




# HOUSING COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS Corporate Policy

<b>Title of Policy Document</b>	<b>Housing Complaints and Compliments</b>
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Signed off by	 Chief Executive
Renewal date	May 2023
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Creative Support aims to provide high quality homes, housing management and housing services that meet the needs of tenants. We also strive to be good neighbours and to contribute positively to our local communities.
- 1.2 We are committed to achieving the highest standards of customer care. In order for us to achieve this, we seek feedback from our tenants and other stakeholders. We are always grateful for suggestions as to how we can improve our services. We view complaints positively as a means of being able to identify and make changes and improvements.
- 1.3 When something has gone wrong or has fallen short of the required standards we will endeavour to take timely and appropriate steps to put things right.
- 1.4 Creative Support is registered with The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and is committed to meeting the regulator's standards in respect of its social housing properties and tenancy management as well as legal frameworks relevant to housing, the environment, health and safety, data protection and safeguarding.

## 2. BASIC PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 We are committed to making it as easy as possible for you to provide feedback to us, and to use your feedback to improve our services.
- 2.2 Through our *Complaints and Compliments* policy, we will aim to resolve your complaints quickly, effectively and fairly. We will pass on comments and compliments to relevant people, departments and stakeholders.
- 2.3 When dealing with complaints, it is our aim to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction as far as possible and leave you feeling that it was handled fairly and appropriately. The tone of our contact will be open, responsive and avoid unnecessary formality. Our written correspondence will use plain English, and will be backed up with positive action to resolve your complaint.
- 2.4 We are committed to treating all tenants and customers fairly, and we take equality and diversity into account in a positive way. We will therefore ensure that individual needs are taken into account when applying this policy and that any reasonable adjustments are made as required. This policy is available in a large print version.
- 2.5 Complaints of discrimination and harassment are taken very seriously and will be dealt with sensitively. We will take account of the nature of the issues raised when appointing an investigator.
- 2.6 We welcome the involvement of advocates, and where it is felt that a complainant would benefit from the support of an advocate, depending on the nature of the complaint, we will signpost you to the appropriate advocacy service.
- 2.7 We ask that you work with us in the first instance to let us know if you are unhappy or dissatisfied and to give us the chance to put things right. We believe it is better to resolve any concerns at a local level where possible. However, we recognise that this is not always appropriate and we encourage people to use our Complaints Procedure if required as set out below. This policy is promoted to tenants at the point of signing a new tenancy and via tenants meetings and posters on noticeboards.

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### 3. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT OR GIVE FEEDBACK

3.1 In order to make it as accessible and easy as possible to make complaints or give feedback to us you can communicate a complaint or feedback to us via a variety of means including:

- By telephone: 0161 236 0829, asking for **the Housing Complaints Officer**
- By email: [housing.complaints@creativesupport.co.uk](mailto:housing.complaints@creativesupport.co.uk)
- Submitting a webform: <https://www.creativesupport.co.uk/Customer-Care>
- In person: to staff on-site locally or to Head Office's address below.
- By post to: Housing Complaints Officer, Creative Support, 131 Wellington Road, Wellington House, Stockport, SK1 3TS

3.2 Complaints received by Creative Support's Chief Executive will be acknowledged in writing and passed to the Housing Complaints Manager who will respond to you directly.

### 4. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

4.1 This policy is for:

- Tenants and residents
- Their carers and families
- Referrers and workers from other agencies
- Members of the public

4.2 This policy is for any of the above who may wish to: make a complaint, share a concern, give a compliment, make a suggestion, or give feedback in respect of any of Creative Support's housing or housing services.

### 5. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?


5.1 A complaint under this policy is defined 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.

5.2 Our operational managers are usually able to resolve most issues of minor dissatisfaction at a local level as part of their job, without the need for you to make a complaint.

5.3 However there may be times when a more formal approach or further investigation is required, which may need the involvement of other staff to find out what has happened. We will address this through the housing complaints process.

### 6. WHAT IS A COMPLIMENT?

6.1 A compliment is an expression of satisfaction about the standard of service we provide. We are always pleased to hear from people who are satisfied with the services we offer. All compliments are recorded, and a copy is sent to the relevant service manager

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to provide feedback to the member of staff or service. Compliments are also collated and reported to the Creative Support Board of Trustees.

