Roborough Community Property Association Ltd

Complaints and Compliments Policy

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

1.1 We aim to provide customer focused services that get it right first time by listening carefully, responding fully and ensuring that the customer does not need to contact us regarding that issue again.

1.2 We understand things can go wrong and we can make mistakes - we want to know so we can apologise, put them right and learn from them.

1.3 We also want to know when things have gone right (compliments and thanks) and share these with colleagues.

1.4 We aim to:
publicise our processes so all customers are aware of how to make a complaint or compliment

ensure customers can make a complaint or compliment easily

deal with complaints confidentially and fairly

resolve complaints efficiently, politely and at the earliest opportunity (ideally, within our timescales of 10 working days and at stage one)

put things right, where possible

use complaints to learn and improve processes and services

keep customers updated throughout and keep a proper record

ensure staff understand how to deal with a complaint and receive ongoing training

empower and support staff to take ownership of complaints assigned to them

make correspondence clear, concise and in Plain English

publicise the services of the Ombudsman from the very start of a complaint

co-operate with the Ombudsman to ensure we reach suitable resolutions for all parties

comply with the Ombudsman code and scheme and any Ombudsman recommendations, determinations or Complaint Handling Failure Orders

act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute for Housing

1.5 We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by RCPAL, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

1.6 For clarity, we will not accept the following as a complaint:

an initial request for a service or information. A service request is a request from a resident to RCPAL requiring action to be taken to put something right.

a report of anti-social behaviour (unless the issue relates to how we have handled it)

a query about a policy (unless the issue relates to failure to comply with the policy)

issues brought to our attention after 12 months of arising or 12 months after the customer becomes aware of the issue

issues already answered within a previous complaint

concerns about the level of rent/service charge or the amount of the rent/service charge increase (depending on whether a rent/tenancy is secure/affordable/social, customers can appeal to the government about their level of rent or service charge; customers can contact their housing officer in the first instance for information)

matters that are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings and where a complainant has or had the opportunity to raise the subject matter of the complaint as part of those proceedings. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.

issues being pursued in an unreasonable manner (see later section in this policy)

issues the Ombudsman has already decided upon

If an issue raised falls under the above categories we will explain to the customer why it is not considered under the complaints process and advise them if there is an alternative method or how to contact the Ombudsman.

1.7 We expect customers to behave in a reasonable way when contacting us or our contractors; staff should not be subjected to aggressive or abusive behaviour.

Customers are people who receive a service from us or our contractors, former customers who have left a property no more than twelve months previously and any individual or group affected by our services.

All complaints and compliments are recorded on our housing management software.

The role of the Customer Service Co-ordinator is to facilitate and support complaints, compliments and compensation claims.

2. COMPLAINTS

Principles

A complaint can be made by a variety of communication methods including written, telephone, in person or online (social media).

Customers can give permission to a third party to act as an advocate on their behalf (i.e. relatives, community leaders, MPs, councillors, external agencies, etc.).

Anonymous complaints are accepted and a response provided wherever practical and appropriate

A complaint can be made by a group or from one person representing a group of people; this could be in the form of a petition or joint communication. We ask the group to nominate a spokesperson and deal with that person until the complaint is resolved.

A complaint is investigated by the member of staff responsible for providing the service being complained about unless it is about the behaviour of a member of staff, in which case an appropriate manager investigates; this is the case even when a complaint is addressed to an executive director or board member.

Where a complaint is about a member of staff, they may be interviewed as part of the initial investigation then kept up to date following each stage of the process. Should any action be taken against the member of staff this will be in accordance with the relevant human resources policies and procedures.

There are two internal stages in our complaints process; we aim to resolve most complaints at stage one and within 10 working days.

If we cannot resolve the complaint within 10 working days (at stage one) or 20 working days (at stage two), we will keep the customer informed and extend response times by 10 working days where there is a good reason. Examples of a ‘good reason’ include:

a delay by a third party, over which we have no control, in providing information
requiring further time to undertake interviews

needing longer to acquire all the information required from multiple sources to enable us to properly investigate a long-standing, complex case

where this involves undertaking work which may take weeks or months to complete, we provide a schedule and time frame, and monitor progress.

We can offer solutions, mediation and/or compensation at any stage of the complaint process; the customer has 15 working days to accept the offer. For more information see the separate Compensation Policy. (available upon request)

If we have not heard from the customer within 15 working days of our response, we will consider the matter resolved and the complaint closed.

Internal stage 1 – investigation by an appropriate staff member/team

When receiving a complaint we:

acknowledge within 3 working days, and advise the customer of the staff member who will investigate and respond

contact the customer using their preferred method to find out more about the complaint and discuss a resolution

follow up the contact with a written response within 10 working days of the acknowledgement; if it is likely to take longer, we will keep the customer updated and aim to respond within a further 10 working days of the complaint receipt

Our response to the complaint will include whether the customers complaint was upheld, partially upheld or not upheld along with any reasons for this decision.

We make it clear at this stage that the customer must provide us with all the information that they want us to consider in dealing with their complaint as no additional information will be considered after stage one.

If customers raise additional complaints during the stage 1 investigation these are incorporated into one response, however if the additional complaints would delay the response significantly a new complaint is logged.

