

Complaints Policy

Policy Statement & Purpose

Complaints are important to us. We need to know if our service goes wrong, so we can put things right, learn from our mistakes and take action to prevent it from happening again.

We capture all expressions of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Bromford, our colleagues, or those acting on our behalf, whether the issue affects an individual customer or a group of customers.

Scope

This Policy sets out how we deal with formal complaints.

Through this policy we seek to ensure that complaints are:

- handled sensitively and fairly
 - resolved as quickly as possible
 - a catalyst to ensure mistakes are corrected quickly and we do what we say we will
 - used to prevent similar service failures happening again
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Reference Documents

List of Referenced Documents
Consumer Credit Complaints Policy
Compensation Policy
Restricting Customer Access Policy
Equality and Diversity Policy

Responsibilities

Complaints covered by this Policy

Where a customer, applicant or individual affected by Bromford has expressed dissatisfaction with the service we have provided directly, or by any company we employ to provide a service on our behalf.

Complaints not covered by this policy

This policy does **not** cover:

- Consumer Credit related complaints

Or complaints where there is another process already in place to handle them. For example:

- Complaints relating to another customers behaviour (Anti-Social Behaviour).
- If there is ongoing legal action regarding the same issue.
- Decisions where there is another appeal process in place, including the Lettings and Aids and Adaptations policies.

- An issue which happened over 6 months ago; a complaint should be made no later than 6 months after the date the event occurred, unless there are exceptional circumstances which mean the complainant was unable to notify us of their concerns sooner. We may consider historic complaint outcomes however, to resolve the issue for the complainant.
- The complaint relates to a legal claim or personal injury claim.
- In some circumstances it may be appropriate to refer the complainant to our insurers to progress claims where the complaint relates to significant financial loss or damages, and personal injury.

If we fail to deal with an issue through the relevant process however, then the failure to do so can be dealt with as a Complaint under this Policy. The above list is not exhaustive and on receipt of a complaint we will review the concerns and confirm if there is a more appropriate process. We will inform the customer why we will not be accepting the complaint, provide details as to what policy we will be following, and which colleague will be their point of contact.

If a customer disagrees with this decision, they should let Bromford know why, this will enable us to reconsider the decision. Alternatively, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman to support them in challenging this decision.

How we manage complaints

We aim to make the complaint process accessible to all, we will:

- Accept complaints in any way the customer wishes, including but not limited to, over the telephone, through our website, social media, or letter.
- Accept complaints from a third party acting on a customer's behalf. We will need signed authority from the customer to divulge any information we hold to a third party. This includes requests from Councillors and MP's.
- Offer a review process if the customer feels their complaint has not been resolved, we call this stage 2.

Bromford take responsibility for the actions of our colleagues and where a complaint is made about the conduct of our people, appropriate consideration of our People Policies will be made if and where required. Where an investigation about individual colleagues and their actions is undertaken in line with our People Policies, we will not disclose the detailed outcome directly to the customer due to the confidentiality rights of our colleagues.

We have two stages of our formal complaint process:

Stage 1

We aim to deal with all formal complaints at Stage 1 because we want to put things right as soon as possible.

Acknowledgement: customers will receive an acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 working days, however where a complaint is received electronically i.e., by email, it will be acknowledged within 24 working hours.

Response: stage 1 responses will be issued within 10 working days of receipt unless the complaint is complex. If this is the case, we will discuss and agree an extension of the timescales directly with the customer; generally, any extension will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

Good reason could include, but not limited to, complaints where legal advice is required, or another independent 3rd party expert is needed (other than our partners who support us to deliver day to day services). An extension of the timescales may also be required where we are unable to contact a customer and / or the complaint and the outcome they are seeking is unclear. In these circumstances we will ensure timescales are communicated with the customer.

We will keep in touch with the customer via their preferred method of contact throughout the complaint and we may in some instances arrange to meet a customer at their convenience. The outcome of the complaint will be communicated with the customer via their preferred method of contact however we will also provide written confirmation. This will include any actions we are going to take to put the matter right and provide clear timescales as to when the actions will be completed. Following the written response, we will continue to monitor all complaints to ensure actions agreed are completed.

Stage 2

If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome at stage 1, or the actions agreed have not been completed, they have the right to request their complaint is escalated for review at stage 2. We will not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint; however, we will request the following information:

- confirmation from the customer as to which points of the complaint remain unresolved;
- to provide any further information or evidence to support their complaint; and
- to clarify the outcome, they are seeking.

On receipt of the customer response, we will review our previous response to ensure there are no outstanding and / or unresolved issues that cannot be resolved straight away. Any requests for supporting information or evidence which are unreasonably refused by the customer may result in our refusal to escalate the complaint for review at stage 2.

In this instance, we will be clear with the customer as to what evidence we are seeking, explain why we cannot progress their complaint without the information, and provide guidance as to alternative options available to them. This may include referral to the Housing Ombudsman to support the customer further.

A senior Bromford colleague will review the complaint along with a customer member of the Locality Influencing network (LIN). They may arrange to meet the customer who can bring along a friend or advocate for support.

