



CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

Our aim is to provide you with outstanding customer service, however we acknowledge that occasionally things may go wrong. We want to know if this happens so we can put things right.

If you make a complaint, we will always aim to treat you with respect and be sympathetic to your issue. Throughout the complaint process, our Resolution Team will take ownership of your concerns and will promptly investigate and deliver a fair resolution. Your opinion matters to us, and we will do our best to make amends.

This procedure outlines the process of handling complaints for the Flagship Group and its subsidiaries which include: Flagship Homes; Suffolk Housing; Victory Housing Trust; Flagship Housing Development; Gasway Services; RFT Services and any other contractor we may use to provide a service on our behalf.

DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

It is important that we deal with all sources of dissatisfaction quickly and ensure that our staff take ownership and resolve the problem as soon as they hear about it. If they are unable to do this, we will deal with those issues as a formal complaint. Our definition of a complaint is:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by us, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting you”.

FORMAL COMPLAINT – STAGE 1

A complaint can be made in any way that is convenient for you. Once we have received your complaint, we check to see that it meets our definition of a formal complaint. If it doesn't, this is our earliest opportunity to resolve the issue informally. If it does meet the definition, your complaint will be passed over to the Learning and Resolution Team to formally investigate. You will then be contacted by one of our Resolution Officers within 24 working hours.

During the investigation, you may be asked to provide supporting evidence to enable us to carry out a thorough investigation. The complaint will be resolved within 10 working days of receiving it. Where this is not possible, the Resolution Officer will liaise with you to explain the delay and advise you of when you will receive a resolution. This will not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

Once the resolution is agreed, the Resolution Officer will ensure any actions forming part of the resolution are carried out before the complaint is closed.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint it can be escalated to stage 2. Details on how to do this will be provided within our response letter.

REVIEW COMPLAINT – STAGE 2

Following a resolution being offered, if you remain dissatisfied and believe that your complaint has not:

- a) been handled in line with the complaints policy;
- b) are unhappy with the proposed resolution;
- c) have a complaint about the conduct of the complaint handler;
- d) or are unhappy with the way the complaint has been handled.

Your complaint can be escalated for review by a Senior Manager who will make contact within 5 working days. They will look to understand why you are unhappy with the outcome and to see if we can put things right. You will receive a written response on your complaint review within 20 working days. Where this is

not possible, the Senior Manager will liaise with you to explain the delay and advise when you will receive a response. This will not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason. The Senior Manager will make a fair and reasonable decision on the outcome.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your review, you have the option to appeal to our Tenants Experience Group (TEG). Alternatively, if you choose not to appeal your complaint, you can wait eight weeks from the date you receive our final response letter and then contact the Housing Ombudsman Service directly.

OPTIONAL APPEAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If you remain dissatisfied and believe:

- a) All or some of the points raised as part of the complaint have not been investigated or responded to as part of the complaint or review;
- b) All or some of the agreed actions have not been carried out or carried out to a less than satisfactory standard within the agreed timescales.
- c) Flagship Group has failed to respond to the complaint within the agreed timescale.

To escalate your complaint to an appeal, you must explain how your complaint meets one or more of the three criteria above. You may also be asked to provide us with any evidence to support your request.

NB – The Flagship Group reserves the right not to hold an appeal hearing where the agreed actions to put things right have been completed and you do not meet the above criteria.

The appeal meeting will be arranged, by mutual agreement, within 20 working days of your request. You may be accompanied at the meeting by another person, except for legal representation. During the meeting you will be able to provide your views on the complaint and these will be considered.

TEG will make a fair and reasonable decision on the outcome of their review, and a response will be issued within 5 working days of the appeal meeting.

NB – The outcome of the appeal will represent the Flagship Group's final response on the complaint and will not enter into any further correspondence or discussion on the complaint.

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

Following the review stage of the complaints process, you will be signposted to external parties such as a designated person - an MP, or local councillor. The designated person may contact us in accordance with the Localism Act 2011. By entering this process, you are giving consent for the designated person to act on your behalf and liaise with us regarding your complaint.

If the designated person cannot help resolve the complaint, we/they can signpost you to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Alternatively, if you choose not to contact the designated person, you can wait eight weeks from the date you receive our final response letter and then contact the Housing Ombudsman Service directly.

Flagship Group is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Service Scheme. The address and contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ, Tel: 0300 111 3000,

E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

New elements added to a complaint in progress

If whilst we are investigating the complaint, there are new issues that arise, we will determine whether they meet our definition of a complaint. If they do not, we will signpost you to the relevant team to resolve the new issues in the first instance. Should the new issues meet our definition of a complaint, we will follow the complaints procedure from the beginning.

Safeguarding or Health and Safety Concerns

Any safeguarding issues or health and safety concerns raised during the handling of a complaint will be reported and the relevant policies and procedures will be followed.

Persistent complaints or unacceptable behaviour

If we believe that complaints are being pursued in an unreasonable manner where customers use threatening, abusive or intimidating behaviours or whereby complain in an unreasonably persistent way, we reserve the right to not investigate the case and will seek legal advice.

Learning from complaints

Departments continuously review complaint themes and trends to improve the services we deliver.

We will regularly update Management, Boards, and staff on the complaints we have received and what we have done to resolve them. Every quarter we refresh our websites “you said, we did” sections with information on complaints received and how we have learnt from them.