



Complaints and Compliments Policy & Procedure

Version number: 3

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UNCONTROLLED IF PRINTED

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Introduction

Parasol Homes Limited ('Parasol') seeks to provide tenants with a high standard of service. This is ensured by monitoring performance throughout the Company. However, Parasol recognises that if standards fall below acceptable levels tenants have the right to make a complaint. In addition, Parasol also recognises that stakeholders and external agencies also have the right to make complaints. All complaints will be confidential and taken seriously and any unacceptable performance standards will be amended.

For the purposes of this policy the definition of a complaint will be taken to be 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.

This policy and procedure is in relation to the accommodation and housing management service that is provided, complaints regarding the support service will be dealt with by the support provider.

A first appeal for service or assistance will not constitute a complaint.

Aim of policy

Parasol aims to:

- Pro- actively seek comments and feedback regarding the accommodation and service we offer
- Provide guidelines for handling and resolving complaints and dealing with compliments concerning the accommodation and service offered by Parasol

Policy

Complaints & Compliments Procedure

Complaints can be reported at any time, and are not limited to working hours.

A tenant/ representative can make a complaint in the following ways:

- In a House Meeting
- Via a Complaints and Compliment Slip
- Via the channel on the website
- Verbally
- In writing

Representatives of tenants are able to make complaints on the behalf, and are also able to attend any further meetings or be included in any further communication should it be requested by the tenant.

External agencies/organisations & third-party individuals can make complaints in the following ways:

- Verbally
- In writing.

All complaints and compliments will be taken seriously by the Company and staff members

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should ensure that any complaints are handled in accordance with Parasol policies and procedures. For a complaint to be treated as such, the tenant or third party, does not need to use the word “complaint” for it to be considered as one.

In situations of advocacy no member of staff should discuss personal information with anyone other than the complainant unless written consent to do so has been obtained.

All members of staff should undertake to treat complaints and compliments with respect and a positive ethos, promoting this ethos to others in line with the Company’s approach of open governance and continual improvement. Staff members should offer support and assistance as necessary to any resident wishing to make a complaint verbally or in writing.

Complaints made verbally should be addressed as a matter of priority and resolved as quickly as possible. When a written complaint is received it should be immediately reported to a complaint handler, recorded in the complaints log, and acknowledged within three working days of receipt..

The complaint logs for each area to be sent monthly to the Director of Housing where they will be logged and reviewed in the central complaints register.

Staff dealing directly with service users will be trained and supported so that they are able to resolve matters informally and promptly. All service users will be made aware that they have the right to pursue complaints with external organisations and at any stage can seek independent advice.

In circumstances where complainants feel their complaint is unresolved, or has not been handled satisfactorily, they may report their complaint directly to an organisation external to Parasol. Examples of these organizations are listed as follows:

Housing Ombudsman

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool L33 7WQ
info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk Tel: 0300 111 3000
Shelter
Shelter Free Helpline 0808 800 4444 Citizens Advice Bureau
Citizens Advice Bureau National Advice Line 03444 111 444

Parasol will respond to all complaints within set deadlines keeping the complainant informed in writing of the progress. Complainants will be informed of all decisions in order that they can take action if still dissatisfied. An initial acknowledgement response to a complaint will be made within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint. With a full investigation and response made within 20 working days. The response to complainants will identify all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reason for any decisions made.

Parasol may, at any time, make use of external services if it will help promote a satisfactory outcome for all involved providing the consent of both parties is given. At any stage Parasol may offer a service user or other person compensation which may include an apology or financial settlement. Alternatively complaints can be put in writing and sent directly to the Company Administrator at Head Office.

A full investigation must be undertaken into the complaint at the earliest opportunity, records kept and the complainant informed of the outcome as a matter of priority in an impartial manner.

Where anonymous complaints refer to harassment a full investigation will be made where complainants do not disclose their identity for fear of recrimination and reasons related to their own safety and/or where a complainant can easily be identified e.g. health and safety issues. All anonymous complaints will be dealt with by the departmental manager and left to his/her discretion.

In the case of a complaint including an allegation about a member of staff, the staff member will be informed as appropriate and the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the Parasol Allegations Against Staff Policy.

If a complainant feels they have not received a satisfactory response to a written complaint, they can appeal to the Head of Operations. The Head of Operations will maintain a record of any such complaint and undertake to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days and conclude a full investigation within 20 working days taking care to keep the service user informed throughout.

