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Complaints Policy

Title	Complaints Policy
Date Created	December 2018
Next Review Date	December 2021
Author	Christina Friedenthal
Approver	Board of Management – Approved January 2019
Applies to	CDS residents, Client landlords and client residents, non-residents

1 Introduction

CDS aims to provide an easy and non-confrontational way for our customers and others to let us know if they are unhappy with any aspect of our service. We endeavour always to provide a high-quality service in a fair way, but recognise that sometimes we get things wrong. We want to respond quickly, openly and effectively when this happens.

We will make sure it is easy to let us know about any service problem by:

- Ensuring our service users and others can make complaints /give feedback in a variety of ways including on the telephone, in person, by email, in writing and via our website
- Making complaints information available in alternative languages and formats upon request

2 Objectives

This policy aims to ensure:

- It is easy for customers or their representatives to complain if they are unhappy with the service that they receive
- Complaints are dealt with promptly and efficiently and complainants are listened to and treated fairly
- Complaints are responded to within a reasonable timeframe and in accordance with this policy
- Complaints are recorded and monitored for the purpose of improving services
- CDS fulfils its duty, as outlined in The Equality Act 2010, including making reasonable adjustments, where applicable, for those people with protected characteristics to ensure they receive the same services, as far as is possible, regardless of their status under the Act

3 Who can complain?

Our complaints policy is available and applies to everyone who receives or requests a service from CDS, others affected by our services or actions. Complainants may authorise a representative to act on their behalf at any point throughout the process. Eligible complainants could include

- CDS tenants
- CDS homeowners
- Members of client management committees
- People living in properties where we provide services
- Neighbours of CDS properties
- Councillors and MPs
- Legal representatives
- Citizen Advice Bureau staff and other similar advocacy agencies

4 What is a complaint?

We encourage our staff to be open to complaints. Our definition of 'a complaint' is "an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions of lack of action by the organisation, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual resident or client or a group of residents or clients. More specifically, this may include:

- Dissatisfaction with our policy or practice
- Failure to meet our legal duty as a landlord
- Dissatisfaction with the way we made a decision or with the actions taken in implementing that decision
- Complaints about CDS staff behaviour, performance or attitude
- Complaints about contractors or other representatives appointed by us
- Complaints about our administrative process, including delays in responding to your queries
- Failure to provide a service that we claim to offer
- Failure to achieve our published standards or quality of service

We are always keen to hear if customers or other service users are unhappy for any reason.

What is not covered by this Policy?

Except when doing so would be unreasonable under the Equalities Act 2010, CDS will not typically address the following under this complaints policy:

- Survey feedback, first notifications of problems or issues not intended as complaints or requests for service (eg. A repair notification or request for help with a noise problem)
- Issues that the complainant knew about more than six months before they complained and did not alert us to
- Issues that have already been responded to as a complaint and where no request for escalation is made within one calendar month of response or where the escalation process has been exhausted
- Matters that are being or have been dealt with via another resolution process (eg. Legal action, insurers or a tribunal)
- Complaints relating to the policies and procedures or actions of an independent client landlord. We do not have any authority in these matters, but we will make sure that complaints are forwarded to the client for their action and will let you know who the issue has been referred to
- Complaints relating to Government policy or which are otherwise outside our jurisdiction (eg. Utilities)

In the event a complaint is not eligible for review, the complainant will be notified of the reason.

5 Complaints from our Clients

If one of our clients has a complaint related to the terms or performance of the management (or other written) agreement with CDS, one of the client management committee members should raise this as a complaint with the Client Relationship Manager (CRM).

The CRM will investigate and seek to resolve any service issue and will provide a full written response within 20 working days. If the client remains unhappy with the response, they should then address their concerns through the disputes process set out in the management agreement.

If any resident of a client landlord – including a member of the management committee – has a complaint about the service they personally received from CDS or a CDS contractor, they can make a complaint to us through any method listed in Section 1 above. Where residents of our clients complain to us about the action, behaviour or inaction of their landlord, we will advise them how to direct that complaint to their landlord

6 Receiving a complaint

We want to know if customers or other service users are unhappy and we positively encourage staff to “hear” and capture complaints, whether or not a formal complaint is made. Staff will actively log dissatisfaction as a complaint so that it can be formally responded to in a timely way.