Acknowledgement: customers will receive an acknowledgement of their stage 2 complaint within 5 working days, however where a complaint is received electronically i.e., by email, it will be acknowledged within 24 working hours.

Responses: We will respond within 20 days of the request to escalate however if this is not possible an explanation will be provided, and a date confirmed as to when the stage 2 response will be received. Generally, any extension will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. The outcome of the review will be communicated in writing.

This is the final stage of our internal complaints process.

Designated Persons / Housing Ombudsman

Following completion of our internal process, if the customer remains unhappy the following options are available to them.

Self-referral to a designated person; “**Designated persons**” are defined as an MP or a local councillor for the district in which a customer's home is located. Customer can access further information relating to designated persons via the Housing Ombudsman’s website; <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/designated-person-information/>

Customers can contact the Housing Ombudsman Dispute Resolutions Team at any time to seek their guidance in making a complaint and during the complaint process. However, the Ombudsman will only accept a case for adjudication, directly from a customer without referral to a designated person, if 8 weeks have passed from the date of the final response.

A customer can contact the Housing Ombudsman in the following ways:

By letter: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ
Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

For further information you can visit their website <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/>

Other considerations

Reasonable adjustments and support: We understand that some customers may have difficulty communicating a complaint and / or participating in the complaint process, as such we will always make reasonable adjustments, enabling customers to report their concerns and engage in the process.

Restricting or changing a customer access to services: On rare occasions we may make the decision to restrict a customer’s access to our services by making alternative arrangements for communication to manage the relationship more effectively. For full detail as to how and why the decision will be taken please refer to our Restricting Customer Access Policy.

Changing circumstances: On occasion we may conclude our internal complaint process if we consider the dissatisfaction is now subject of another process e.g., legal action, insurance claim, anti-social behaviour, etc. If so, this will be communicated and agreed with the customer as early in the complaint process as possible.

Further information: Our aim is to make the complaint policy accessible to all our customers and we will publish guidance on our website and as part of regular communication as to how to make a complaint. Customers can also speak to any colleague for further guidance in making a complaint.

Learning lessons from complaints

To ensure we have a culture which embraces the learning from mistakes and continual improvement, we review activity and trends around complaints, and the action taken to improve the service and prevent similar issues reoccurring. The following details who is responsible for the setting and embedding of this policy and measuring adherence to it.

Board, their role is to:

- Approve the Complaints Policy
- Consider all reports relating to complaint handling failures, orders and maladministration, and the management action being taken to rectify.
- Review complaints handling performance on a regular basis.

This ensures the Board gain assurance from our work and have visibility of performance and service failings.

Customer and Community Influence Network, their role is to:

- Review and help draft the Complaints Policy.
- Review complaints handling performance on a regular basis.
- Consider all reports relating to complaint handling failures, orders and maladministration, and the management action being taken to rectify.
- Receive regular reporting on complaint performance, trend analysis, including themes, lessons learnt and areas for improvement.
- Provide a customer representative to consider any stage 2 complaints.

Executive, their role is to:

- Implement and embed the Complaints Policy
- Consider all reports relating to complaint handling failures, orders and maladministration, and the management action being taken to rectify.
- Consider complaint analysis reports on a regular basis, highlighting performance and identifying areas for Improvement, themes, trends and risks.

Leaders, their role is to:

- Embed the complaints policy and culture within their teams. Ensuring their teams respond to service failings and apply the necessary improvements to prevent reoccurrence.
- Respond to complaints in a timely and professional manner, as set out by this policy.
- Promote an open and transparent use of information to assess both performance and risks.

Customer Solutions team, their role is to:

- Manage all complaints, liaising with leaders as required to respond to complaints in a timely and professional manner, as set out by this policy.
- To issue reports to the business on complaint handling failures, orders and maladministration, and the management action being taken to rectify.

- To issue complaint analysis reports to the business on a monthly basis, highlighting performance and identifying areas for improvement, themes, trends and risks.

In addition:

- an Annual Complaints Report will be provided to the Board, Executive and Customer and Communities Influence Network:
- a summary of complaints performance, themes, and service improvements will also be provided to all customers via the Annual Customer Report; and
- We will report complaint performance information to customers, via our website, quarterly.

The Director of Customer Experience is responsible for the Complaints Policy.

Legislative Requirements: by following this policy, it ensures that Bromford complies with:

- [Regulator of Social Housing, the Regulatory Standards](#)
- [Localism Act, 2011](#)
- [Equality Act, 2010](#)
- [Housing Ombudsman – Complaint Handling Code, 2020](#)

Assurance Framework: We will monitor compliance with this policy through regular self-assessment, internal audit, and performance measures. Regular reporting will be provided to Board, senior leaders, governance, colleagues, the Customer and Communities Influence Network and Locality Influence Network to support learning from complaints and to promote the open and transparent use of information to access performance and risks. An annual complaint report highlighting performance, trends and lessons learnt will be available to customers through the Customer Annual Report.

Document Details

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