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Customer Feedback (Compliments and Complaints) Policy

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Scope and aims	2
3. Definitions	2
4. How to provide feedback.....	2
5. Valuing your feedback.....	3
6. Support with making a complaint	4
7. Complaints handling process	5
8. What will not be accepted as a complaint.....	6
9. Remedies and putting things right.....	8
10. Housing Ombudsman	8
11. Extra Care Settings.....	8
12. Learning and improvement.....	9
13. Governance and review	10

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Coastline Housing is committed to delivering excellent services and doing the right thing for our customers. This policy outlines how we handle all forms of customer feedback - compliments, complaints, and comments - in a way that is inclusive, accessible, and customer-centric. It supports our [Trust Charter](#) and [Customer Pledges](#), and reflects our values of respect, rapport, fairness, and learning.
- 1.2 Customers are encouraged to tell us if we haven't done something right, it won't disadvantage you or affect your tenancy or lease.

2. Scope and aims

- 2.1 This policy applies to all feedback – compliments and complaints – received from customers, including those in general needs housing, supported housing, leaseholders, shared owners, and extra care settings. It aims to:
- Encourage all forms of feedback to improve services.
 - Provide a clear, fair, and timely process for handling complaints.
 - Celebrate compliments and share them within Coastline.
 - Use feedback to drive continuous improvement and learning.
 - Comply with the [Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code](#), Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards, and the Data Protection Act 2018 (as amended).

- 2.2 To report Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) or request a repair:

- ASB: please see [Reporting antisocial behaviour - Coastline Housing](#)
- Repairs: please visit [Report a repair - Coastline Housing](#).

Or contact our Customer Access Team at customer.service@coastlinehousing.co.uk or call 01209 200200.

- 2.3 We publicise this Customer Feedback (Compliments and Complaints) Policy and details about the Housing Ombudsman via our website [Complaints - Coastline Housing](#) and customer communications including the CoastLine Magazine.

3. Definitions

- 3.1
- **Service Request:** A request from a customer to take action to put something right. For example, a request to clean a communal area; to cut the grass in shared spaces; to remove graffiti in areas Coastline is responsible for.
 - **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action taken by Coastline, its staff, or contractors.
 - **Compliment:** Positive feedback about a service, staff member, or experience.
 - **Comment:** General feedback or suggestions for improvement.

4. How to provide feedback

4.1 Customers can provide feedback, including make a complaint, via:

- In person, to any member of staff or at Coastline House, 4 Barncoose Gateway Park, Pool, Redruth TR15 3RQ
- Website or portal ('My Coastline' app or website [Home - My Coastline](#))
- Email feedback@coastlinehousing.co.uk or customer.service@coastlinehousing.co.uk
- Social media (private message our social media channels)
- Through a third party (with consent)
- Telephone (please call **01209 200200**)

4.2 All feedback is acknowledged and logged:

- Compliments are shared with relevant teams and reported internally.
- Comments are reviewed for service improvement opportunities.
- Service requests are logged and responded to within four working days. We will keep customers informed of progress.
- Complaints follow a two-stage process with clear timescales and escalation routes. We will keep customers informed of progress.

5. Valuing your feedback

5.1 We will:

- Treat all customers with respect and empathy.
 - Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
 - Use plain language and support accessibility.
 - Empower staff to resolve issues at first contact wherever possible.
 - Learn from suggestions for improvements and from our mistakes to improve the service we provide to customers.
 - Offer support through Complaint Mentors (these are Coastline customers who can provide support and guidance if you wish to raise a formal complaint).
 - Recognise and respond to vulnerabilities.
 - Keep you updated on the progress of your service request or complaint.
 - Provide feedback loops: 'we've listened and acted'
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6. Support with making a complaint

6.1 We recognise that making a complaint can sometimes feel daunting or confusing. To support you, we offer access to Complaint Mentors—these are Coastline customers who are trained to support you through the process.

6.2 Role of Complaint Mentors

☒ What Complaint Mentors Do	☒ What Complaint Mentors Don't Do
Offer practical, independent support	Influence the investigation or decision
Help you understand the complaints process	Act as legal representatives
Attend meetings with you if you wish	Make decisions on your behalf
Provide reassurance and guidance	Access confidential case details without your permission
Ensure your voice is heard	
Share feedback to help improve services (with your consent)	

You can request a Complaint Mentor at any point during the complaints process. While we aim to provide a mentor whenever requested, availability may vary as mentors are volunteers. To request a Complaint Mentor, please complete the relevant form or contact complaints@coastlinehousing.co.uk

6.3 Support for your wellbeing

We understand that raising a complaint or providing feedback can sometimes feel stressful or overwhelming. If you are finding things difficult and need support with your mental health or wellbeing, help is available:

- **Speak to Us:** Please let a member of our team know if you are struggling. We will do our best to support you and can make reasonable adjustments to help you through the process.
- **Cornwall Mind:** Offers free, confidential support for anyone experiencing mental health difficulties. Visit cornwallmind.org or call 01208 892855.
- **Samaritans:** For emotional support 24/7, call 116 123 or visit samaritans.org.
- **Your GP:** Your doctor can provide advice and refer you to local mental health services.

