

Complaints Policy

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Approved by	Managing Director (Triathlon Homes)
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Responsible officer	Head of Operations (Triathlon Homes)
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We aim to deliver a good quality service and positive customer experience. If we don't meet our service standards, we'll:
- Apologise
 - Accept responsibility
 - Acknowledge your expectations
 - Put things right when they're in our control within reasonable timescales
 - Keep you informed
 - Listen to you to improve what we do.
- 1.2 This Policy sets out a consistent and fair approach to responding to complaints from residents, customers, and stakeholders, which aims to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3 We've developed this Policy in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, our statutory and legal duties, and residents' feedback.
- 1.4 The terms 'you' and 'your' in this Policy mean residents, customers, or stakeholders. The terms 'we', 'our' and 'us' mean Triathlon Homes.
- 1.5 You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice at any point throughout our process. See section 8 for details.

2. What is a complaint?

- 2.1 We've adopted the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint as:

'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'

2.2 Service requests

The Housing Ombudsman Service defines a service request as 'a request from a resident to their landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right'.

When you first let us know about your concern, as a starting point we'll ask you what you'd like us to do to put things right. We can often resolve service requests, such as a missed appointment, immediately with an apology and by providing another appointment. We may be able to resolve this outside of our complaints process.

If we need to make further enquiries to resolve the matter, or if you ask us to, we'll log it as a complaint.

3. Who can make a complaint?

- 3.1 Anyone can make a complaint about the services we, or anyone working for us (e.g. contractors), provide.
- 3.2 However, you may only be able to escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service if you have a landlord/tenant relationship with us. This includes leaseholders and other residents with agreements to occupy premises with a member landlord/managing agent.
- 3.3 If you prefer, you can authorise someone else to make a complaint on your behalf i.e., an 'advocate'. This could be a friend/relative or representative from an external organisation (such as Citizens Advice). If you'd like an advocate to act on your behalf, let us know.
- 3.4 We treat complaints received through petitions or a group of residents in the same way as all other complaints. If helpful, we're happy to meet the petitioners or group. In terms of handling the complaint efficiently, we'll ask for a single point of contact to be nominated.
- 3.5 If the complaint escalates to a stage 2 review, we'll allow one other petitioner/resident to be involved.
- 3.6 We expect all residents to behave reasonably and cooperate with us throughout the process¹.

4. What can you complain about?

- 4.1 You can complain about our standard of service, actions or lack of action by us or anyone working for us (e.g. contractors) within six months of the issue happening.

We may use our discretion to accept older complaints if there's good reason you hadn't raised it before.
- 4.2 If the problem is a reoccurring or ongoing issue, we'll consider any older reports as background to the investigation.
- 4.3 If you make a complaint and we complete our process, we're unlikely to accept another complaint about the same issue unless you provide new information. If you're unhappy with our decision, please see section 8, which explains other options.
- 4.4 There may be some circumstances where your complaint is better dealt with outside our complaints process. If this is the case, we'll provide an explanation setting out why and the action you can take. You'll be able to approach the Housing Ombudsman Service once you've received our decision.

¹ Our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy outlines how we manage unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives.

4.5 We won't accept new complaints that have already been investigated or are under investigation by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Table 1 provides examples of where we'll advise alternative action outside our complaints process. This list is not exhaustive.

Table 1

Concern raised	What action we will take
Where legal proceedings have been started. This is defined as a Claim Form or Particulars of Claim have been filed in Court.	Our solicitors will communicate directly with your legal representative, if you have one.
Service charge queries	<p>You can use our service charge dispute resolution process. A manager with knowledge of the service charges or scheme will look at your query.</p> <p>If you feel the services being delivered aren't to an acceptable standard, we'll consider this as part of our complaint process.</p>
Rent charges or increases	If you're dissatisfied with your rent charge or increase, the relevant team will respond to your enquiry.
Personal injury or third-party liability claims (including those against contractors)	You may need to contact your own insurance company, or we may refer these to our insurers.
Behaviour of our residents e.g. alleged anti-social behaviour	<p>We have a separate policy for dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB).</p> <p>We'll consider complaints about the handling of your ASB case under our complaints process.</p>
Subject access requests	<p>If you have concerns about the content of your subject access request, you can contact our Data Protection Team. You may also contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).</p> <p>We can deal with other complaints about our handling of your request under our complaints process.</p>
Decisions made in accordance with our statutory obligations, or legislation/regulation	We're unable to reverse these decisions. Examples include succession and the Right to Rent.

	We'll deal with issues relating to how we handled the matter as a complaint.
Issues subject to contact restrictions	Where the specific issue being raised is subject to contact restrictions under our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy. We'll act according to the contact arrangement we have with you.

4.6 If we decide not to accept a complaint, we'll provide an explanation setting out the reason why. If you're unhappy with our decision, you're able to approach the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice.

5. How you can contact us

5.1 There are a range of ways you can raise a complaint:

- Our website
- Online customer portal
- Phone
- Letter/email
- In person

If you need help in raising a complaint in another way, just let us know.

5.2 We'll take your preferences into account when communicating with you and we'll make reasonable adjustments in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#).

