

Complaints policy

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 My Space Housing Solutions is committed to providing excellent services to all customers however, we accept there will be occasions when this may not always be achieved. We understand things can go wrong and where this happens, it is important for our customers to be able to tell us so that we can address these concerns and try to put things right.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our residents, service users and any person or group of people who are affected by an activity or service conducted by the Association can raise their complaint and have it thoroughly investigated and resolved in a timely manner.
- 1.3 Adherence to this policy will ensure that we are fair and consistent in how complaints are investigated and that we respond in a structured and timely manner.
- 1.4 My Space Housing Solutions welcomes complaints as a means of identifying recurring problems and areas of policy and practice requiring improvement. This policy outlines the way complaints will be managed within the Association. It defines what we mean by a complaint, the action we will take to resolve complaints, and the way we will monitor the service improvements we need to make or good practice we can share.
- 1.5 As members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, we commit to following the Housing Ombudsman Dispute Resolution principles of being fair, putting things right and learning from outcomes. We will at all times co-operate with the Housing Ombudsman or other regulatory body with responsibilities for oversight of complaints handling.
- 1.6 We acknowledge that customers and other stakeholders may wish to make comments or suggestions for improvements to our services which we will consider and respond to.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all services delivered by My Space Housing Solutions.
- 2.2 Where complaints are made in respect of third parties contracted by My Space, we will manage the complaint in line with this policy and conduct a full investigation and provide a response.

3. Definitions

3.1 What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as, "An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents."

3.2 What is a comment?

A comment is defined as, "A comment about the services we provide or a suggestion for service improvement." This will include feedback from customers who disagree with a policy provisions and will be used to inform policy reviews.

3.3 What is a service request?

A service request is defined as, "A request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right." Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.

4. Exclusions to this policy

4.1 Not every matter can be addressed through this policy. The list below is not an exhaustive list but are examples of when this policy will not apply;

4.1.1 An initial request or follow-up request for a service e.g. reporting a repair

4.1.2 If there is another means of managing and addressing concerns, for example;

- a. The ending of a tenancy, appealing a warning, or appealing an allocation decision (this will be dealt with in accordance with the Tenant Appeals policy)
- b. Complaints about your neighbour causing noise, nuisance, harassment or anti-social behaviour (this will be dealt with in accordance with the Anti-social Behaviour Management policy)
- c. Where legal proceedings have started for the issue being complained about and a Claim Form and Particulars of Claim have been filed at court.

4.1.3 If a complaint is about an issue that took place more than 12 months ago. If the problem is a recurring issue we will consider any previous reports as part of the background to your complaint.

4.1.4 If the complaint is the same or has only minor differences to one that has been progressed through each stage of the complaints process previously, we will advise that the matter is closed.

4.1.5 Personnel matters including issues of employment.

5. How to provide feedback

5.1 Complaints can be made in the following ways:

- a. In person to one of our employees;
- b. By telephone to our Head Office on 01204 694154;
- c. Online using the complaint form on our website
<https://myspacehousing.org/complaint-form/> ;
- d. By email to complaints@myspacehousing.org
- e. By post addressed to Complaints Team, My Space Housing Solutions, Derwent Suite, Paragon Business Park, Chorley New Road, Horwich, Bolton, BL6 6HG

- 5.2 Comments and compliments can be made in the following ways:
- a. In person to one of our employees;
 - b. By telephone to our Head Office on 01204 694154;
 - c. By email to info@myspacehousing.org
 - d. By post addressed to HR Manager, My Space Housing Solutions, Derwent Suite, Paragon Business Park, Chorley New Road, Horwich, Bolton, BL6 6HG
- 5.3 Complaints made anonymously will be investigated as far as is possible in line with this policy however it is acknowledged that there may be a limit to data gathering and a limit to the ability to provide a response to the complainant.
- 5.4 On occasions where the same complaint is made about the same issue by a number of people, a request for a lead complainant to be named will be made, with correspondence addressed to the lead complainant on the group's behalf.

6. Accessibility

- 6.1 Where support is required to make a complaint, this will be provided by My Space Housing Solutions, or if preferred, complainants can seek assistance through external agencies, for example Citizens Advice.
- 6.2 Where a complainant requests to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, such as a carer, family member, friend, or advocate, written permission will be sought to communicate with someone other than the complainant before any information can be shared.
- 6.3 A complainant may contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time throughout the course of their complaint being progressed through our internal processes for advice and support. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted in the following ways:
- a. Telephone: 0300 111 3000
 - b. Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
 - c. Online: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
 - d. By post: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ
- 6.4 If assistance is required by way of provision of information in an accessible format or a translation of information is required, My Space Housing Solutions will make this available in accordance with our accessibility policy.

