



Cottington Close Resident Management Organisation

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

We aim to provide the best possible service at all times, but we recognise that sometimes we may get things wrong. Cottington Close Resident Management Organisation (CCRMO) welcomes and values feedback on the services we provide and we encourage residents to raise any concerns about the services they receive. Where a problem arises, we will focus on putting right the problem that has occurred. Where the issue cannot be changed, the focus will be on taking actions – revising policies, procedures or providing training - to try to avoid a reoccurrence of the problem.

2. Purpose

We aim to have a Complaints system that ensures:

- Complaints are valued and acted on promptly
- Learning from complaints is used to improve services
- Residents have a clear, simple and accessible method to raise an issue of concern
- Staff know how to respond effectively to issues raised by residents;
- Complaints are dealt with consistently and promptly with residents kept informed throughout the process
- Service standards, agreed with residents, are met
- No resident is treated less favourably as a result of making a complaint

3. Scope

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a resident or other stakeholder, where an initial response to their problem has not proven satisfactory. The cause of the dissatisfaction must have occurred within six months of the complaint being raised.

For example a complaint is where:

- Someone is dissatisfied with our standard of service or the service provided by one of our contractors.
- Someone feels we have failed to do something we should have done or have acted inappropriately.
- Someone feels we have treated them or their family unfairly or impolitely.
- Someone feels we have failed to follow our policies, procedures or met service standards.
- There is a service failure which requires consideration to ensure it is addressed and to avoid complaints being made at a later date.

Complaints about neighbours or other residents are addressed through the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

A complaint is not:

- A request for information or an explanation of our policies, procedures, practices or service standards.
- An initial request for a service, for example, a repair request to one of our properties.
- About a matter or service where CCRMO has no responsibility, for example, legislation, government or local authority policy or where the responsibility rests with another organisation.

Complaints can be raised by telephone, letter, e-mail, in person, through our website, or through third parties. Where a complaint is made by a third party, it will be necessary for CCRMO to be satisfied that the person has permission to act on the complainant's behalf before we respond.

Wherever practicable, the member of staff first approached will seek to resolve complaints immediately and informally. Additionally, our staff may meet with the person who has made the complaint where this is considered the most efficient or appropriate course of action.

To ensure speedy resolution of complaints, it is important we understand what went wrong and what action the complainant would like us to take and/or what the complainant would like to happen to put things right. Where this is not clear it may be necessary for CCRMO to clarify the problem, which can cause a delay in responding to a complaint.

If the complaint is upheld, our primary aim will be to put right the problem that has occurred and to apply any lessons learnt to improve services. Sometimes it may not be possible, practical or value for money to retrospectively put the matter right. In those cases, we will focus on taking actions – such as revising policies, procedures or providing training – to try to avoid a reoccurrence of the problem.

Wherever practicable, we will seek to resolve complaints immediately and informally. If that is not possible, the following process will apply.

4. Early Resolution

When we can resolve complaints straight away, they will be passed to the member of staff who can resolve the issue. They will make contact with the resident and agree actions to resolve the issue and agree timescales. At this stage the resident will not receive a written response but if they do want a written response this will become a Local Resolution. Hopefully this will resolve the matter and, unless we hear otherwise, the complaint will be recorded as closed. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, they can ask for their complaint to be formalised to a Local Resolution.

All complaints including Early Resolution Complaints must be recorded in the Complaints Book in the office as soon as possible, for monitoring and learning purposes.

5. Local Resolution

Requests for a Local Resolution should be made in writing within 20 working days – if more time is required the complainant should contact CCRMO (within that timescale) to seek an extension of this time period. This request will be acknowledged in writing. The request should explain in what way our initial response was unsatisfactory and what action the complainant would like us to take and/or what they would like to happen to resolve the complaint. Once we have this request, a more senior member of staff or the CCRMO Board will take a fresh look at the problem experienced. We cannot look at any new issues that were not previously raised during the Early Resolution stage.

Our response will normally be provided within 20 working days but, should more time be required, we will explain to the complainant how long we think it will take before we can respond. Where a response is provided by telephone or in person, the outcome will subsequently be confirmed in writing. Hopefully this will resolve the matter and, unless we hear otherwise, the complaint will be recorded as closed after 10 working days. If, however, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can appeal the outcome and ask for a Review of the Local Resolution outcome.

