



Council Housing Complaints Policy

October 2020

Policy Statement and Aims

When responding to complaints the Council Housing team follow the Lancaster City Council complaints policy.

This document summarises how we handle complaints within the Council Housing service, whilst adhering to the governing standards set by the Housing Ombudsman.

We provide housing services for thousands of tenants and customers every year. At times we get things wrong and fail to meet the standards we aim to achieve. We welcome feedback, including complaints from those affected by our work

We aim to:

- Resolve complaints raised by our customers quickly.
- Resolve complaints to the satisfaction of our customers whenever possible.
- Use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements

We are dedicated to ensuring that our complaint handling process is customer friendly, enabling our residents and members of the wider community to be heard and understood. This begins by everyone understanding what a complaint is.

What is a complaint?

We adhere to the Housing Ombudsman's universal definition; therefore, we consider a complaint to be:

"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"

When will we not investigate a complaint?

In line with the wider Council's complaints policy (Sept 2019), Council Housing exclude the following from the complaints process.

- Day to day service requests or reporting faults (for example a repair).
- Criticisms or disagreement with council policies.
- Complaints against individual employees which arise from dissatisfaction with a council policy or decision, and where no other basis for the complaint exists.
- Appeals against any council advice, actions or decisions in its capacity as a regulator where a statutory right of appeal or other council appeals/review procedure exists.
- Appeals concerning a matter where an alternative appeals/review procedure exists, such as an appeal within the council or to an independent tribunal (e.g. the awarding of Housing Benefits).
- A matter which is, or could be reasonably be expected to be, the subject of Court or tribunal proceedings, or which is in hands of the council's insurers. Challenge of a Council or Committee decision would generally be by way of Judicial Review.
- Complaints which constitute a refusal to accept a rule of law which the council is applying.

Making a complaint

Either you or another person (friend, relative, adviser etc.) can make a complaint on your behalf. However, if you're complaining on behalf of someone, their full name and address along with a signed [Consent for Third Party Complaints Form \(PDF, 22KB\)](#)

Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. If you prefer to talk to someone in person, a meeting can be arranged and a friend, relative or other representative can come with you if you wish. Alternatively, you can also use our online Talk Back form – which can be found [here](#).

You can make a complaint anonymously and we will consider your complaint, but a detailed investigation will not normally be carried out.

All information about you or anyone involved in the complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

How your complaint will be handled

We welcome feedback and complaints, we view these as opportunities to listen, learn and influence change in our services. Speaking out will not bring negative consequences and there will be no reprisals for those who do.

We feel all frontline staff should feel empowered to resolve problems at the point of service delivery without having to resort to the formal complaints process. If a complaint cannot be resolved at the point of the service provision, then the staff member should deal with it as a formal complaint.

We operate a two-stage system for handling formal complaints. Stage one handles the initial complaint and its response from the council. Whereas step two is for complaints that are escalated should you feel unhappy with the initial stage one response

Stage One

- Once a complaint is raised; you will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.
- We will provide a full response in 10 working days, from the receipt of the complaint.
- If this is not possible, you will be contacted with an and an estimated timescale
- Responses will be provided in writing and state how to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 if you are unhappy with the response

Stage Two

- Once you have requested your complaint be raised to Stage Two; you will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.
- We will provide a full response in 20 working days, from the receipt of the complaint. And if this is not possible, you will be contacted with an and an estimated timescale
- Responses will be provided in writing and outline what to do if you are still not satisfied with the response.

Should you still feel your complaint has not been resolved these are the next steps available to you:

Housing Ombudsman

- If you have been through the appeal process and are still unhappy, you can ask the Independent Housing Ombudsman to investigate your complaint.
- You must wait 8 weeks after receiving the Stage 2 response before contacting the Housing Ombudsman.
- Contact details for the Independent Housing Ombudsman can be found at [housing-ombudsman.org.uk](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk).

Regulator of Social Housing

- If you have been through the appeal process and the complaint relates to 'serious detriment', you are able to raise this with the Regulator of Social Housing.
- Such complaints can only be taken up through a third party such a tenants' group, a councillor or an MP. You will be given appropriate assistance and advice should you wish to follow this route.

Equality

We are committed to respecting equality and diversity in all aspects of our work and will treat customers with fairness and respect and ensure that our services are accessible for all.