- **Other Support:** If you need information about local wellbeing services, you can also contact Healthwatch Cornwall or ask us for signposting.

If you would like information in a different format, or need extra support to make your voice heard, please let us know.

7. Complaints handling process

7.1 We welcome complaints as opportunities to improve and we encourage staff to resolve issues at first contact where possible.

7.2 Stage 1 – Investigation

- Acknowledged, defined and logged within five working days.
- Investigating Manager (IM) appointed to understand the complaint. The IM is a manager in the area where a concern has been raised or a colleague allocated who is well-placed in terms of skills-set or experience to consider and address the issues raised.
- IM investigates and responds to the customer, via the customer's preferred method of contact, within 10 working days.
- Any extension to providing a response would be no more than 10 working days without good reason. Those reasons would be clearly explained to the customer, and the customer would be provided with the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.
- Site visits offered where appropriate.
- Customers may be accompanied by a Complaint Mentor or advocate.

7.3 Stage 2 – Independent Panel Review

- Requested by the customer within 30 calendar days of Stage 1 closure; if a Stage 2 is requested outside of this timeframe it will not be accepted.
 - Acknowledged, defined and logged within five working days. Note that customers are not required to explain their reasons for requesting escalation to stage 2. We will though try to understand why a customer remains unhappy after Stage 1 as part of the stage 2 response.
 - Reviewed by a panel of an Executive Director, Customer Member, and Non-Executive Director or Independent Committee Member. The panel is independent of the Stage 1 investigation.
 - Held in person at Coastline House or remotely (e.g. via MS Teams). We will make reasonable adjustments for the meeting location where appropriate.
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- Any extension to providing a response would be no more than 20 working days without good reason. Those reasons would be clearly explained to the customer, and the customer would be provided with the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.
- Customers may be accompanied by a friend, family member or Complaints Mentor, and submit supporting statements.

7.4 Note that if a complaint relates to a specific member of staff or a group of identified staff, this would be reviewed by an appropriate senior manager. If the complaint was found to be justified, it may be progressed via our internal disciplinary procedures – the outcomes of any such disciplinary actions would not be shared with the person making the complaint, per the Data Protection Act 2018.

7.5 If you have any questions on the complaints handling process, please contact feedback@coastlinehousing.co.uk

8. What will not be accepted as a complaint

8.1 Complaints will be accepted unless there is a valid reason not to do so. We exclude the following:

- Reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) issues themselves (handled under our ASB policy – please see [Reporting antisocial behaviour - Coastline Housing](#) for further information).
 - Complaints about the amount of rent set, as this is decided by government rules and your tenancy agreement. If you have questions or concerns about paying your rent, please speak to your Housing Officer.
 - If you have a complaint about how your service charges have been worked out, we will look into it as a service request initially and progressed to a Stage 1 complaint if necessary. If you are still not satisfied after Stage 1, and we believe Stage 2 is unlikely to resolve things, we will advise you to contact the First-Tier Leasehold Valuation Tribunal for an independent decision, instead of moving to Stage 2 of our complaints process. You can find more information here: <https://www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/residential-property#leasehold>
 - Complaints about or requests for services Coastline does not provide.
 - Complaints against a decision or process where there is clear and documented evidence that Coastline has acted in full accordance with its policies, procedures, and service standards.
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- Complaints made about an individual member of staff where decisions have been made in line with our policies or information provided, and where no other basis for the complaint exists.
- Complaints about property allocation decisions taken in line with the relevant policies.
- Complaints made more than 12 months after the event (unless with evidenced justification).
- Complaints submitted by unauthorised third parties; we require evidence of permission if a third party is making a complaint on behalf of a customer e.g. family member of the customer.
- Complaints relating to legal or tribunal matters already in progress, or which is in the hands of our insurers (i.e. personal injury or damage claims).
- Complaints about disagreements with appropriate application of the law or a decision made by a court of law.
- Vexatious complaints, which are defined as persistent, unreasonable demands made by a customer or their representative. In response, we will inform the customer of the impact this behaviour is having and if the behaviour continues, we may refuse to deal with the complaint, limit the ways the customer can complain, amend our published target response times, or respond without a full investigation. Any action will be taken in accordance with our Acceptable Behaviour Policy
- Survey feedback unless explicitly raised as a complaint.
- Instances where a complaint has been fully reviewed and responded to at all appropriate stages of the complaints process. In such cases, the complaint will be considered closed and no further internal review will be undertaken.