6. Our complaints resolution process – stage one

6.1 If you're unhappy with our response to your service request or wish to raise a complaint at stage one of our process, we'll contact you within five working days to:

- Acknowledge your complaint
- Establish full details of what's happened
- Find out how you'd like us to resolve it. We'll be clear where your desired outcome may be unreasonable or unrealistic, but we'll focus on what we can do.

6.2 If you raise multiple complaints at the same time, we'll provide you with one point of contact, where possible. If you raise further concerns when we've already issued a response, or it would unreasonably delay our response, we'll log it as a new complaint.

6.3 We aim to give you a full response within 10 working days of the acknowledgement date.

6.4 If, for any reason, we need more than 10 working days to respond to your complaint, we'll explain why and agree the response date with you. If we're not able to agree an

extension, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman for advice. We'll continue with our investigation and provide a response within the extended timeframe.

6.5 We'll email our acknowledgement and formal response (unless you've requested a different communication method). Our response will confirm:

- The complaint stage
- Definition of your complaint
- Our decision on the complaint
- Reasons for our decision
- Details of any remedy offered to put things right
- Details of any outstanding or further actions required and how we'll monitor progress
- Details of how to escalate your complaint to review stage if you're not satisfied with the outcome.

6.6 We may close your complaint if you refuse to engage with us to resolve the complaint, for example:

- Failing to respond to contact for a prolonged period
- Refusing to allow access to your home.

If we decide to close your complaint, we'll always confirm this in writing.

7. Unhappy with our decision? – Stage two

7.1 We'll explore if there's anything further we can do, or you can ask us to review your complaint at stage two of our Policy. You must request this within 20 working days of the date of our formal response. We may consider requests after this time at the discretion of the manager responsible for the service.

7.2 You must be clear about the reasons you remain dissatisfied with our reply and the outcome you'd like to resolve your complaint.

7.3 Within five working days of you contacting us, we'll acknowledge your request and confirm our understanding of the issues and outcomes you're seeking.

7.4 Stage 2 complaints will be handled by an appropriately trained senior Triathlon Homes staff member not previously involved in the Stage 1 complaint.

7.5 If you wish to submit additional information for the review, you must do this at least 10 working days before the review date.

7.6 We'll contact you with our decision within 20 working days of our acknowledgement.

7.7 If, for any reason, we need more than 20 working days to respond to your complaint, we'll explain why and agree the response date with you. If we're not able to agree an

extension, you're entitled to contact the Housing Ombudsman for advice. We'll continue with our investigation and provide our response within the extended timeframe.

- 7.8 There may be occasions when we won't accept a request to review a complaint, for example if the outcome being sought isn't within our power or ability to deliver. In these cases, we'll write to you and explain why. We'll give the options available to you, including your right to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

See [Table 1](#) for examples of why we may not accept a request to review. This list is not exhaustive.

8. What if you disagree with the review decision?

- 8.1 You're able to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point throughout your complaint for advice. Once you've exhausted our complaints process at stage two, you may ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to mediate or investigate the case on your behalf.

- 8.2 The Housing Ombudsman Service may not consider complaints that fall within the jurisdiction of another:

- Ombudsman
- Complaints-handling body (such as the Information Commissioner)
- Regulator (such as the Regulator of Social Housing or Building Safety Regulator)
- Property Redress Scheme.

Appropriate referral will depend on the specific complaint. We, or the Ombudsman, will signpost you to the relevant body as appropriate.

- 8.3 You can find Housing Ombudsman Service contact details below, on our website, or at housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housingombudsman.org.uk.

9. Mediation

- 9.1 When we both agree it would be helpful in reaching a resolution, at any time during the process, we can invite an independent mediator to help us find a solution.

10. Learning from complaints

- 10.1 We want to learn from complaints as this helps us improve our services. We have formal mechanisms in place to make sure we gather learning from complaints and use

this insight to improve services. We'll share our learning from complaints with our residents and include it in our Annual Report and on our website.

11. What have we done to make sure this Policy is fair?

11.1 We've carried out an Equality Impact Assessment to consider the positive and negative impacts this Policy may have on people with protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

12. Review

12.1 We will review this Policy to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues.

Policy Controls sheet		
Author	Date	Main changes and why (i.e. change in legislation, change in internal processes)
Customer Services Policy Consultant	January 2023	Aligned policy to Southern Housing Policy.
Customer Services Policy Consultant	1 October 2022	Aligned policy to be consistent with Southern Housing Group's Policy and to reflect the latest changes to HOS Complaints Handling Code.
Customer Services Policy Manager	13 December 2021	Timescale for acknowledgment of new complaints changed to be within 3 working days.
Customer Services Policy Manager	May 2021	Update new template. Correct minor typing errors.
Customer Relations Manager	December 2020	Revised policy to take into account changes required to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
Head of Operations	June 2016	Officers seek to resolve complaints informally. If not successful then it becomes formal with an agreed action plan and input from Head of Operations. Action plans are monitored to completion. If the customer is still dissatisfied following an action plan, they can request an M.D review.
Policy and Research Manager and Head of Operations	December 2015	Stage 2 Panel removed and replaced with a review by TH Managing Director.
Policy and Project Officer	April 2013	Original policy.