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1. Overview

Redditch Co-operative Homes is a partnership between the 5 Neighbourhood Co-operatives, GreensquareAccord Ltd and Redditch Borough Council.

We exist to meet the greatest need in society through building better lives. We do this as a tenant-focused landlord.

We empower people through tenant-led, co-operative and mutual housing – creating diverse neighbourhoods where each individual, family and community has the best opportunities to live independently. We create quality homes and sustainable communities where people can enjoy happiness, health and prosperity – the vital foundations for successful and fulfilling lives.

Our Complaints Policy ensures you have easy access to tell us when things go wrong, so we can promptly address concerns and improve our services. When we receive your complaint we want to show you we:

- ◆ care about your complaint
- ◆ can be trusted to act on the feedback you give us
- ◆ are committed to improving the quality and delivery of our services.

2. Aims and Objectives

We recognise sometimes things can go wrong and you may not always be happy with the level or type of service you receive from us. How we manage complaints when we receive them is important to improving our service delivery, and achieving high levels of satisfaction in all we do.

We value complaints as a form of feedback together with compliments and survey responses. All feedback we receive helps us to understand what you value most, and which parts of our service provision we need to maintain, change or improve.



We want the service we offer you to be fair, consistent, and easy to access and to achieve our aims, we follow and meet a set of service standards which are:

- ◆ Enabling you to raise your complaints in any way you prefer and with any of our colleagues
- ◆ Ensuring all colleagues are aware of our complaints process and are empowered to take responsibility and ownership for complaints
- ◆ Treating you with respect and responding positively to complaints
- ◆ Giving you clear information about how you can make a complaint. This includes making it easy for you to give us feedback by accepting complaints in a range of ways including in person, by phone, email, letter. We will investigate complaints in the same way regardless of how you make them
- ◆ Accepting your view that you have a genuine complaint and make you feel we are taking it seriously; considering the individual circumstances and understanding what you want to see happen because of your complaint
- ◆ Handling complaints positively, fairly and within agreed timeframes and offering apologies and resolutions at the first point of contact wherever possible
- ◆ Ensuring you are aware of your rights to access the relevant Ombudsman. For Landlord services this includes the Housing Ombudsman and any other relevant regulatory services. Contact details of these organisations are included in Appendix 1.
- ◆ Keeping you informed of how your complaint is progressing, any actions agreed and the outcomes following our investigations
- ◆ Ensuring any action agreed to resolve a complaint is taken
- ◆ Respecting confidentiality and ensuring we manage complaints in accordance with Data Protection legislation
- ◆ Ensuring good, clear records of complaints are made and kept, actions are taken, and lessons are learnt using all feedback to improve our future service delivery
- ◆ Monitoring, analysing and publishing information on complaints performance for you and colleagues.
- ◆ We will not:
 - pressure, intimidate or discourage you from making a complaint by suggesting or giving an impression there may be a comeback which affects the service you receive from us.
 - create any barriers to making or chasing a complaint by insisting complaints can only be made in writing for example.

3. Policy scope and exclusions

This Policy is adopted by all 5 neighbourhood co-operatives, Breedon Housing Co-operative, Redditch Co-operative 2000, Pioneer Co-operative Housing, Riverside Housing Co-operative and Winyates Co-op. This policy applies to anyone who has been affected by us, our homes or our services which includes:

- ◆ Current, former and potential members (including shared owners and leaseholders)
- ◆ Suppliers and contractors
- ◆ Partner agencies

Family members, health workers, MPs, local councillors or other advocates and those with legal Power of Attorney or acting as a Court of Protection appointed Deputy making a complaint on someone's behalf, providing the member has authorised in writing for them to do so.

Policy exclusions

We do not have a blanket exclusion policy and will consider all complaints individually. The following are exclusion categories we will consider.

