



# **Accountable Persons Policy**

**2023 - 2025**

## Accountable Persons Policy

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<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Executive Director of Customers
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<b>Version Reviewed by:</b>	CLT on 17 January 2023 ELT on 19 January 2023
<b>Version Approved by:</b>	Operations Committee on 7 February 2023
<b>Policy Links:</b>	Equality and Diversity Policy Complaints Policy Limited Contact Policy Reasonable Adjustments Policy Code of Conduct for Colleagues, Board Members and Involved Customers Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

### **Brief Policy Summary:**

LHP considers the way in which customer concerns and enquiries whether H&S concerns or those relating to the Consumer Standard are handled, performs an important strategic role for the organisation, providing valuable intelligence regarding the Companies health, performance and reputation. LHP promotes the continuous use of customer feedback to provide a high-level framework to support effective handling of concerns and to ensure that these are addressed in a timely fashion, with outcomes fed back to the customer, reported to Board, reported to the wider customer base and that learning outcomes are used to improve service delivery.

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## Purpose

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1. The purpose of the accountable persons policy is to enable LHP to promote the appropriate Directors for customers and stakeholders to contact should they feel that their concerns or enquiries are not being heard and therefore addressed and resolved in a timely manner.
2. The Social Housing White Paper is expected to legislate to require social landlords to identify and promote to customers and stakeholders nominated persons responsible for complying with health and safety requirements and consumer standard.
3. It is further intended to create a positive culture amongst colleagues, customers and stakeholders when concerns and enquiries are received to ensure that they are addressed and responded to promptly.
4. In setting out LHP's commitment to providing an efficient, straightforward, and easy to access process, we intend to:
  - Ensure that concerns and enquiries are resolved quickly, with outcomes being quickly fed back to the enquirer and to the wider customer base.
  - Empower our colleagues to make decisions to resolve concerns and enquiries without fear of blame.
  - Inform the wider business regarding trends, outcomes, and learning.
  - Use the accountable persons process to promote a positive relationship based on trust and respect between landlord and customer.
  - Address concerns and enquiries in confidence, be fair, polite, and transparent, impartial, and consistent in our approach and in our feedback.
  - Recognise where we have got things wrong, apologise, explain, and put it right.
  - Use learning to improve our service offer to our customers.
  - Inform our customers regarding what we have learnt, what has changed as a result and how the customer journey has improved.
  - Comprehensively advertise how to contact our accountable persons through all our access channels.
  - Monitor and report performance of these enquiries to our colleagues, customers, and Board of Directors.

## Objectives

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5. This policy is intended to provide a clear and straight forward explanation of the accountable persons concerns and enquiry process.
6. That being able to contact an accountable person is straight forward and simple and that enquiries can be made through all our access channels in any format.
7. That the process itself and how to access the service is comprehensively advertised through all our customer contact mechanisms.

## Scope

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***“We want to see a transformed consumer regulatory regime which holds landlords to account in maintaining good quality homes and services, prioritising safety, treating tenants respectfully and being transparent with information”.***

The accountable persons process is available to every customer and anyone who receives a service or encounters LHP.

8. This includes tenants, leaseholders, contractors, housing applicants and anyone else affected by LHP's activities.
9. Examples of issues that can be raised through the accountable persons process are described below:
10. Any service provided by LHP where our customer or stakeholder does not feel that their concern or enquiry regarding their H&S and consumer standard has been heard and addressed.
11. The Consumer Standard includes:
  - **The Home Standard** - sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to provide tenants with quality accommodation and a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service.
  - **The Tenancy Standard** - sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to let their homes to tenants in a fair, transparent, and efficient way.
  - **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** - sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes they own clean and safe, co-operate with relevant partners to promote the wellbeing of the local area and help prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour.
  - **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard** - sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants, a clear approach to complaints and a wide range of opportunities for them to have influence and be involved.

12. Full details are available at: [Regulatory standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-standards)
13. This policy is not intended to replace the Complaints process and where it is appropriate to do so, enquiries raised with the accountable persons that have not been raised as a complaint and it is appropriate to do so, the person raising a concern will be advised that the matter has been raised as a complaint and will be addressed following the complaints process and timelines.

