenant panel

## 5.7 The Housing Ombudsman

5.7.1 If the designated person or panel considers that they cannot help to resolve a complaint locally or a complainant does not wish to use this option, they can wait 8 weeks and refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

5.7.2 LHP will act upon any recommendations or determinations that are made as a result of complaints that are reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman.

## **6.0 Learning from Complaints**

6.1 LHP is committed to learn from complaints and identifying opportunities to improve services.

6.2 Learning outcomes from complaints can include:

- Changing policies, procedures or the way we deliver services
- Revising the way we communicate with customers
- Identifying training needs within a team

6.3 Learning outcomes will be publicised and we will tell customers how we learn from their feedback and what changes we have made.

## **7.0 Vexatious and Persistent Complaints**

7.1 LHP recognises that in a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource issues for the business.

7.2 LHP is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly whilst ensuring that no complaint is missed or ignored because the complainant regularly complains.

7.3 However LHP will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour towards staff and has produced a separate policy which sets out how we will deal with vexatious and persistent complaints.

## **8.0 Communication to Stakeholders**

8.1 We are committed to ensuring all our services are accessible to everyone. We will publicise our compliment and complaints service via leaflets, tenant communications and on our website and will use any methods needed including translation services to ensure that there are no barriers to customers who wish to provide feedback to us or make a complaint.

8.2 We will tell our customers how we are performing in delivering our compliment and complaints service through a variety of formats and we will share with customers' information about how we are learning from complaints.

8.3 When we receive a compliment regarding our services or the actions of staff we will thank the customer.

8.4 When a complaint has been dealt with we will carry out a user satisfaction survey to better understand a customer's experience of using our complaints service.

## **9.0 Delivery and Monitoring**

9.1 All our staff have responsibility for ensuring the effective delivery of this policy. Staff who investigate and handle complaints directly will take ownership and find solutions to the complaint.

9.2 The Company will record and monitor compliments, complaints and user feedback and use this information and learning outcomes to:

- Report our performance to customers, staff and our Board
- Involve our customers in shaping our services
- Set challenging performance targets
- Review our policies and procedures
- Train our staff

## **10.0 Review Cycle**

10.1 This Policy will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis with the next review due in April 2020.

## 11.0 Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy / strategy / project (the" initiative"):

**Compliments and Complaints Policy**

**Provide a brief summary of the aims and main activities of the initiative:** (bullet points)

- It is LHP's aim to provide the highest quality service.
- To respond to the needs of our customers in a fair, helpful and efficient manner, using our best endeavor to find a satisfactory solution to those needs.
- To define the Company's standards of service, so that customers know what type of service they can expect to receive.
- To explain our actions and apologise for any inconvenience or offence caused by the Company and not to be afraid to own up to our mistakes.
- To comply with Equal Opportunities legislation, the Assured Tenants Charter and the Company's Policies, especially in respect of Customer Care and Participation.

**Completed by:** Bridget Lloyd

**Date:** April 2018

## STAGE 1: SCREENING

This stage establishes whether a proposed initiative will have an impact from an equality perspective on any particular group of people or community – i.e. on the grounds of race, religion/faith/belief, gender (including transgender), sexual orientation, age, disability, or whether it is “equality neutral” (i.e. have no effect either positive or negative).

**Q 1. Who will benefit from this initiative?** Is there likely to be a positive impact on specific groups/communities (whether or not they are the intended beneficiaries), and if so, how? Or is it clear at this stage that it will be equality ‘neutral’ i.e. will have no particular effect on any group? *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

This policy has been designed to impact in the same way regardless and it is envisaged that it will be equality neutral.

**Q 2. Is there likely to be an adverse impact on one or more minority/under-represented or community group as a result of this initiative?** If so, who may be affected and why: Or is it clear at this stage that it will be equality ‘neutral’? *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

This policy will have a positive impact as it is available to all through various different mediums and is supported through a range of formats. LHP does not envisage any negative impact with the scope of the Service Delivery through the implementation of this policy as we believe this policy is Equality Neutral.

**Q 3. Is there sufficient data on the target beneficiary groups/communities?** Are any of these groups under or over represented? Do they have access to the same resources? What are your sources of data and are there any gaps? *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

The policy is designed to provide a framework to enable complaints and praise that promotes fair treatment and therefore supports the good community relations and is promoted through the complaints leaflet and is available in a number of formats including different languages as well as being available through a number of mediums. It is also supported by our disability pack.

**Q 4. Outsourced services – if the initiative is partly or wholly provided by external organisations / agencies, please list any arrangements you plan to ensure that they promote equality and diversity.** *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

LHP will deliver this policy whilst working in close consultation with partner organisations who are committed to our Equality and Diversity Policy, through our complaint contractor meetings.

**Q 5. Is the impact of the initiative (whether positive or negative) significant enough to warrant a full impact assessment – see guidance? If not, will there be monitoring and review to assess the level of impact over a period of time?** *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

No.

**Q 6. To be completed at six monthly review** Detail actions taken to assess the level of impact over a period of time, or to address any gaps in data.

*Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

A review will take place in line with the review of the policy as defined within our policy review programme or when legislative changes require an update immediately.