Complaints can be received via any media. Dissatisfaction raised publicly via social media will typically receive a broad public response, so everyone who may be affected can access the same information. When specific or individualised responses are appropriate, private communication through social media will be initiated where the complainant will be given the opportunity to have their issue considered formally and routed through this process.

We aim to resolve all informal complaints fairly, consistently and promptly at the first point of contact and within one working day. This is known as a Quick Fix. Where it is not possible to achieve this aim for any given reason, we will then treat it as a formal complaint and it will be passed to the relevant staff member to respond.

Stage	Next Steps / Task	Target Time for Response	Lead Officer
Quick Fix	An informal complaint that can be quickly resolved, with the response provided using any method of communication.	1 working day	Relevant Repairs, Housing or Client Services Officer
Stage 1	Acknowledgement provided following receipt of the formal complaint	2 working days	Executive Administrator or the staff member who received the complaint
	Written response provided – Anyone other than client landlords complaining about terms of the management agreement	10 working days from the date of receipt	The person responsible for the service area in question. If the complaint is specifically about that staff person, their manager will respond.
	Written response provided – Client landlords complaining about the terms of the management agreement	20 working days from the date of receipt	
Stage 2	If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome from Stage 1 then they can make a Stage 2 complaint within 1 calendar month of the Stage 1 outcome. Acknowledgement letter will be sent.	2 working days	Executive Administrator or the staff member who received the request to escalate
	Full response provided. This concludes the CDS internal complaints process.	20 working days	The manager of the person who responded to the Stage 1 complaint*

** Complaints about a Director will normally be considered by the Chief Executive. In exceptional circumstances the Chief Executive may, at her/his discretion, seek involvement from members of the Services Committee in reviewing or responding to these complaints. Where the subject of the complaint is the Chief Executive, the Chair of the Board will decide on the route for responding to the complaint.*

Throughout each stage of the informal / formal complaints process staff may speak to the complainant to:

- Ascertain why they are unhappy
- Find out what outcome they seek

During the investigation of the issues raised, staff will be honest and open about what we can / cannot do to meet the expectations of the person who has complained. They will provide a full written response to formal complaints within the timeframe above, which will set out specifically:

- Whether the complaint has been upheld fully, partially or not upheld
- Reasons for the decision made
- What action will be taken, including details of outstanding actions
- When this will be done
- The name of a lead officer to fulfil this promise (where action is proposed)
- How to escalate the matter if dissatisfied

If for any reason a full response cannot be provided within this timeframe, the respondent will write to the complainant to advise them when they can expect the full response to the issues that have been raised.

7 Designated Person / Housing Ombudsman Service

If at the end of the internal complaints process, once the Stage 2 response has been sent, the customer remains dissatisfied, they can:

- Refer their complaint to a 'Designated Person' as described in the Localism Act 2011 to assist in the resolution of the complaint at a local level, **or**
- give authority to the 'Designated Person' to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service immediately; **or**
- Wait 8 weeks following completion of CDS's internal complaints process and refer their case themselves to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

At the end of a Stage 2 response, the following wording will be included to ensure complainants understand their options:

You have now come to the end of our internal complaints process. If you remain dissatisfied with our response, you can now refer your complaint to a designated person including a local councillor or MP or

contact the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. For more information, please visit: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square
London E14 9GE
Tel:0300 111 3000

8 Monitoring and Compliance

We believe that complaints can help us to continually improve our services. We will aim to capture the lessons that we learn and identify the improvements that we make as a result of this feedback.

We will carry out a complaints review with the Services Committee of the CDS Board of Management at least once a year and publish an annual report to share information about complaints causes, outcomes and learning.

Version control

Date	Amendment	Version control
December 2018	Full policy review	v.2.3
November 2020	Updates based on HOS code	v.3