



Complaints Policy

January 2021

MONITORING, APPROVAL AND REVIEW	
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Version No/Date	No 2.3 – January 2021
Version Notes	This is an amendment to the existing policy to include recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice.
Publication	- Public/Published (available on Website)
Consultation	Asset Team Income Collection Neighbourhood Services Property Care Legal Services Neighbourhood Care Care Customer Consultation-including Customer Voice Panel
Equality Analysis	To be completed
Approved by	Board
Approval date	March 2021
Review Frequency	The Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or in line with legislative or regulatory changes.

Complaints Policy

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1. Purpose of this Policy?

1.1 First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) understands that on occasions customers may not be satisfied with the level of service they have received and that complaints will sometimes be made. Complaints provide an opportunity to understand what customers want from and feel about the services provided. Complaints are also a key source of feedback and provide FCHO with vital intelligence on the performance and reputation of the organisation. The purpose of this policy is to enable customers to express dissatisfaction about the standard of service received or action or lack of action by FCHO. The Aims of the policy are to:

- ❖ Provide clear and accessible information about the complaints process
- ❖ Explain the different ways customers can make a complaint
- ❖ Explain how customers can challenge decisions and have their complaint escalated if a resolution is not reached
- ❖ Explain the ways in which complaints will be resolved
- ❖ To deal with any dissatisfaction efficiently and effectively

2. FCHO approach to complaints

FCHO adopts a positive culture towards complaints and recognise complaints as a learning opportunity to improve services to customers. This is achieved by:

- ❖ Ensuring the Board, Leadership Team and Managers maintain a clear focus on achieving positive outcomes and learning from complaints
- ❖ Providing open and transparent processes, which are accessible to customers
- ❖ Ensuring expectations are properly managed
- ❖ Aiming to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity
- ❖ Ensuring colleagues understand their roles and responsibilities and have the authority to resolve complaints
- ❖ Ensuring that colleagues who deal with complaints are appropriately trained

3. The Policy

The Policy applies to expressions of dissatisfaction or complaints made about FCHO services and colleagues.

3.2 The definition of a complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own colleagues, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers. It also includes a complaint about performance against the regulatory standards.

We are unable to accept a complaint if:

- ❖ It relates to a first-time request for a service
- ❖ Legal proceedings are pending or have started, or where there is a legal solution
- ❖ It relates to an issue that has occurred due to an Act of God e.g. high winds
- ❖ It relates to reports about neighbour nuisance and/or antisocial behaviour (this will be dealt with under the Antisocial Behaviour Policy)
- ❖ It is determined that the demands are aggressive or unreasonably persistent

3.3 How customers can complain

FCHO request that customers complain within 6 months of the incident occurring to allow the matter to be resolved in a timely manner. FCHO offer a range of ways in which customers can make a complaint:

- ❖ **Online** – by filling in a complaint form
- ❖ **By phone** – 0161 393 7117 - lines are open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
- ❖ **By post** – FCHO Tellus, First Place, 22 Union Street, Oldham, OL1 1BE
- ❖ **In person** – First Place, 22 Union Street, Oldham, OL1 1BE, current opening hours can be found on the website
- ❖ Or via direct message on Facebook or Twitter – customers who contact us via this channel will be asked to share their contact details via private message to ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained.

If a customer has expressed dissatisfaction via any method of communication, FCHO will contact them to discuss their feedback in more detail and provide them with a resolution or an explanation of the next steps they can take. If the feedback is anonymous, a record of it will be kept for performance purposes only

When making a complaint customers should provide the following information:

- ❖ Name and address
- ❖ A contact number and/or e-mail address
- ❖ A description of concerns and any relevant reference numbers
- ❖ What the customer would like FCHO to do to put things right

FCHO will accept complaints from advocates acting on behalf of another customer when written consent is provided and where that customer has a right to complain.

3.4 How will FCHO aim to resolve complaints?

FCHO recognise that sometimes things go wrong or do not meet the levels of service that customers expect. FCHO operate a two-stage process which seeks to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity.

Stage 1 – Make it right

FCHO will always aim to resolve complaints by putting things right as quickly as possible; this process is called “making it right”. As part of this process, a customer’s complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt, by an agreed method. The customer will then be contacted to discuss their

complaint in more detail; the complaint will be investigated, and a response provided within 7 working days from receipt of the complaint. The response will include the agreed outcome(s) and any timescales for resolution. When FCHO have delivered the outcome(s), the customer will receive written confirmation that their complaint has been resolved. We aim to resolve all stage 1 complaints within 7 working days. If more time is required to carry out the investigation and provide a response, the customer will be contacted, and a revised response date agreed.

FCHO aim to satisfactorily resolve customers complaints at stage 1. If no response is heard from the customer within 7 working days from the date the stage 1 response letter was e-mailed / posted FCHO will assume the complaint is closed.