## 7. WHAT CONCERNS CANNOT BE DEALT WITH UNDER THIS POLICY

7.1 Not all complaints to us will be dealt with under this policy. Please see below for guidance on what we cannot deal with:

- Complaints made about Local Authorities
- Complaints made about Health Services
- Complaints about services provided by other landlords or organisations
- Complaints by staff in respect of Creative Support corporate support services or employment issues. These should be dealt with through the Grievance Procedure described in the Employee Handbook
- Reporting maintenance works and requesting progress updates.

7.2 Complaints we cannot deal with under this policy could be in relation to repairs to a property not owned by Creative Support, wider environmental issues or neighbour disputes. Notification of a service failure that is not provided by Creative Support may also fall outside the remit of this policy. However, in this situation we may support tenants and others to complain to the correct body and to access appropriate advocacy if needed.

7.3 We will **not** normally investigate complaints about something that happened more than six months ago, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

7.4 We are unable to address a complaint under the Complaints Procedure when a legal process has commenced or a legal challenge is being made regarding whether a decision, action (or lack of action) is lawful.

## 8. OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

8.1 Creative Support has a two stage process for addressing complaints. However, it is good practice to try and resolve concerns informally at a local level first.

8.2 When a concern is raised locally it should be dealt with immediately as part of good customer care. Low level complaints should still be logged locally as a complaint even if dealt with immediately. For example: Tenants complaining that the communal heating is too hot. This is something that can be fixed immediately by changing the heating settings but would not be classed as a complaint unless expressly requested or if unresolved. However as a matter of good practice the concern and the response should be logged locally.

8.3 Our aim is to resolve complaints quickly and as close to where we provide the service as possible. However if you consider that your complaint cannot be resolved locally or if local resolution has failed, you can submit a complaint to the Housing Complaints Officer directly.

### 8.4 Stage One

8.4.1 This is the first formal stage, usually undertaken by the Complaints Officer or the Manager of the Property Services Team. Where a complaint includes issues for more

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than one part of our service, the investigation will be led by the person who has responsibility for the major part of the complaint. We will aim to provide you with a single response whenever possible.

8.4.2 We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing by letter and/or email as soon as possible and within **5 working days**. The acknowledgement will outline our understanding of the concerns raised by the complainant. We will advise you as to:

- The name and job title of the person who is dealing with your complaint.
- Agree a date or timeframe by which you can expect to receive a response to your complaint and what will happen if we cannot meet the agreed timeframe.
- We will generally seek to talk to you directly about your concern. We will establish what you would like to see happen as a result of your complaint.

8.4.3 We aim to investigate and to respond to complaints in writing by letter and/or email within **10 working days** where possible. If this is not possible an explanation will be offered and a date by which a response should be received. This generally will not exceed a further **10 days** without good reason. If it is taking longer than anticipated we will inform you of the reason for the delay and when you can expect to receive a response.

8.4.4 Should it be required, the person investigating your complaint may contact you for further information to assist with their investigation. Where necessary a meeting, conference call or video meeting may be arranged to investigate your concerns more thoroughly.

8.4.5 Our response to your complaint will be set out clearly in relation to the points you have made and can be provided by letter, email, face to face or by telephone. Where a response is given by telephone or in person, we will provide written confirmation of our response. If we are unable to resolve your complaint at this stage we will advise you that you can escalate your complaint to Stage Two should you wish to do so. We will advise you that all complaints are logged and reviewed centrally for quality checking and review by our Board of Trustees.

## 8.5 Stage Two


8.5.1 Stage Two addresses complaints that have not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at Stage One. A request to escalate the complaint to Stage Two should be made to the Housing Complaints Officer within **14 days** of the date we provided the response to your initial complaint at Stage One.

8.5.2 At this stage, we will ask you to provide details to aid the review of our response at Stage Two, to explain why you are still dissatisfied and to provide any information in support of your complaint, including any significant new evidence.

8.5.3 We will appoint a different senior member of staff to review your complaint. This will be someone who was independent of the Stage One investigation and outcome.

8.5.4 The complaint will be acknowledged in the same way as at the initial stage, by email and/or letter within **5 working days**.

8.5.5 The review will consider the points you have made and the reasons given for your continued dissatisfaction. We will look at how we dealt with your original complaint and

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we will also respond to any further related issues that you have raised with us. If there is significant new information or evidence we may undertake additional investigations.

- 8.5.6 Our policy is to work within a reasonable and agreed timescale. Our aim is to provide a thorough response that addresses your complaint in a comprehensive manner. We aim to respond to Stage Two complaints where possible within **20 working days** from the date of acknowledgement. However investigations may take longer than this so we will work collaboratively with you and communicate with you as to progress. If the timescale is to change we will keep you informed of this in writing by email or letter.
- 8.5.7 Our response to your complaint at Stage Two is final. Within our final response, we will inform you of your right to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman if you remain dissatisfied. We will provide the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service.