- 8.2 All exclusions will be explained to the customer, including their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman.
- 8.3 Complaints raised by Legal and General property customers will be investigated at Stage 1 by Coastline and any requests to escalate to Stage 2 will be passed across and dealt with by Legal and General direct, under its complaints policy.
- 8.4 If we receive contact direct from solicitors representing customer disrepair claims when no reports of repairs required have been made to us in the first instance, the customer will be signposted to follow this complaints process through to the conclusion of Stage 2. Further advice and guidance about disrepair claims can be found here:
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- [Citizens Advice - things to consider before making a disrepair claim](#)
- [Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims \(England\) - Civil Procedure Rules \(justice.gov.uk\)](#)

8.5 We appreciate that raising a complaint can be a stressful time and customers may feel angry or upset. We will do our best to help and support customers to listen to and resolve a complaint. However, the actions of some customers who are angry or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on, or behaviour towards our staff. In those circumstances, we will take appropriate action to manage such behaviour in line with our Acceptable Behaviour Policy.

9. Remedies and putting things right

If we find that we have not met our standards or have made a mistake, we will take action to put things right. Remedies may include:

- A sincere apology and explanation of what went wrong.
- Practical action to resolve the issue (for example, completing outstanding repairs or correcting records).
- Reimbursement of reasonable costs, where appropriate (this does not stop a complaint progressing should you wish).
- Changes to our processes or services to prevent similar issues in future.

We will always consider the impact the issue has had on you and aim to provide a remedy that is fair and proportionate to the circumstances. Our goal is to learn from complaints and improve our services for all customers.

10. Housing Ombudsman

10.1 If you remain dissatisfied after Stage 2, you may contact the Housing Ombudsman Service:

- **Website:** housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- **Email:** info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- **Phone:** 0300 111 3000
- **Address:** Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

11. Extra Care Settings

- 11.1 Coastline Housing provides extra care services at locations such as Miners Court, where housing and care are delivered together. We are committed to ensuring that all customers can raise concerns safely and confidently.

11.2 What You Can Complain About

If you live in one of Coastline's extra care settings, you can raise complaints about:

- Housing-related services (e.g. repairs, tenancy issues, communal facilities)
- Care and support services (e.g. personal care, medication support, staff conduct)

We treat all complaints seriously and investigate them under this policy, whether they relate to housing or care. This includes complaints about the standard of care, missed visits, or how staff have treated you.

11.3 Contacting the Care Quality Commission

If your complaint relates to the quality of care, you can also contact the Care Quality Commission (CQC):

- **Website:** [Complain about a service or provider – CQC](#)
- **Email:** enquiries@cqc.org.uk
- **Phone:** 03000 616161

The CQC does not investigate individual complaints but uses your feedback to inform inspections and protect others.

11.4 Contacting Cornwall Council

You can also raise a concern about your care with the adult Social Care team at Cornwall Council, who commission Coastline to provide the extra care service:

- **Website:** [Adult Social Care - Cornwall Council](#)
- **Phone:** 0300 1234 131

11.5 Safeguarding and advocacy

If you feel unsafe or vulnerable, please speak to a member of staff immediately. Coastline will make reasonable adjustments and offer advocacy support where needed. You can also contact Cornwall Council's [safeguarding team](#) or Healthwatch Cornwall ([Home | Healthwatch Cornwall](#)) for independent advice.

12. Learning and improvement

- 12.1
- Feedback is used to identify opportunities to improve our services. Implementation of improvement commitments identified from complaints are monitored by the Customer Feedback team and managers.
 - “You said, we did” examples are published in the CoastLines Magazine.
 - Quarterly and annual reports submitted to the Customer Experience Committee and Board.
 - Annual self-assessment against the Ombudsman Code published to our website.

13. Governance and review

- 13.1
- The Chair of the Customer Experience Committee is the Member Responsible for Complaints.
 - The Head of Governance, Risk and Assurance is the accountable officer for complaints.
 - The Governance and Customer Feedback team acts as the ‘complaints officer’ as defined by the Housing Ombudsman. The team has access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.
 - Oversight is provided through regular reporting and performance monitoring through to the Customer Experience Committee and Board of Directors.
 - We complete an annual self-assessment for complaints handling, which is reviewed by the Customer Experience Committee and Board of Directors, and published to our website.
- 13.2
- This Policy is reviewed every three years or following updates to the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code. Customers are involved via the Customer Voice or Scrutiny sessions in reviewing the policy.
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