Stage 2 – Investigating your complaint

If FCHO are unable to resolve a complaint to the customer's satisfaction at the "Make it right" stage, a customer can ask to escalate their complaint to the next stage, 'Investigating your complaint'. Complaints escalated to the 'Investigating your Complaint' stage will be acknowledged within 2 working days. At this stage the complaint will be escalated to a senior manager or Head of Service for a review of the complaint and original investigation and should include contact with the customer (e.g., by telephone/email or face to face) as a matter of course. This includes providing the customer with an opportunity to comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. A full response will be provided within 15 working days from receipt of the complaint. The response will include the agreed outcome(s) and any timescales for resolution. When FCHO have delivered the outcome(s), the customer will receive a resolution letter. We aim to resolve all stage 2 complaints within 15 working days. If more time is required to carry out the investigation and provide a response, the customer will be contacted, and a revised response date agreed.

We are unable to escalate a complaint if:

- ❖ Legal proceedings are pending or have started, or where there is a legal solution
- ❖ It relates to an issue that has occurred due to an Act of God e.g. high winds
- ❖ It relates to reports about neighbour nuisance and/or antisocial behaviour (this will be dealt with under the Antisocial Behaviour Policy)
- ❖ It is determined that the demands are aggressive or unreasonably persistent

Housing Ombudsman Service

If the customer remains dissatisfied after the stage 2 review, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service. FCHO will provide advice on access to the Housing Ombudsman Service at each stage of the complaints process.

Housing Ombudsman Address:
Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ
Telephone Number: 0300 111 3000
E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Designated Person Customers can also ask a “designated person” to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service on their behalf. The customer must have exhausted all the stages of FCHO’s Complaints Policy; they do not have to wait 8 weeks before taking this approach. A designated person is an MP or Councillor. Details of elected members in Oldham can be found on Oldham Council’s website www.oldham.gov.uk.

3.5 **Complaint Remedies**

There are a number of ways in which FCHO will consider resolving customers complaints, including taking action to restore the complainant to the position they would have been in had there not been a failure in service. These remedies include but are not limited to:

- ❖ An apology and explanation
- ❖ A specific action or correction of an error within timescales
- ❖ A review of policy and procedures- customers will be informed of any changes
- ❖ Additional training for colleagues
- ❖ Offering financial compensation, where appropriate, through FCHO’s Recompense Policy

3.6 **Learning from the outcome of complaints**

FCHO aims to learn lessons from the outcome of complaints in order to improve the services delivered to customers. This is achieved by:

- ❖ Reviewing the outcomes of complaints to identify service delivery improvements
- ❖ Capturing and recording satisfaction levels with the complaints process, including how complaints have been handled, to ensure a positive experience for customers
- ❖ Reporting this information through governance channels and the Customer Voice Panel to ensure there is a focus on continuous improvement

3.7 **Self-assessment and compliance**

We will carry out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.

We will also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures. Following each self-assessment, we will:

- ❖ report the outcome of our self-assessment to our Board

- ❖ Publish the outcome of our assessment on our website
- ❖ Include the self-assessment in our annual report section on complaints handling performance

3.8 Media Enquiries

All media enquiries will be dealt with via the FCHO Marketing and Communications Team communications@fcho.co.uk.

3.9 Roles and Responsibilities

The **Customer Excellence Team** co-ordinate all complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction. The Customer Excellence Team will:

- ❖ Work in partnership with internal colleagues to ensure a full resolution of customer complaints
- ❖ Escalate complaints to senior managers / Heads of Service if a resolution cannot be reached at “Make it Right” stage 1
- ❖ Produce a weekly complaints report identifying current complaints
- ❖ Liaise with the customer to agree a resolution

Complaints Champions - Support the Customer Excellence Officer to provide the customer with a right first time answer to their complaint.

Manager / Heads of Service – Investigate customer complaints at the “Investigation Stage” ensuring a full review of the complaint has taken place in line with the policy.

4. Monitoring Performance

Performance on complaints will be reported on a monthly basis detailing delivery timescales and customer satisfaction against the performance measures detailed below. Performance will be monitored at the Internal Complaint Meeting.

Performance Measure	Target 20/21	Target 21/22	Target 22/23
Customer complaints acknowledged within timescales at stage 1 (2 working days)	100%	100%	100%
Customer complaints responded to within timescales at Stage 1 (7 working days)	95%	96%	97%
Customer complaints resolved within timescale at stage 1 (7 working days)	45%	50%	60%

Customer complaints acknowledged within timescales at stage 2 (2 working days)	100%	100%	100%
Customer complaints responded to within timescales at Stage 2 (15 working days)	95%	96%	97%
Customer complaints resolved within timescale at stage 2 (15 working days)	45%	50%	60%
Customers complaints resolved within 6 months (all stages)	100%	100%	100%
Customer satisfied with the outcome of their complaint	85%	87%	89%

5. Legislative or other Guidelines

This Complaints Policy ensures FCHO complies with the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice July 2020.

Links to First Choice Home's Strategic Delivery (SDP) Plan

This Policy links to the area of 'Excellent Landlord' within the Strategic Delivery Plan and could impact on the following measures:

KPIs:

Excellent Landlord - Percentage of overall satisfaction

Business Assurance - Compliance measure