- ◆ Service requests which are defined later in this policy
- ◆ The cause for complaint happened over 12 months ago although we may choose to apply discretion where there is good reason to do so
- ◆ Legal proceedings have started where details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.
- ◆ Any issues which have already been fully investigated through this policy and its associated procedure.
- ◆ Anything connected to the way in which we process personal data; this would be managed by our Data Protection team.
- ◆ Reports of anti social behaviour, nuisance, hate crime or harassment as these are covered by our Co-operative Living Policy.
- ◆ Dissatisfaction with lettings policy decisions, as these are covered by our Lettings & Waiting List Policy.
- ◆ Compensation claims - the reason for claiming compensation may need investigation as a complaint, however the compensation claim itself is considered in line with our Compensation Policy and Guidelines. Members should be aware that the rules of their Co-operative prohibit them from receiving financial gain from being a member.
- ◆ Anonymous reports, although these may be investigated if they are a cause for concern
- ◆ Complaints about matters outside our control including legislation, government or local authority policy, a contract, tenancy agreement or lease for example
- ◆ A consultation petition or objections to building work or planning applications.

When a decision is made not to deal with an issue through our complaints process, the full reasons for this will be clearly explained to you and, for landlord services, you will be advised of your right to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service regarding our decision not to investigate.

Where issues raised are excluded from this policy, we will ensure feedback is captured and used when this policy is reviewed.

An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, although you can ask us to raise the matter as a complaint if you wish.

Negative comments or messages on social media do not need to be tracked or logged as complaints although it may be appropriate to signpost customers to our complaint process

4. Roles, Responsibilities and Duties

This policy applies to all RCH Neighbourhood Co-operatives and RCH Colleagues and is approved by our 5 Co-operative Committees to ensure it is current and complies with our legal and moral obligations.

In line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code, there are two roles with defined responsibility for complaints handling:

Role	Remit	Our arrangements
Senior Lead responsible for complaint handling	This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Elected Co-operative Committees
Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC'); a member of the governing body	Lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. The MRC is responsible for ensuring the Co-operative Committees have information that provides insight on complaint handling.	RCH Locality Manager

5. Definitions

The Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code effective 1 April 2024 defines a complaint 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.'

You might contact us to complain about being unhappy because we have:



- ◆ done something badly or wrong
- ◆ done something we should not have done
- ◆ failed to do something we should have done
- ◆ treated you unfairly or without respect
- ◆ failed to deliver what was promised

and we want to:

- ◆ put things right for you as soon as possible
- ◆ say sorry when we need to and
- ◆ learn from our mistakes.

You do not have to use the word 'complaint' and if you express dissatisfaction we must offer you the choice to make a complaint unless our policy exclusions apply. A complaint made by a third party or representative on your behalf will also be handled in line with this policy, subject to the relevant written consents being in place.

As guided by the Housing Ombudsman, we recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. The Ombudsman defines a service request as:

'a request requiring action to be taken to put something right'.

Examples of service requests include when you ask us:

- to complete to a repair
- to carry out a damp and mould inspection
- for information on service charges
- for a change to the menu of Care & Support services
- to record and act on a report of anti-social behaviour.

Although service requests are not complaints, it is important we record and action them within our published timescales. If you are dissatisfied we failed to complete a service request or did not complete it to the required standard this will be recorded as a complaint.

Some examples are shown below:

Contact	Service Request or Complaint
My neighbours are keeping me up all night playing loud music	Service request - this will be passed to a Housing Officer and will be managed through our anti social behaviour (ASB) procedure.
I reported ASB to my Housing Officer six	Complaint - the first contact to report the ASB

weeks ago. They told me they would come and see me, but I haven't heard anything and it's getting worse.	was a service request and the member is dissatisfied we did not complete the agreed action.
My heating is not working	Service request – we will make an appointment for our heating team to attend.
You should see the mess the plumber has left behind; it will take me ages to clean this up.	Complaint - this is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service we have delivered.

If you express dissatisfaction with our response to the service request you can make a complaint even if the handling of your service request is ongoing. We will continue our efforts to resolve your service request if you raise a complaint.

6. Our Policy

Effective complaint handling enables our customers to be heard and understood. We will ensure we have a clear and accessible complaints process you can understand.

In line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code we have a two stage complaint process which is overseen by the elected Co-operative Committees.

At each stage of our complaints process, we will:

- handle complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind
- give you a fair chance to set out your position
- take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
- consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

We have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to quickly and which require further investigation.

In determining this, we will consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether you are vulnerable or at risk. Most Stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly by giving you an explanation, saying sorry and providing a resolution if one is needed.

