

Isleworth & Hounslow Charity Ltd

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. The Isleworth and Hounslow Charity Ltd (the Charity) including Chiswick Parochial Charities which is incorporated into 'the Charity' wants to know when things go wrong or when residents or other stakeholders are not happy - either with the service that they have received or the duty of care that they had expected.

All residents to be issued a copy of this policy when signing up and whenever a review of the policy has been made.

1.2. A complaint is dissatisfaction expressed about an aspect of our service, policies or actions and decisions. The General Manager will determine whether the dissatisfaction expressed is a complaint of the Charity; the Chair of the Trustees will determine this if the complaint is about staff (and he should investigate the complaint).

Complaints as a general rule must be made within 12 months of the issue arising or the complainer becoming aware of the issue. The Charity may consider accepting a complaint made outside the time limit, where there are good reasons to do so.

If the Charity decides not to accept a complaint an explanation must be given to the complainant and the right for that person to contact the Ombudsman.

Low-level disagreements between the Charity's beneficiaries where there is no breach of the beneficiary's good neighbour agreement will generally not be considered for complaints-action (see the Charity's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy).

1.3 The complainer can tell us about their complaint on the telephone, in writing, an email or by visiting or contacting any of the office staff. They may be required to put it in writing. As far as is reasonably possible the Charity will treat all communications about complaints as confidential.

1.4 There are usually two levels at which the Charity will consider a complaint. At any meetings after Level 1 the complainant can be accompanied by a relative or friend. At each level the Charity will respond by saying to what extent it upholds the complaint and, insofar as it is needed, what action has or will result from its decision.

2. Level 1: Informal complaint

2.1. When an individual or organisation tells a member of staff that they are unhappy with something the staff member – or a designated Trustee - will take responsibility for taking the information. The member of staff or Trustee will find out from the complainer:

- What the issue is that they are unhappy about
- What they would like to be done to resolve the matter

and they will inform the complainer of the time needed to get the issue resolved. Once resolved staff may give some feedback to the complainer.

2.2 Most complaints are resolved within no more than 10 days. If the member of staff resolves the complaint within 10 working days it will be considered as a Level 1 complaint. If not yet resolved, the complainer may agree to a time extension. If they do not agree – or if they want to appeal the decision - the complaint will move to Level 2.

2.3 The Charity must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:

- a. the complaint stage
- b. the complaint definition
- c. the decision on the complaint and reasons
- d. the reasons for any decisions made
- e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right
- f. details of any outstanding actions
- g. Any reasonable adjustments made to the complaint
- h. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response
- i. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied

3. Level 2: Formal Complaint

3.1 After Level 1, the complaint must be in writing. Staff – or a Trustee - will then:

- Date the complaint
- Endeavour to speak with the complainer within three working days to clarify the issue and agree how and when the complaint might be resolved
- Actively work to fully resolve the complaint
- Write to the complainer within 10 working days to fully explain the outcome, or
- If the complaint has not then been resolved to the complainer's satisfaction, ask the complainer if they will agree a time extension of no more than 10 days in order to ensure that they are satisfied.
- If requesting an extension the complainer must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.

If the complainer does not agree an extension or is otherwise not satisfied, the complaint will move to Level 2, Review. The complainant must be provided with contact details of the Ombudsman,

4. Level 2: Review

4.1 If the complainer is not satisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint they can ask the Chair of the Trustees for it to be reviewed. The Chair will agree the start-date of the review and may commission two or more Trustees (these are likely to be members of the Charity's Pastoral Committee) to review the complaint. They will:

- Endeavour to speak with the complainer within three working days after receiving a review request to clarify why they are dissatisfied with the complaint response, and see whether anything can be done to resolve it before the review
- If the complainer is not satisfied, carry out the review – a Level 2 complaint
- Write to the complainer confirming how the complaint has been resolved, within 10 working days or a further 10 working days if an agreed extension of when the complainer asked for a review (the reply will be reported to the Trustees Meeting)

- If the complaint has not been resolved within the time frame, notify the complainer in writing of this with an explanation and a date when the complaint is expected to be resolved, but must be no more than 20 working days without good reason
- If requesting an extension the complainer must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.

4.2 For Level 2 complaints against staff the matter is likely to go to a Trustees Meeting.

4.3 The Charity must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language:

- a. the complaint stage
- b. the complaint definition
- c. the decision on the complaint
- d. the reasons for any decisions made
- e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right
- f. details of any outstanding actions
- g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied

5. Ombudsman

5.1. If a beneficiary is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint after it has been considered at a Level 2 review they can refer their complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service.

5.2 Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

PO Box 1484

Unit D

Preston

PR2 0ET

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/

Email : info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

6. Putting Things Right

If the evidence or balance of probabilities supports a complaint it will be upheld. If a complaint contains more than one issue and one of the issues is upheld, but not all, it will be recorded as partially upheld. Complaints that are upheld may be resolved in several ways and will reflect the extent of the situation based on its own merit, and the impact caused to the complainant as a result. These may include:

- acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
- providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons.
- apologising when a mistake has been made or people have been let down.
- taking action or setting out the action CHS intends to take to put things right.
- reconsidering or changing a decision.
- amending a record.
- providing a financial remedy.
- changing policies, procedures, or practices.

- signposting to support agencies. When considering a resolution, a range of factors impacting the level of detriment caused to the complainant will be considered including, but not limited to:
- the length of time that a situation has been ongoing.
- the frequency with which something has occurred.
- the severity of any service failure or omission.
- the number of different failures.
- the cumulative impact on the complainant.
- a complainant's particular circumstances or vulnerabilities.
- consideration of any quantifiable losses in accordance with our compensation policy and procedure and/or any discretionary payment to acknowledge service failure more broadly. Compensation for quantifiable loss will normally be paid as credit to the rent account in accordance with Compensation Policy. Any discretionary payment will be reimbursed directly to the complainant.

7. Keeping records

The Charity will document all complaints and resulting actions and will keep copies of all complaint correspondence to and from the complainant. The Charity will keep copies of the complainant's correspondence received at each stage.

The General Manager will be responsible for ensuring that outcomes to complaints are implemented. Any themes or trends will be assessed by the Charity to identify any systemic issues, serious risks or areas for improvement for appropriate action.

8. Learning from complaints

The Charity aims to support a positive complaint handling culture by placing learning and improving at the heart of its complaints management.

This will include:

- The Trustees will receive updates at each meeting on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints and details of any Ombudsman investigations
- The General Manager will review annual complaints performance and service improvement reports and submit findings to the Trustees. They will assess themes or trends.
- The General Manager will have lead responsibility for complaints. The GM will provide assurance to the Trustees on the effectiveness of the Charity's complaints system, including challenging the data and information provided to the Trustees
- The Charity will proactively use learning from complaints to revise policies and procedures.
- Sharing learning with individual complainants and more widely with members
- Annual completion and submission of Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment to the Housing Ombudsman Service
- The annual complaints performance and service improvement report will be published on the Charity's website (Which is currently being built) Whilst the website is currently work in progress the residents will receive an individual report by letter.

9. Data Protection

Confidentiality and data protection apply to the complaints process, we will not share personal information gathered as part of the complaint process with any third party who is not entitled to receive it, in accordance with data protection legislation.

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