7. The Complaints Process

- 7.1 Every effort will be made to resolve an issue at the first point of contact however, where this is not possible or where the individual is dissatisfied with our handling of the initial comment, or a complaints is identified as such, the complaints process will begin.
- 7.2 All complaints irrespective of how they are received into the company will be overseen by the Complaints Handling Team.
- 7.3 The Complaints Officers will:
- a. Act sensitively and fairly;

- b. Have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints;
- c. Have the authority to resolve complaints quickly and fairly.

7.4 My Space Housing Solutions has a two-stage complaints process.

7.5 Where complainants' behaviour becomes unacceptable during the course of investing and reviewing a complaint, the processes outlined in the Company Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy will be commenced.

7.6 **Stage One**

7.6.1 The complaint will be logged and acknowledged within five working days of receipt. The five working days will begin the day after the complaint is received.

7.6.2 An investigation will commence into the complaint and a full written response will be provided within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

7.6.3 The response will detail the findings of the investigation and the details of any remedial actions where necessary and dates for commencement of works where this is required.

7.6.4 There may be circumstances where we are unable to meet the above timescales. If it is anticipated that there will be a delay in providing a written response, notification of this will be sent in writing, advising of the new response date.

7.7 **Stage Two**

7.7.1 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response at Stage One, they have the right to escalate their complaint to Stage Two.

7.7.2 The complainant has 20 working days from the date of the issue of the Stage One outcome to escalate their complaint to Stage Two.

7.7.3 It is not a requirement of the complainant to outline their reasons for escalation.

7.7.4 The request to escalate will be logged and acknowledged within five working days of receipt. The five working days will begin the day after the complaint is received.

7.7.5 The complaint review will be completed by the Complaints Officer and a senior manager.

7.7.6 A written response will be sent within 20 working days of the escalation being acknowledged.

7.7.7 Where a delay to meeting the above timescales is anticipated, this will be communicated to the complainant with the reasons why, and a new response date provided which is no longer than 30 working days from the date the escalation was acknowledged.

7.7.8 Once the response is provided to the complainant, save for any remedial actions being completed, this concludes the My Space Housing Solutions' Complaints Handling process.

7.7.9 The response will include the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint and wish to escalate their case to Ombudsman's complaint handling investigation processes.

7.8 Extensions

7.8.1 Reasons as to why we are unable to meet the dates outlined in 7.5 and 7.6 above may include:

7.8.1.1 Where more information is required from the complainant to fully investigate their complaint;

7.8.1.2 Where the complainant is not available to discuss the complaint;

7.8.1.3 Where My Space is unable to gain access to a site or property to complete an investigation into the issues detailed in the complaint;

7.8.1.4 Where a third party or contractor is not available.

7.9 Discretion not to escalate a complaint

7.9.1 The stages of the complaints process are sequential and the complaint will be dealt with fully under each stage. There is no right to skip to a specific stage of the process.

7.9.2 My Space Housing Solutions will not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint to the next stage of the process.

7.9.3 There may be exceptional circumstances where, at the discretion of executive management, there is a refusal to escalate the complaint to Stage Two. The reasons for this may include;

7.9.3.1 The resolution required by the complainant is, in the reasonable opinion of the executive manager, outside of the remit of My Space Housing Solutions or is considered excessive given the service failure.

7.9.3.2 The complaint is considered closed or refused in line with the circumstances identified at section 4 of this policy.

7.9.4 Where this is the case, the reasons will be confirmed in writing to the complainant and the complaint will be considered closed.

7.10 Closing a complaint

7.10.1 A complaint will be considered closed under the following circumstances:

- 7.10.1.1 After requesting information from the complainant to support the investigation and not receiving a response, or the complainant refusing to engage in the process.
- 7.10.1.2 After sending a response and there is no further contact with the complainant after 20 working days from the date of the response.
- 7.10.1.3 When a resolution is agreed and any agreed actions are completed.
- 7.10.1.4 When a Stage Two investigation is complete, the final response is sent, and all resolution actions have been completed.