## **The Accountable Persons Process**

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14. LHP has a One Stage Process
15. A concern or enquiry will be acknowledged to the enquirer and logged on the LHP recording system.
16. If we haven't spoken to the enquirer, we will further contact them by phone to ensure that we understand their concern and clarify the outcomes being sought. This will be undertaken in five working days.
17. The concern or enquiry will be thoroughly investigated and responded to formally in 10 working days from the date of the original enquiry. Should this not be possible, we will explain why and advise the date that a full response will be received which will be no longer than a further 10 working days.
18. These concerns and enquiries will be reported to Board every quarter through established performance monitoring mechanisms.
19. Learning outcomes identified will be reported to Board through the quarterly Customer First Update and advertised to customers through the website and newsletters.
20. It is LHPs intention to swiftly resolve concerns and enquiries to accountable persons providing complete and transparent information however we recognise that on occasion the feedback provided may not meet the expectations of the enquirer. On these occasions, the details will be provided to the Customer Designated Panel to review and to the Housing Ombudsman along with the historic information and previous responses to ensure that unsatisfied concerns or enquiries are escalated appropriately in order to seek resolution.
21. The enquirer will be advised of the steps LHP has taken along with the Designated Persons Panel and Housing Ombudsman's contact details.
22. LHP will act on any recommendations that are made because of concerns and enquiries reviewed by either a designated person/panel or the Housing Ombudsman or will provide robust valid reasons as to why they are unable to act.

## Communicating with Customers, Residents and other Stakeholders

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23. LHP will ensure that there are no barriers to accessing the Accountable Persons Process and how to access it using all its customer communication channels including but not limited to:
  - The LHP Website
  - Leaflets
  - Social Media Channels
  - Newsletter
  - Annual Report
  - Translation Services
24. LHP will communicate with our customers, residents and stakeholders using plain language appropriate to them.
25. All points raised within a concern or enquiry will be addressed and LHP will provide clear reasons for any decisions taken and will reference policy, good practice, and the law as appropriate.
26. At the completion of the process, LHP will write to the enquirer advising them of the following:
  - the outcome of the concern or enquiry
  - the reasons for any decisions made
  - the details of any remedy offered to put things right
  - the details of any outstanding actions
  - the details of how LHP will escalate the matter if dissatisfied with the outcome
27. LHP will provide the enquirer with the opportunity to:
  - Set out their position
  - Comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made
28. Whilst at least adhering to the response timelines, LHP will respect and follow any agreed different arrangements made with the customer that better meets their needs regarding the frequency and method of communication.
29. LHP will keep customers regularly updated and informed regarding their concern/enquiry even should there be no new information to provide.

## **Fairness in Accountable Persons Concern/Enquiry Handling**

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30. LHP will operate and deliver a customer-focussed accountable persons process ensuring that enquirers are provided with the opportunity to explain their point of view and the outcome that they are seeking before a decision is reached and feedback provided.
31. Enquirer's expectation of outcomes will be clearly managed from the outset of the concern being raised and LHP will be clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.
32. LHP will support those raising concerns to have a representative deal with their concern on their behalf and to be both represented and accompanied at any meeting where this has been offered or requested and where this is reasonable. If someone is acting on behalf of a friend or family member, LHP will need to seek permission for them to do this from our customer whose data we hold so that we ensure that private information is not shared without agreement.
33. Where areas of a concern relate to the party's legal obligations, LHP will clearly set out its understanding of the obligations of both parties and seek clarification before doing so where this is not initially clear.
34. Investigations will be conducted in an impartial manner, seeking sufficient reliable information from both parties so that fair and appropriate findings and recommendations can be made.
35. Investigations will be fair and to achieve this LHP will:
  - Deal with an enquiry / concern on its merits
  - Act independently and have an open mind
  - Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
  - Consider all information and evidence carefully
  - Keep the concern confidential as far as is possible, with information only disclosed where necessary to properly investigate the matter.
36. LHP's assessment of the concern or enquiry will include:
  - What the concern is about
  - What evidence is needed to fully consider the issues
  - What risks the concern raises for LHP
  - What outcome would resolve the matter for the customer/customers
  - Any urgent action that LHP needs to take
37. LHP's will endeavour to resolve a concern at the earliest opportunity



38. Those raising a concern or enquiry will be provided with the opportunity to:
- Set out their position
  - Comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made
39. There may be circumstances where LHP could exercise discretion in its response to a concern. These will always be discussed with the Executive Director of Property and Executive Director of Customers and where discretion is used, LHP will provide a full explanation to the customer and maintain a log of the use of discretion and the circumstances in which it was used.
40. LHP is committed to resolving all concerns fairly and quickly.

