

## **Princes Park Housing Co-operative Complaints Policy**

The Co-operative tries to offer tenants the best possible service but there will be occasions when things go wrong. If we have made a mistake, we will apologise and try to resolve problems at the first point of contact but there may be instances where a complainant wishes to take things further and we have a formal complaints procedure to allow this.

A copy of our Complaints Policy and Procedure is available on request.

Our policy and procedure aim to:

- Ensure that complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible;
- Allow complainants easy access to the procedure;
- Foster good relationships between the Co-operative and tenants;
- Be consistent, fair and impartial;
- Respect confidentiality and privacy; and
- Ensure that, where appropriate, complaints are used to improve services.

## **Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**

The Co-operative has assessed this policy and the associated procedure against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. A copy of our self - assessment will be included with our annual report which is sent to members each year.

## **Who can complain?**

Complaints may be received from anyone who receives or is requesting a service from the Co-operative, including:

- Tenants or members;
- Applicants for housing;
- Neighbours of the Co-operative's properties; and
- Committee members.

Complaints may be received from others acting on behalf of the complainant such as solicitors, councillors, Members of Parliament or advice organisations.

## What is a complaint?

Our definition of a complaint is based on that set out in the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code: “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”.

Examples include dissatisfaction with:

- The Co-operative’s policies or practices;
- The way we have reached a decision or with the way we have implemented it;
- Staff or contractor attitudes;
- Failure to provide a service;
- Failure to achieve a satisfactory standard of service; and
- Failure to fulfil statutory or contractual obligations.

A complaint may be made by anyone receiving or seeking a service from the Co-operative. A complaint must, in normal circumstances, be made within three months following the provision of a service. A person may make a complaint on behalf of someone else, with their consent.

You do not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative will be handled in line with our complaints policy.

The Co-operative will recognise the difference between a **service request** and a **complaint**. A service request is a request from a tenant to their landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests will be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.

A complaint should be raised when a tenant raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request.

Our Agent, North West Housing Services (NWHS) will provide further advice and guidance as to whether the approach is a service request or a complaint, using Housing Ombudsman good practice resources for guidance.

## **What is not a complaint?**

We will not treat the following as complaints:

- Neighbour disputes, nuisance, and anti-social behaviour. These will be dealt with under separate policies;
- Complaints which amount to a disagreement with the Co-operative about its decisions rather than the way the decisions have been carried out e.g. rent levels;
- Initial requests for a service (e.g. the first reporting of a repair);
- Requests for information;
- Anonymous reports or enquiries;
- Cases in which legal action has been instigated;
- Issues which are over six months old, unless there are safeguarding concerns or health and safety issues; and
- Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy

If we decide not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided, setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman and how you can do this.

## **Making a complaint.**

We try to ensure that complaints are resolved at the first point of contact (e.g. with our agent North West Housing Services' Client Services Officer or Building Surveyor). If you remain dissatisfied, a formal complaint can be made by:

- Completing and returning a complaint form;
- Emailing your Client Services Officer; or
- Writing to the Co-operative at:

North West Housing Services  
19 Devonshire Road  
Liverpool  
L8 3TX

Assistance can be obtained by visiting our office or calling us on 0151 726 2200.

On receipt of a formal complaint, the complaints procedure will apply.

## **Equality Act 2010**

The Co-operative recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and, where appropriate, will make reasonable adjustments to the application of its complaints procedure to reflect an individual's needs. If you think you have specific needs which may have to be taken into account, please let us know at the time you make your complaint.

## **Resolution and Compensation**

Resolution of a complaint may involve one of the following:

- An apology;
- A change in policy;
- A goodwill gesture, e.g., flowers, gift voucher;
- A compensation payment

Any claims for compensation must be made in writing no longer than 14 days after the incident to which the claim relates. If you are claiming for damage to possessions, you must allow the Co-operative or its agents to inspect the damaged items. If you dispose of the items without allowing for an inspection, the Co-operative will not consider your claim.

Most claims will be dealt with by the Co-operative's insurers or the Committee of Management.

Where payments of compensation have been paid by the Co-operative these will be formally logged to ensure a clear audit trail is recorded and to track expenditure and any failures in service.

## **The Housing Ombudsman Service**

We will advise you regarding your right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout your complaint, not only when the Co-operative's complaints process is exhausted.

If you remain dissatisfied after the Co-operative's complaints procedure has been exhausted, you can refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service at:

[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

PO Box 152  
Liverpool  
L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000

## **Vexatious Complaints**

We recognise that on occasion complaints made can be vexatious. The Co-operative will not tolerate continuous vexatious complaints and will take appropriate action through the enforcement of tenancy conditions or advise the tenant the way in which their tenancy and communication with the Co-operative will be managed in future.

## **Sources of Advice and Information**

Multi-agency complaints involving the police, social services or other agencies can be difficult to resolve. We will signpost and support the complainant in cases where resolution of the complaint involves other agencies.

## **Monitoring, Delivery and Performance**

Details of all complaints will be reported regularly to the Management Committee.

Any lessons learnt or changes needed in policies and procedures will be made as required.