



Broadacres

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

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## **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.

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.

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.

Our aim is always to provide an early and local resolution to a complaint or dispute. If a decision to try and resolve a complaint informally is taken we will only do this in agreement with the customer and within the agreed complaint timescales.

## **2.0 What is a complaint?**

“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 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

Where we receive a complaint that is actually a service request, we will advise the customer it will not be treated as a complaint and the request will be dealt with by the relevant department.

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

### **3.0 Exclusions**

Where we receive a complaint that cannot be considered under the Complaints Policy, we will advise the customer in writing that it will not be treated as a complaint and why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

Examples of what may not be considered a complaint;

- An initial request for a service, such as the first report of a repair.
- An initial request for information or an explanation.
- Something that is out of our control or not our responsibility (e.g. street lights/ car parking).
- Antisocial behaviour – these complaints are dealt with under the Anti-social Behaviour procedure.
- 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 six months ago.
- Legal proceedings have been started.
- Matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy.

### **4.0 How to make a complaint**

- We will accept complaints by phone, letter, e-mail, in person, website and social media.
- We will accept complaints made by friends, relatives, advocates or other people authorised to act on a customer's behalf.
- We aim to resolve the complaint on the day we receive it.
- If we need time to look into it, we will acknowledge that we have received the complaint within 24 hours.
- We will provide a full written response within 10 working days. If we can't get back within that time, we will explain why and tell the customer how long it will take e.g. where a third party such as the Health and Safety Executive may need to be involved.
- We will keep customers up to date with progress.
- We will always be open and honest about the process.
- If a customer's feels their complaint has not been addressed to their satisfaction or they feel it remains unresolved we will give the opportunity to have their complaint reviewed and investigated by a Service Director.

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

## 5.0 Vexatious Complaints

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.

## 6.0 Reasonable Adjustment

We will consider a change to our working practices to avoid or correct the disadvantage to a person with a disability. We will let people 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.

## 7.0 The Complaints Procedure

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

Broadacres' complaints system is based upon the following process:

**Stage 1** – will be investigated by the most relevant member of staff or a partner contractor / agency and we will respond within 10 working days.

Our written response will include an option to have your case escalated to a Stage 2 by responding to us within 10 working days

**Stage 2** – will be reviewed by a Service Director and we will respond in 20 working days.

If you remain dissatisfied with the way we have handled your complaint after Stage 2, you can;

- Ask a designated panel or person i.e. your local councillor or MP, to review your complaint. Alternatively, you can escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) eight weeks after you have exhausted our internal complaints procedure. (See Designated Person Leaflet – this is available from the HOS website or Broadacres' dedicated complaints team can provide a copy upon request).
- If the complaint is about the delivery of support services funded by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) or Darlington Borough Council (DBC) then you can approach the designated person(s) or appeal to the appropriate Council through the Supporting People Commissioning Body – contact details are available from the Councils' own website or Broadacres' dedicated complaints team can provide the relevant information upon request.
- If the complaint is about the delivery of care, the complainant can approach the designated person(s) or appeal to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) – contact details are available from:  
**<http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/complainabout-service-or-provider>**  
or by telephone on **03000 616161**.

Broadacres will co-operate fully with any decisions of the HOS, NYCC, DBC and CQC.

## **8.0 Customer Satisfaction**

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 Performance Improvement Panel, the Customer Experience Committee and our Board and will be discussed, alongside scrutiny of the Ombudsman's annual landlord performance report.

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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**