8. Putting things right

- 8.1 My Space Housing Solutions will ensure that any remedy offered as an outcome to a complaint reflects the extent of any and all service failures and the detriment caused to the complainant as a result. This shall include, as appropriate:
 - 8.1.1 Acknowledging where things have gone wrong and apologising;
 - 8.1.2 Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
 - 8.1.3 Taking action if there has been a delay;
 - 8.1.4 Reconsidering or changing a decision;
 - 8.1.5 Amending a record;
 - 8.1.6 Changing policies, procedures or practices; and
 - 8.1.7 Providing financial compensation
- 8.2 Financial compensation will be considered and awarded in line with the Compensation policy following senior management approval.

9. Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

- 9.1 Regular monitoring and reporting on the types of complaints received will be completed and shared with the senior leadership team and Board of Trustees to inform improvements to the service we provide and our processes.
- 9.2 Themes and trends are assessed to identify any systemic issues, serious risks or areas for improvement.
- 9.3 Lessons learned will support revision of policies and procedures and inform learning objectives for our staff and contractors.
- 9.4 My Space Housing Solutions will conduct self-assessment annually against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and publish this report on our website.

- 9.5 Data on wider learning and improvements made in response to feedback will be included in our annual report.
- 9.6 This policy will be reviewed not less than every three years or in line with regulatory or legislative requirements, or an update to best practice.

10. Regulation and Legislation

- 10.1 The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard of the Regulator for Social Housing requires My Space Housing Solutions to have a complaints policy and process that is simple and accessible.
- 10.2 Landlords have an obligation to publish a complaints policy in accordance with the terms of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and 2024 complaint handling code and to co-operate with the Ombudsman in its investigation of complaints referred to it.
- 10.3 This policy is written in line with the following legislation:
 - a. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
 - b. General Data Protection Regulation
 - c. Equality Act 2010
- 10.4 The following My Space policies are linked to the complaints policy:
 - a. Safeguarding policy
 - b. Anti-social Behaviour Management policy
 - c. Compensation policy
 - d. Reasonable Adjustments policy
 - e. Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy
 - f. Health and Safety policies
 - g. HR and Staff Management policies

11. Equality Impact Assessment

Assessment for this Policy	Yes	No	Please explain
Is it likely that the policy could have a positive or negative impact on minority ethnic groups? What evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Yes	No	The practice of the policy does not take into account ethnicity and so this would not be impacted by this policy.
Is it likely that the policy could have a positive or negative impact due to gender including pregnancy and maternity? What evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Yes	No	The practice of the policy does not take into account ethnicity and so this would not be impacted by this policy.
Is it likely that the policy could have a positive or negative impact due to disability? What evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Yes	No	Reasonable Adjustments would be made to ensure all have access to this policy and its processes.

Is it likely that the policy could have a positive or negative impact due to sexual orientation? What evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Yes	No	The practice of the policy does not take into account ethnicity and so this would not be impacted by this policy.
Is it likely that the policy could have a positive or negative impact due to age? What evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Yes	No	The practice of the policy does not take into account ethnicity and so this would not be impacted by this policy.
Is it likely that the policy could have a positive or negative impact due to religion or belief (or none)? What evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Yes	No	The practice of the policy does not take into account ethnicity and so this would not be impacted by this policy.
Is it likely that the policy could have a positive or negative impact due to gender identity? What evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Yes	No	The practice of the policy does not take into account ethnicity and so this would not be impacted by this policy.
Is it likely that the policy could have a positive or negative impact due to marital or civil partnership status? What evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Yes	No	The practice of the policy does not take into account ethnicity and so this would not be impacted by this policy.
Can any adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for a particular group? (For example, the policy may be deliberately designed to promote equality for disabled people but may run the risk of this being at the expense of non-disabled people which is permissible under law)	Yes	No	All individuals are encouraged to use the complaints policy and its process with no treatment being favourable to any group.
Has this policy been amended or developed in the last review in order to promote equality of opportunity for any particular group? (Please note any changes made)	Yes	No	The policy has been updated to reflect the Reasonable Adjustments policy and My Space's commitment to ensure accessibility to all.
Has this policy been amended or developed in the last review to take account of changes in legislation, statutory guidance or accepted good practice?	Yes	No	Changes to the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards and the updated Housing Ombudsman's 2024 Complaint Handling Code have informed the policy and process.