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 the action needed to be taken to resolve the situation by all parties.

On occasions when any aspect of a complaint requires contact with any person or agency outside Parasol, staff should be aware that they are representatives of the company and act accordingly. It is their responsibility to consider their words and deeds and the potential these have to impact on Parasol. If in doubt, staff should refer situations requiring contact with persons or agencies outside Parasol to their line manager.

In situations where there is the potential for media attention relating to a complaint, or a statement to the media is required, only a Senior Manager or a member of the Director's Team will represent Parasol Homes. Other members of staff should not comment. They should refer enquiries to Senior Managers and/or a member of the Director's Team.

The Head of Operations who co-ordinates the central register of complaints/ compliments will report to the Director of Housing on a monthly basis with any outstanding complaints/ compliments being discussed at this time.

Personnel will attend training in relation to complaints and compliments as required. It is essential that the handlers of the complaints are acting in the best interest of the company and the tenants. Therefore, handlers must be free of conflict when handling the complaint, and if there is a conflict, this will be noted on the register and the handler will be removed from that specific case and a different handler will be issued.

As we aim to take a pro-active approach to comments on our service. All staff should ensure there is widespread and easy access to our comments/suggestions form at all times as this can be instrumental in helping us improve our service.

The following Stages of Complaint should be adhered to:

Stage 1:

When a complaint is received it will be acknowledged within three working days of receipt, an investigation undertaken into the complaint and a response given to the complainant within 7 working days wherever possible with a maximum of 20 working days allowed when necessary. Should any extensions be necessary, they will be agreed by both parties involved.

Where a complainant raises an additional complaint during the investigation, these should be incorporated into the stage response if they are relevant and the stage one response has not been issued. Where the stage one response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint.

Stage 2:

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response he/she can contact The Head of Operations of Parasol. The Head of Operations will acknowledge the complaint within three working days of receiving it, the handler of stage one will no longer be considering the complaint. Following investigations, a response will be given to the complainant within 20 working days wherever possible.

Stage 3

If the complainant is still dissatisfied s/he can write to the Director of Housing. The Director of Housing will maintain a record of any such complaint, inform the directors Team at weekly meetings and undertake to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days and conclude a full investigation within 20 working days, taking care to keep the service user informed throughout.

It is the complaint handler's responsibility to ensure that their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking is noted in the acknowledgment of the complaint, and that any unclear areas are clarified and a complete definition agreed by both parties.

The response to the complainants will include:

- the complaint stage
- the decision on the complaint
- the reasons for any decisions made
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right
- details of any outstanding actions
- details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer

For the above 3 stages, it is within Parasol's right to decline to escalate a complaint, but should this be done the handler must communicate clearly the reasoning for declining the complaint and should advise the complainant of the external channels they can take.

Compliments Policy Statement

When a compliment is received, this should be seen as an indicator that we are providing a high standard of service. Any member of staff receiving compliments on behalf of Parasol should ensure that they are passed on to others through the line management process.

All service users and others affected by the activities of Parasol have the right to express satisfaction or appreciation about Parasol services. When this happens the compliments, procedure will be followed, allowing Parasol to learn from experiences that produce positive results.

How the policy will be delivered

All staff members will be responsible for familiarising themselves with the Complaints and Compliments Policy of the Company and ensuring that they facilitate any person wishing to access the process appropriately.

Related documents

Complaint Handling Code 2022
Self-Assessment Form - The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

Monitoring arrangements

Complaints and compliments will be monitored monthly, records will be maintained, and a central register will be kept recording all complaints and compliments received by the Company and their outcomes.

A six-monthly review of complaints and compliments will take place. This will be completed by the Senior Management.

Control data and approval history

Policy owner:	Director of Housing
Next review date:	October 2023

Action	Approved by	Date
Approval	Relevant lead or director	October 2022
Approval	Executive Leadership Team representative(s)	11 th November 2022

Document revision history

Date approved	Version number	Version history
2019	V1	The policy was written following the move from 28a to Parasol Homes.
Date amended	Version number	Key changes
July 2021	V2	Amends were made following advice provided by the Housing Ombudsman.
October 2022	V3	The policy was updated to reflect the necessary requirements in the Complaint Handling Code published by the Housing Ombudsman in March 2022.