6. The Review

Requests for a review should be made in writing within 20 days of receiving a Local Resolution outcome – if more time is required the complainant should contact us (within that timescale) to seek an extension of this time period. All requests will be acknowledged in writing. The request should set out in what way the Local Resolution was inadequate and what action they would like us to take and/or what they would like to happen to resolve the complaint. Reviews are undertaken by the Estate Manager and members of the CCRMO Board. The Review will not normally address new issues that were not previously raised.

The outcome of the Review will represent our final response on the matter and we will not enter into any further correspondence or discussion on the complaint.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied they can refer the matter to the London Borough of Lambeth Housing Services either directly after 8 weeks of completing CCRMO's complaint process or earlier where supported by a 'designated person'. Guidance will be provided as part of the Review response.

7. Mediation

We may suggest mediation at any stage in the complaints process as a mechanism to resolve difficulties or disagreement. Mediation is voluntary, and will only take place with the agreement of all parties. The complaints process will be suspended whilst mediation is underway and will only be reinstated if the mediation is unsuccessful in resolving the issue.

8. Complaints about Staff & Board Members

The purpose will be to establish if CCRMO has acted inappropriately, and, if it has, to put things right. That should be distinguished from disciplinary proceedings, which are there to decide whether a particular member or members of staff or Board Members have broken CCRMO rules.

Where a complaint is raised about the actions of a member of staff this will be referred to their manager who may refer the case to the Human Resources provider. A member of the Human Resources provider, in conjunction with an appropriate manager or Board Member, will assess whether the complaint and the supporting evidence justifies investigatory action and/or disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. The decision whether or not to initiate investigatory action and/or disciplinary action will be strictly confidential to the member of staff concerned and to CCRMO.

If the complaint is about one of our Board Members this will be referred to the Board and Chair of the Board. The Board may request assistance from the Lambeth Housing Client Team or a third party, depending on who or what the complaint is about. The team will assess whether the complaint and the supporting evidence justifies investigatory action and/or disciplinary action in accordance with the Board Code of Governance and Rules. The decision whether or not to initiate investigatory action and/or disciplinary action will be strictly confidential to CCRMO Board and those appointed to review the complaint.

Complainants need to be aware that if they make a complaint against a member of staff or a Board Member and investigatory and/or disciplinary action is initiated, the member of staff / Board Member will be provided with a copy of the complaint and be given an opportunity to respond.

9. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints cannot be properly investigated, because of insufficient verifiable information, and are therefore discouraged. Where an anonymous complaint is received, we will consider if any action is either appropriate or practical. (Please see CCRMO's Whistleblowing policy).

10. Petitions

Where a complaint is received in the form of a petition this will be logged as a complaint and will be recorded against the nominated spokesperson.

11. Legal Action

We will not consider complaints that concern matters that are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings. Where a complainant chooses to pursue their complaint through a solicitor, threatens legal action or takes legal action about an issue, CCRMO will normally refer the matter to their Solicitors and deal with the matter outside of the complaints policy process.

12. Multiple Complaints

In the event that multiple complaints are received from a complainant, we reserve the right to deal with these as one complaint. Approval for this rests with a member of the CCRMO Board.

13. Vexatious Complaints

We expect complainants to behave in a reasonable manner. We will not accept or investigate complaints where the behaviour of the complainant has become unreasonable or unacceptable or vexatious – for example, if they are being threatening or abusive in any way or continuing to complain after the issue has been closed.

14. Time expired complaints

Complaints are expected to be made in a timely manner. CCRMO will not consider or investigate complaints where the cause of the complaint occurred more than six months prior to the complaint being raised. In addition, complaints will not normally be re-opened or escalated to the next stage of the complaints process once they have been closed.

15. Compensation Policy

If the complaint is upheld, the primary aim will be to apologise, put right the problem (wherever that is possible, practical and value for money) and to apply any lessons learnt to improve services – such as revising policies, procedures or providing staff training - to try to avoid a reoccurrence of the problem. In exceptional circumstances, compensation may be payable. Any requests for compensation will be dealt with CCRMO's Legal Advice Service.

16. Roles and Responsibilities

All employees of CCRMO are responsible for dealing with complaints. Employees will receive training and support to do this, in line with CCRMO's policy and procedures. We will monitor, ensure consistency and promote good practice to all employees.

The Complaints Policy will be publicised via the website.