## 9. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

- 9.1 The first step with any complaint is to tell your landlord about the problem. This will give the landlord the opportunity to put things right. Residents can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service if they are having difficulty reporting an issue, if they feel the landlord is not responding correctly or if they are dissatisfied with the response from the landlord.
- 9.2 Creative Support will promote the details of the Housing Ombudsman Service to tenants:

Housing Ombudsman Service  
Exchange Tower  
Harbour Exchange Square  
London  
E14 9GE

[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) (online complaints form available from this website)

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

## 10. REQUESTING AN EXTERNAL INVESTIGATION

- 10.1 Creative Support at times may feel it is appropriate to appoint an external individual to investigate a complaint. It is the company's not the complainant's right to request an independent person.

## 11. COMPLAINTS ABOUT DATA PROTECTION

- 11.1 If your complaint is about how Creative Support has processed personal data, or sensitive personal data, under the [Data Protection Act](#) (2018), for example, complaints about information sharing, disclosure, retention, or information security, this will be investigated by the senior member of staff with responsibility for data protection.
- 11.2 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint regarding data protection at Stage One, you can escalate this to Stage Two.

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- 11.3 Under the Data Protection Act, an individual is entitled to request an assessment from the Information Commissioner's Office ("the ICO") as to whether Creative Support has complied with the requirements of the Act. The details as to how to appeal are set out on the Information Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/> However, Creative Support is committed to trying to resolve all complaints at an early stage and encourages individuals to raise any concerns with us before contacting the ICO.

## 12. ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD, THEFT, OTHER CRIMES OR SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

- 12.1 We are committed to being open and accountable for the actions of our staff and others acting on our behalf. If you have serious concerns about our staff, please come forward and let us know. If a fraud, theft or other crime may have been committed we will be obliged to inform the police of the concerns. If the complaint involves the safeguarding of children and/or vulnerable adults we will be obliged to report the concerns via the local authority's safeguarding procedures.

## 13. COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS OF STAFF

- 13.1 If you have a complaint about a member of our staff, and our investigation finds that a member of staff acted in such a way as to merit disciplinary action, our normal disciplinary policies will apply. The amount of detail we can share relating to internal disciplinary actions may be limited by the need to maintain employee confidentiality, but we will advise you that this is the course of action being taken.

## 14. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

14. Anonymous complaints will be investigated as far as possible, and a record of the complaint, the investigation and outcome kept.

## 15. DEALING WITH PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS

- 15.1 There are a small number of customers who may be deemed by us to be a 'persistent or vexatious complainant' due to the behaviours they demonstrate in pursuing the resolution of their complaint. For example:
- A 'persistent or vexatious complainant' displays behaviours/actions which are disproportionate, are harassing and repetitious.
  - They seek unrealistic outcomes relative to the issue being raised and state that their intention is to persist until that outcome is achieved.
  - They repeatedly make the same complaint with minor differences, but do not accept the outcome of any investigation into their complaints.
- 15.2 The inclusion of this section within the policy is to ensure that those customers who we deem to be 'persistent or vexatious complainants' are still dealt with fairly, honestly and properly, whilst also ensuring that the wellbeing of Creative Support staff and managers is not adversely affected.

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- 15.3 There is no right of appeal regarding the implementation of this section of the policy. We would, however, direct the customer to the Housing Ombudsman should they not agree with these restrictions.
- 15.4 When a customer is being dealt with under this section of the policy, information concerning the restrictions will be shared with relevant Creative Support managers and staff to ensure that they are still dealt with fairly, honestly and properly, whilst also ensuring that other service users or staff are not adversely affected. Information about the restrictions will also be registered on the customer's records whilst they are in force.

## 16. ROLE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- 16.1 Details of complaints will be reported to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis in order that they may have an overview of the number, trends, causes and outcomes of complaints. This will be done with a view to reducing the incidence of complaints or dissatisfaction with our homes and services and improving the satisfaction of those using the complaints procedure. The Board of Trustees will receive an annual report on all complaints received which analyses numbers and types of complaint, trends, lessons learned and actions taken to prevent re-occurrence or improve our properties and services.

## 17. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

- 17.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service published a new [Complaint Handling Code](#) for Landlords in July 2020. Creative Support has reviewed this document and we have self-assessed ourselves against the new Code and believe that we are compliant. We will review this policy and our compliance on an annual basis.

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