When something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have already taken, or intend to take, to put things right. These will include:

- saying sorry
- acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
- providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons
- acting if there has been delay.



Dependent on the complaint, other actions may be:

- reconsidering or changing a decision
- amending a record or adding a correction
- changing policies, procedures, or practices.

Our remedy offer will clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with you where appropriate. It will consider the impact on you of any fault identified. And for our landlord services, we will consider the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

We will ensure this policy is applied fairly and consistently to all our customers and in accordance with our values and the principles contained in our internal policies. We will consider our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of customers who may need to access the complaints process.

Examples of the reasonable adjustments we may make in complaint handling are:

- using your communication preference for the duration of the complaint, for example contacting you by email
- Extension of any time limits where it is lawful to do so
- Providing information in alternative formats for example easy read, large print or on coloured paper.
- Meeting you in locations appropriate to your needs for example where a hearing loop is available.

When investigating complaints, we will identify if you have any individual needs or vulnerabilities we should have considered in reviewing how we delivered our service to you. If your needs change, please let us know and we will update our records appropriately.

An Equality Impact assessment has been completed and the outcome of the evaluation is that this policy has no significant negative impact on any group of members who have a protected characteristic. The likelihood and any impact felt by all members will continue to be assessed as part of the policy's scheduled reviews.

8. Monitoring and Reporting

We will monitor and analyse the numbers of exchanges made for each Co-operative. The monitoring and analysis we do helps us to ensure that:



- Our process is being managed in a fair, consistent and appropriate way
- Our process does not discriminate against any group in society
- Our policy and procedure are fit for purpose
- complaint volumes and resolution stages are tracked and trends are identified
- we achieve our timescales and deliver our resolution promises
- lessons learnt are shared and used to reduce complaints and improve services
- our colleague training programme is appropriate
- feedback is given to colleagues on good and poor areas of performance

This policy will be reviewed on a three year basis, unless there are significant prior changes in legislation or there are found to be any gaps within its ability to meet the needs of the co-operatives.

9. Legal and regulatory framework

This Policy is designed to comply with our legal and regulatory responsibilities.

For our landlord services this policy falls within the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard of the Regulator of Social Housing's Regulatory Framework - Consumer Standards.

This requires we must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.

Specific expectations are:

- ◆ Registered providers must ensure their approach to handling complaints is simple, accessible and publicised.
- ◆ Registered providers must provide accessible information to tenants about:
 - how tenants can make a complaint about their registered provider
 - the registered provider's complaints policy and complaints handling process
 - what tenants can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how a complaint was handled
 - the type of complaints received and how they have learnt from complaints to continuously improve services.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 empowered the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice about the procedures members of the scheme should have in place for considering complaints. It also placed a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with this code. The statutory Complaint Handling Code took effect from 1 April 2024 and the Housing Ombudsman duty to monitor compliance began at the same time.

You have the right to contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage of our complaints process.

When we provide you with our Stage 1 complaint response we will give you information on how you can escalate your complaint to Stage 2 if you remain unhappy and give you the contact details for the Ombudsman should you wish to seek further advice about your complaint.

If you escalate your complaint to Stage 2 we will signpost you to the Ombudsman in our response as you can take your complaint to them for investigation if you consider the issues have not been resolved after using our procedure. The Housing Ombudsman's contact details are also available in Appendix 1

10. Communication, Training and Implementation

The policy is communicated to all colleagues and elected Co-operative Committee Members who are directly or indirectly involved in delivering our services. All RCH staff will implement the policy on behalf of the 5 neighbourhood co-operatives and RCH as a Service provider.

11. Information sharing and confidentiality

We will provide information as required in line with relevant law and regulation.

We collect information (personal data) to enable us to:

- ◆ manage and support our relationship with you to comply with legal obligations
- ◆ improve our services
- ◆ achieve our legitimate business aims

We are committed to complying with data protection legislation when handling your data. You have rights including access to your data and to object to the way it is processed. For more information on how and why we process your data and how you can exercise your rights please view our full Privacy Policy on our website at Privacy notice – GreenSquareAccord.

Appendix 1: Contact Details

Complaints relating to Landlord services

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk