



Complaints Policy

REVISED APRIL 2024

Registered provider of social housing registration number LH4014. Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, society number 27656R.

1.0 Introduction and overview

This policy relates to all parts of the organisation and to other organisations that provide services to our customers under contract or in partnership with us.

This Policy relates to customers who have a tenancy, lease, licence to occupy, service agreement or other arrangement to occupy premises owned or managed by Broadacres Housing Association.

Although complaints can be received from a range of individuals, only the above customers or their advocates can escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service and will therefore follow this process.

We will inform those customers who are not covered by this process, why and that their complaint will be logged and passed to an investigating officer who will respond within ten working days.

Our complaints system is designed to:

- resolve matters in an understanding way, promptly and in confidence
- provide customers with a fair, consistent, impartial and confidential process through which they can express dissatisfaction about an element of our service
- give us an opportunity to put right what has gone wrong

We are committed to achieving a positive customer experience by keeping the customer fully informed throughout the process and with information that is well published and easy to read.

We follow the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, and we will continue to self-assess against it annually, as well as respond whenever the Code is revised.

Customers have the right to access the Housing Ombudsman service throughout every stage of their complaint, not just when the complaint is exhausted. The Customer may wish to do so to obtain impartial advice from the Ombudsman dispute support advisors during the complaints process.

Those involved in dealing with complaints will have the skills, ability and support to consider individual circumstances and reach a fair outcome at

any stage. Colleagues are trained to welcome and deal with all types of feedback both positive and negative in a supportive, non-judgemental and non-defensive manner.

Information on our complaints process can also be found within our packs for new tenants and on our website.

2.0 What is a complaint?

In line with the Housing Ombudsman guidance to the housing sector, we recognise complaints 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”.

Often a customer's concerns can be resolved quickly at first point of contact and will not need to go through the formal two stage process. If a customer wishes for their concerns or dissatisfaction to be recorded as a complaint, then colleagues should willingly do so using this policy to guide them, which outlines issues that we will investigate and those excluded from our policy.

Examples of what a complaint is;

- standard of service received was poor
- we failed to do something we agreed to
- we gave a customer incorrect information
- we failed to follow our policies and procedures
- inappropriate or rude behaviour by a colleague or contractor

What is a Service Request

Where we receive a first-time request for a service, which is deemed a 'service request', we will advise the customer it will not be treated as a complaint and the request will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly and dealt with by the relevant department.

However, if the customer expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request or provision of this service we will raise a complaint.

Examples of a service request:

- an initial request for a service, such as the first report of a repair
- an initial request for information or an explanation
- a report of anti-social behaviour

3.0 Exclusions

Where we receive a complaint that cannot be considered under the Complaints Policy, we will advise the customer in writing, setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the Complaints Process and the right to take the decision to the Ombudsman.

However, we do consider each complaint on its own merits and the circumstances in which we exclude will be fair and reasonable.

Examples of what may not be considered a complaint are:

- an initial request for a service, such as the first time that a repair
- is reported or that Broadacres is made aware of a repair. However, complaints about the provision of this service are accepted.
- an initial request for information or an explanation
- something that is out of our control or not our responsibility (e.g. streetlights/ car parking)
- anti-social behaviour – these complaints are dealt with under the anti-social behaviour procedure. However, complaints about the provision of this service are accepted.
- housing application banding query – these will be dealt with under the ‘North Yorkshire Home Choice Allocation Policy’
- the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago
- in some circumstances, where legal proceedings have been initiated
- matters that have already been considered under the Complaints Policy

4.0 How to make a complaint

By telephone to our Contact Centre Team on 01609 767900 between the hours of 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

In writing to our Head Office address:

Freepost RRBZ-TATA-BYHL
Broadacres Housing Association
Broadacres House
Mount View
Standard Way
NORTHALLERTON
North Yorkshire
DL6 2YD

By email to our Contact Centre Team at info@broadacres.org.uk

Face to Face with any Broadacres colleague.

Via our website at www.broadacres.org.uk

Via Broadacres social media pages, using Facebook Messenger.

If social media is used to report a complaint, we will deal with the complaint in line with our Privacy Policy and Social Media Policy, and all communication will take place using private messages. We will not enter into conversations regarding complaints in any public social media forum.

We will accept complaints made by friends, relatives and advocates who have the customers authorised consent to represent them, and via a Councillor or MP or other relevant third party (e.g. Housing Ombudsman or consumer rights organisations).

What happens when a customer makes a complaint.

- All complaints are recorded on a central customer relations management system (CRM) and are logged on the day they are received (or the next working day).
- We will keep customers up to date with progress.
- We will always be open and honest about the process.
- Where customers raise additional complaints during the investigation, these will be incorporated into the response if they are relevant, and the response has not been issued. Where the response has been issued or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint and we will advise the customer of this decision.

5.0 Reasonable Adjustment

Customers may need us to make reasonable adjustments to be able to access our complaints process. Reasonable adjustments are changes to our work practices, either on a temporary or permanent basis, which aim to avoid disadvantaging someone who has a disability and to provide extra support where necessary. The term disability also relates to mental health conditions which have a long-term impact on the individual's day to day activities, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Examples of reasonable adjustments may include:

- allowing more time at each stage of the complaints process for customers to respond
- allowing customers to communicate in writing or verbally, as they need to
- providing our replies and information in a different format
- providing translation services for documents and discussions

We will work to improve accessibility for everybody that we deal with offering reasonable adjustments, adaptations and discussing ways that we can work to remove barriers that you may experience. A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things.

We work together to look at options and agree what adjustments would be reasonable in your individual circumstances.

Please just get in touch with our Complaints Team to find out more.

