



homes, communities, cultures

# Complaints Policy

<b>Version #:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
Version 11	February 2017	Reduction from three stage to two stage with introduction of EOD's
Version 10	December 2013	Split from Procedure and Panel Guidance; other small changes.
Version 9	October 2013	Change to Proc
Version 8	March 2013	Changes required due to new legislation regarding Housing Ombudsman (Clause 1.9)
Version 7	October 2011	Change to Proc
Version 6	March 2011	Review of p&p and panel guidance following training from HOS, internal review with tenants and staff and reference to good practice
Version 5	August 2007	Recommendation of the Housing Ombudsman added; Clause 1.13 added
Version 4	May 2007	Clarification of 2.1
Version 3	February 2007	Change to Proc
Version 2	October 2006	Merging of two Pols & Procs
Version 1	February 2006	

# 1 Complaints Policy

- 1.1 Connect Housing Association is committed to the provision of a high quality service to our customers. However, there may be times when customers are dissatisfied with the level or type of service that they have received and wish to make a complaint.
- 1.2 We actively encourage complaints, comments and compliments. We use all customer feedback as an opportunity to learn about our strengths and to understand our weaknesses. This helps us to inform and improve the services that we deliver.
- 1.3 We give customers clear information about how they can make a complaint. Complaints can be made in person, by phone, e-mail or the Connect website, or by fax. We may suggest contacting someone independent to assist in making a complaint. We tell customers about other steps that they can take if they think that their complaint is not resolved.
- 1.4 Complaints can be made in any language. We provide translation and interpretation services to enable tenants to access this procedure when necessary. We treat all complaints in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Customer Care) Policy.
- 1.5 We treat all complaints confidentially according to our Confidentiality Policy and Procedure and the requirements of Data Protection legislation.
- 1.6 Connect operates a transparent Complaints Policy. Complaints are managed within timescales that ensure complaints are fully investigated and that the person making the complaint receives a response within a specified time period. Generally, complaints at all stages are acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt of the complaint and a full written response is sent within 10 working days.

- 1.7 Connect will always try to resolve any problems with a service as soon as we know about it. However, if a customer wants to make a complaint, there are two stages to the complaints process and we aim to resolve the complaint at the earliest stage possible:
- 1.7.1 Informal. Efforts will be made to resolve a complaint at first point of contact through escalation to line manager. Disatisfaction is recorded against the Customer Contact (Expression of Disatisfaction)
  - 1.7.2 Stage 1 – A formal complaint is made in writing or using a Complaint Form. The complaint investigation and response is completed by a Senior Manager
  - 1.7.3 Stage 2 – the complaint is reviewed by a Director.
- 1.8 If the complainant thinks that the response at Stage 1 has not fully addressed their complaint, they may request that their complaint is moved on to the next stage. Complainants are asked to clarify which aspects of the complaint have not yet been resolved. Requests to move a complaint to the next stage must be received within 3 weeks of the date of the previous stage's response letter.
- 1.9 At the end of Connect's complaints process, if the complainant does not think that the Complaint Review by Director at Stage 2 has fully resolved their complaint, and if the complainant is a tenant, leaseholder or housing applicant of Connect, they will be advised that they can refer their complaint to their local Councillor, local MP or a recognised tenant panel who will try to help resolve the complaint locally or refer the complaint immediately to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). Alternatively, the complainant can wait for 8 weeks (from the date of their stage 2 decision letter) and then go directly to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS).
- 1.10 Anonymous complaints are not dealt with through this complaints policy and procedure. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be necessary to investigate the matter in order to protect the association's interests.

- 1.11 Complaints from groups of tenants will be accepted. The response will be sent to all members of the group who are named in the complaint.
- 1.12 When we have failed to deliver a service to our normal standard and a complaint is upheld, we offer appropriate redress. Such redress may range from an apology or provision of a service to a compensation payment.
- 1.13 Connect reserves the right to refuse to deal with complaints that are pursued unreasonably or in an aggressive or abusive manner. The Housing Ombudsman Service's document "Unacceptable User Actions and Behaviour" is appended to give guidelines on how to handle such complainants (see Complaints Policy and Procedure Appendix 1).
- 1.14 Connect reserves the right to deal with a complaint differently (outside the normal procedures) if circumstances require this. In such a rare case, the association records why it has dealt with the complaint differently and informs the complainant accordingly.
- 1.15 Connect monitors, reports and publishes data on complaints. We give customers the opportunity to comment on the operation of the Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- 1.16 Complaints are not progressed through the Complaints procedure when a tenant has started a specific insurance claim against Connect with reference to the problem. Connect will know that this has happened when our insurers inform us that a potential claim has been lodged.
- 1.17 MP and Councillor enquiries are not treated as complaints.

## **2 Definition of a Complaint**

- 2.1 Connect defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with the service received by the complainant where a Complaint is made in writing. Whether we uphold the complaint as justified or not is irrelevant to the acceptance and handling of the complaint.
- 2.2 Staff try to resolve any issue causing customer dissatisfaction immediately at the point of enquiry. When customers remain dissatisfied, we

recognise customers have the right to decide that the matter is to be treated as a formal complaint.

- 2.3 A complaint can be received from anyone who is dissatisfied with the service that they have received from the association. This means that all complainants are not necessarily tenants of the association.
- 2.4 An expression of dissatisfaction may be about an action (or lack of action) or about the standard of a service. It may be when we (or someone working on our behalf):
  - 2.4.1 did something wrong
  - 2.4.2 did something that should not have been done
  - 2.4.3 failed to do something that should have been done
  - 2.4.4 treated someone unfairly
  - 2.4.5 failed to deliver what was promised.
- 2.5 A request for a service is not a complaint. A distinction must be made between a request for a service (e.g. reporting a repair or an incident of anti-social behaviour) and dissatisfaction with the service received (e.g. complaining that a repair has not been carried out even though it has been reported or complaining that the association has failed to deal adequately with anti-social behaviour reports).
- 2.6 A report of anti-social behaviour is not a complaint about the association. All incidents of nuisance, anti-social behaviour, harassment and racial harassment are recorded and managed separately in accordance with the anti-social behaviour policy and procedure.
- 2.7 If there is any doubt about whether a matter should be treated as a complaint, the relevant director makes the final decision.
- 2.8 Complaints are monitored monthly by Management Team and quarterly by Board. Board receives a full report on complaints annually and tenants receive a summary version of that report in the tenant magazine.