## Putting Things Right

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41. LHP is committed to resolving concerns and enquiries fairly and quickly.
42. Where something has gone wrong LHP will acknowledge this, setting out the actions that it has already taken or intends to take to put things right. These will include:
- there has been an unreasonable delay
  - inadequate or inaccurate advice was provided
  - LHP's policies were not followed correctly without good reason
  - there was a factual or legal error that impacted on the outcome for the customer
  - there was unprofessional behaviour by colleagues
43. LHP will acknowledge and apologise for any failure identified, explain and where applicable inform the customers of any changes made or actions taken to prevent the issue from happening again consulting with customers and managing expectations being careful not to promise anything that cannot be delivered or that would cause unfairness to other customers.

## Appropriate Remedy

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44. Where things have gone wrong, LHP will:
- Acknowledge that something has gone wrong, provide an explanation, assistance, or reasons
  - Apologise
  - Act if there has been a delay
  - Recognise or change a decision
  - Amend a record
  - Provide a financial remedy
  - Change policies, procedures, or practices

45. Remedies offered will reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the customer.
46. When offering a remedy, LHP will set out what will happen, by when, agreeing this with the customer.
47. Agreed remedies will be logged on the performance management system and tracked to completion.
48. Where a remedy is compensation LHP will consider whether there are any statutory payments due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred in addition to the inconvenience and time a customer has been put to as well as any distress and inconvenience caused.

## **Legal Liability**

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49. In some cases, a customer may have a legal entitlement to redress. Whilst there may be concerns regarding legal liability in this situation LHP will offer a resolution where possible.

## **The Housing Ombudsman**

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50. When a customer remains dissatisfied at the end of LHP's accountable persons process, they may bring their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman (HO).
51. LHP will co-operate with the HO requests for evidence and provide this within 15 working days.
52. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, LHP will provide the HO with an explanation for the delay and if reasonable the HO will agree a revised date.

## **Continuous Learning and Improvement**

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53. LHP will proactively use learning from concerns to revise policies and procedures, train colleagues and contractors and to improve communication and record keeping.
54. LHP will ensure that colleagues where appropriate are trained and supported and have the skills to effectively deliver to the accountable person's process.
55. LHP will report learning outcomes and improvements to services as a result of customer feedback through the performance framework, website, newsletters, annual report and customer involvement structures.

## **Monitoring**

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56. LHP will record and monitor every concern or enquiry through this process, take ownership of it and seek to find solutions that meets customer expectations.

57. Feedback will be used to:

- Report performance to customers, colleagues and Board
- Engage with and involve customers in the co-design of services
- Review policies and procedures
- Develop colleagues

## **Review Cycle**

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58. This policy will be reviewed biannually in March 2025 or in advance of this date should there be changes to legislation that affect this policy.

## **2023 Accountable Persons**

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59. Executive Director of Customers – Mark Coupland. Consumer Standard Concerns

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## **Equality Impact Assessment**

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## Accountable Persons Policy

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

- The purpose of the accountable persons policy is to enable LHP to promote the appropriate Directors for customers and stakeholders to contact should they feel that their concerns or enquiries are not being heard and therefore addressed and resolved in a timely manner.
- The Social Housing White Paper is expected to legislate to require social landlords to identify and promote to customers and stakeholders nominated persons responsible for complying with health and safety requirements and consumer standard.

***Completed By:***

Corporate Head of Customers

***Date:***

27 January 2023

### Guidelines: Things to consider

- Where a negative (i.e. adverse) impact is identified, it may be appropriate to make a full EIA (see Stage 2), or, as important, take early action to redress this – e.g. by abandoning or modifying the initiative. NB If the initiative contravenes equality legislation, it must be abandoned or modified.
- Where an initiative has a positive impact on groups/community relations, the EIA should make this explicit, to enable the outcomes to be monitored over its lifespan.
- Where there is a positive impact on particular groups, does this mean there could be an adverse impact on others, and if so can this be justified? - e.g. Are there other existing or planned initiatives which redress this?
- It may not be possible to provide detailed answers to some of these questions at the start of the initiative. The EIA may identify a lack of relevant data, and that data-gathering is a specific action required to inform the initiative as it develops, and also to form part of a continuing evaluation and review process.
- It is envisaged that it will be rare for full impact assessments to be required. Usually, where there are particular problems identified in the screening stage, it is envisaged that changing the approach at this stage, and/or setting up a monitoring/evaluation system to review a policy's impact over time will tackle the problem.

### 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 clearly sets out the process should all customers, contractor and colleagues wish to bring to the attention of the appropriate director issues concerning health and safety and the consumer standards, as such this policy will have a positive benefit to all groups.

**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 is a clear and transparent process to bring issues to the attention of the appropriate accountable person. There are no barriers to accessing this policy and therefore 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*

All groups have the same access rights to the accountable person and does not adversely affect any individual characteristic or group.

**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*

No

**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 aspect of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Beilief, Sexuality*

N/A