If a customer so wishes and where this is reasonable, they can also nominate a representative to deal with their request on their behalf. There may be occasions where we will need to request authority to discuss the customer's request with the representative. An example representative could be a family member, friend, social worker or support worker (this list is not exhaustive).

We will let customers know that we can provide reasonable adjustments and record the adjustments we make with their consent in our IT systems to improve our services. Please [CLICK HERE](#) see our Equality and Inclusion Policy.

6.0 The Complaints Process - Stages one and two.

We aim to resolve a complaint without unnecessary formality within the timescales below and will seek to reach agreement with the customer wherever possible.

However, there may be good reason to extend the response time, examples of good reason could include:

- a delay by a third party, over which we have no control, in providing information
- requiring further time to undertake interviews, investigations.
- needing longer to acquire all the information required from multiple sources to enable us to properly investigate a long-standing, complex case

If an extension is required to enable us to respond to the complaint fully, we will only do this is in agreement with the customer, and within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Timescales. We will agree with the customer suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.

Broadacres' complaints system is based upon the following process:

Acknowledgement - Following receipt of the complaint at stage one, or escalation to stage two, we will aim to acknowledge by the end of the next working day, but always within the Housing Ombudsman Code requirements of 5 working days.

We will acknowledge in writing and provide information on how to contact the Ombudsman Service, if the customer wishes to contact them for support.

Stage 1

The complaint will be investigated by the most relevant member of staff or a partner contractor / agency and we will respond within 10 working days.

If the complaint is particularly complex, we will contact the customer and inform the customer of the expected timescale for response, we will only do this is in agreement with the customer, within the Housing

Ombudsman Complaint Handling timescale and before the original timescale has elapsed.

If the customer is unhappy with the response provided by the investigating officer, they may request that their complaint is escalated to stage two of the process.

Our written response will include an option to have the case escalated to a Stage 2 by responding to us within 10 working days. However, if a customer can demonstrate a good reason for delaying the decision to escalate a complaint, then the matter may still be considered.

Stage 2

The complaint will be reviewed by a Head of Service with oversight from the Director of Service and we will respond in 20 working days.

If the review is particularly complex, we will contact the customer to inform them of the expected timescale for a response. We will only do this in agreement with the customer, within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling timescale, and before the original timescale has elapsed.

Stage one and stage two letters are reviewed by the Complaints Team before they are sent to a customer.

The stage 2 final outcome letter signifies the end of our complaints process.

The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS).

If the customer remains dissatisfied with the way we have handled their complaint after Stage 2, they can escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS).

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

If the complaint is about the delivery of support services funded by North Yorkshire Council, then you can approach the designated person(s) or

appeal to the council through the Supporting People Commissioning Body.

Contact details are available from the Council's own website, or Broadacres' dedicated complaints team can provide the relevant information upon request.

Broadacres will co-operate fully with any decisions of the HOS and NYC.

Putting things right.

Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have already taken or intend to take to put things right.

These may include:

- apologising
- acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- taking action if there has been a delay
- reconsidering or changing a decision
- amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- providing a financial remedy
- changing policies, procedures or practices

We will provide a complaint response when the decision is known and this means not whilst awaiting completion of outstanding actions (e.g. outstanding repairs), so that reasonable complaint process timescales are achieved.

However, we will set the remedy offer out clearly in the final written response, what will happen and by when, in agreement with the customer where appropriate.

7.0 Persistent Complainants or Unacceptable behaviour when making a complaint.

A small minority of complainants persist in making serial complaints about various matters or raising the same case over and over. This frequency of contact and making unreasonable demands on colleagues has significant resource issues for the organisation. When a customer has been identified as unreasonably persistent, we may limit the routes available to them to contact the organisation. Any restrictions placed on

a customer's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. This decision will be taken by a Head of Service.

Where the behaviour of the complainant is hampering the progress of the complaint, this will be explained to the complainant, including the implications of their behaviour, in order to get to a position to respond to their complaint.

If the behaviour persists and where we are unable to hear the complaint or part of the complaint, we will inform the customer of the outcome based on available information.

8.0 General guidelines and information

Correspondence from public officials and external stakeholders should be responded to by the relevant Manager or Head of Service / Director for the service area the complaint is in relation to. Usually, public officials will communicate with us via email to raise complaints on behalf of constituents or complaints they themselves would like us to respond to.

All MP emails should be shared with the Complaint Email inbox, where the Complaints Officer will ensure the relevant service manager or Head of Service /Director is notified, that the complaint is recorded on the CRM system, that a response is provided and that all other relevant stakeholders have been informed of the contact.

Public officials and external stakeholders include (this list is not exhaustive) : MP's (or their representatives), councillors, civil servants, partnering contractors and agencies, funders, community organisations and voluntary groups and partnerships, the police, NHS and charities.

Complaints addressed to Board Members or members of the Executive Team will be logged by the Complaints Officer and processed following this policy.

Customers seeking compensation or financial redress do not need to make a formal complaint to have their request considered. Requests for and offers of compensation within a complaint will be considered in accordance with our compensation policy.

9.0 Monitoring and review

Customers will be given the opportunity to feedback following a complaint. Customer satisfaction is a key performance indicator, and the feedback is used to continually improve the complaints process.

We will report back to our customers and our colleagues on our wider learning and improvements from complaints. Feedback will be regularly provided to our Customer Scrutiny Panel, the Customer Experience Committee and our Board and will be discussed, alongside scrutiny of the Ombudsman's annual landlord performance report.

Each year we will self-assess our complaint handling in line with the Housing Ombudsman Code. We will further publish information about the number, nature and outcome of complaints through an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, as requested by the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

This policy is reviewed every three years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to good practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.

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Broadacres Housing Association Limited is an exempt charity and a registered provider of social housing, Homes and Communities Agency number: **LH4014**, and a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, registered number: **27656R**