Internal stage 2 – review by a manager/director

The customer must inform us to confirm they want to escalate their complaint within 15 working days of receiving the stage one response. On receipt of a request to escalate, the stage 1 investigating officer must consult with customer engagement and provide a handover to the stage 2 investigating officer . A complaint will be escalated unless the reason for escalation falls under the

Once a stage 2 has been accepted we:

acknowledge quickly and within 3 working days, and advise the customer of the staff member who will review the complaint

contact the customer by their preferred method to find out why the resolution offered at stage one is not satisfactory and what we can do to resolve their complaint

respond to the customer within 20 working days of the complaint receipt; if it is likely to take longer, we will keep the customer updated and aim to respond within a further 10 working days of the complaint receipt

Customer options at the end of stage 2

If the customer is not satisfied with the response at the end of the internal stage, they can choose to take their complaint to the Ombudsman.

Independent Housing Ombudsman
The Customer Service Coordinator is responsible for liaising with the Ombudsman and ensuring we meet any timescales set out by the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman details are:
Housing Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London, E14 9GE
0300 111 3000
info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/

RCPAL will comply with the decisions/recommendations/Complaint Handling Failure Orders from the Ombudsman and identify lessons learnt; these actions are monitored by the Executive Team and the board member with oversight for complaints.

Learning from complaints

Complaints are monitored and reviewed by Customer Engagement and via regular reports; emerging trends and issues are identified quickly and flagged with the appropriate service manager.

Once a complaint has been closed, we use an independent organisation to survey customers on their satisfaction with the complaint outcome and handling; the feedback is used to improve complaint handling, services and update policies and procedures.

Where a complaint results in a change in service or a service improvement, we inform the complainant, note it as a lesson learnt in our quarterly report and promote it via our customer newsletter and website.

Lessons learnt reports on complaints, compliments and compensation are reviewed by Executive Team quarterly and board annually.

Vexatious and persistent contacts

A small minority of customers make complaints and/or contacts that take up a disproportionate amount of time and can often be distressing for both parties; this may involve:

persisting unreasonably with complaints or other matters

making serial complaints about different matters

continuing to raise the same or similar matters over and over again

an excessive number of contacts made about an issue

harassing or being rude or aggressive to staff or contractors

attempting to or actually bypassing our processes and/or contacting multiple members of staff about the same issue(s)

changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds

unreasonably contacting (or threatening to contact) the media
This is not an exhaustive list.

Where a level of contact from a customer is so high it makes managing the contact unreasonably time consuming, we discuss this with a Director and write to inform the customer that we believe they are acting unreasonably and give them an opportunity to change their approach. We clearly set out our reasons why and explain the behaviour we would expect from them in order to avoid becoming vexatious or persistent.

If there is no change, a Director may approve to restrict contact to a single channel/person and agree specific timeframes for responses. The customer will be advised of the action, why it has been taken and that it should be reviewed no more than two months later by a Director.

The single channel/person may work with the customer in the following ways:

try to resolve matters by securing a signed ‘agreement’ setting out a code of behaviour for the parties involved in order to continue to process a complaint

agree the most suitable method of contact between us and the customer (i.e. letter, email, etc.)

temporarily suspend all contact with the customer and the investigation of their complaint whilst seeking legal advice or guidance

liaise through an agreed intermediary

offer a limited time slot for necessary calls

notify the customer in writing that:
their complaint or contact has been responded to fully and continuing contact on the matter would serve no real purpose

the correspondence is at an end and that further letters be acknowledged but not answered

they should take their complaint to the Ombudsman

We recognise that a new reasonable complaint may still arise whilst any restrictions are in place and this process will not prevent reasonable complaints from being raised.

4. COMPLIMENTS

It is helpful to hear from customers when they are pleased with our services or our staff/contractors; it helps us to focus on what our customers want.

Compliments are shared with staff and used to continuously improve. They are also reported quarterly to Executive Team and board.

5. MONITORING, CONSULTATION AND REVIEW

Performance in meeting timescales and lessons learnt reports on complaints, compliments and compensation are reviewed quarterly by Executive Team and to board through the CEO report. Directors and managers receive regular reports on complaints and compensation.

There is a board member with oversight for complaints on RCPALs Board who receives a quarterly update.

In line with our involvement policy, the customer scrutiny group is included in monitoring our performance and customers are consulted on the policy revision.

The Customer Insight and Engagement Manager is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years (or when good practice, regulation or legislation changes).

We carry out customer service-related induction and refresher training for all staff to make sure they are aware of our commitment to good service delivery standards and targets. We use case studies for lessons learnt and training purposes.

6. EQUALITY AND ACCESS

We are committed to treating all people with fairness and respect. We aim to create an inclusive environment where people are treated with dignity, inequalities are challenged, and we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances to enable individuals to achieve their potential and foster good relations within the communities we serve. We want to be recognised as an organisation delivering fair, inclusive, accessible services and an employer and partner of choice. [updated in line with Equality Policy]

When applying this policy we act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and to reduce discrimination and harassment by making reasonable adjustments such as:

eliminating discrimination – by providing support to make a complaint to those who need it and providing information in accessible formats and languages on request; providing access to videos on making a complaint; providing information on support available from the Ombudsman at all stages of a complaint;

advancing equality of opportunity – treating all complaints fairly

fostering good relationships – listening to customers and responding appropriately

This policy is available in accessible formats and languages on request.

7. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Compensation policy

Procedures

Social Media Policy

Reviewed April 2026