



Complaints Policy

Policy statement

We aim to provide a consistently high standard of service to everyone who uses or is impacted by our services and we care about getting it right, ideally first time. We recognise the importance of putting things right once we know something hasn't happened as it should. Our aim is always to maintain good working relationships with our residents and other stakeholders.

Anchor is committed to ensuring views about our services are valued and we actively encourage feedback. Complaints, compliments and suggestions give us the opportunity to continually improve our service. We foster a culture which welcomes customer feedback and listening and responding effectively is very important to us. We will not treat complainants differently because they have made a complaint.

We recognise a complaint as '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.'

Anchor is open to all forms of feedback and will look to consider all interactions that may help us to improve. These may include face to face, in writing (both letter and email), telephone and via social media.

Scope of the document

The policy applies to Anchor Housing operations, care services and all other Anchor functions.

Roles and responsibilities

The Customer Relations Manager is accountable for the overall policy and is responsible for its implementation and for ensuring compliance.

Timescales

We operate a two-stage complaints procedure, the timescales for responses are:

- Logging and acknowledgement of a complaint – 1 working day
- Call to the complainant by the complaint handler - within 2 working days.
- Stage one decision – 14 calendar days from receipt of the complaint – if this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date by when the stage one response will be received. This will not be more than 20 working days total without good reason.
- Stage two (response to any appeal made on a stage 1 decision) – 14 calendar days from request– if this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date when the stage two response will be received.

Our approach to complaints

We aim to welcome, understand and resolve individual complaints in a timely manner;



applying an approach that allows for monitoring. We will seek to identify any lessons arising from complaints and use these to improve our service provision across Anchor

Making a complaint

We welcome complaints from anyone, or the representative of anyone, who is affected by the services provided by Anchor. This includes but is not limited to:

- residents
- customers seeking to rent or purchase a property
- family members
- friends, representatives or advocates of residents
- neighbours
- service providers or professionals.

We can engage with a third party pursuing a complaint on the complainant's behalf as long as we have evidence that this person has their specific approval both to act on their behalf. and to have information provided to them by us. We will always work within what our Data Protection Policy allows.

Accessing our service

In order to make it as easy as possible and in keeping with our obligations under the Equality Act we will take reasonable steps to adapt our normal complaint handling policies, procedures and processes where appropriate to accommodate a disabled person's needs, for example providing correspondence in large print or identifying an auxiliary aid or service. We will also look to take steps, when reasonable, to accommodate the communication needs of others, for example accessing a language line service for those whose first language is not English.

Refusing to accept a complaint

We will not discriminate against anyone who makes a complaint. If a complainant behaves inappropriately in making a complaint, we will seek to manage that behaviour as necessary, while treating the complaint like any other. However, there will be some rare occasions when we will not accept a complaint, examples of this are given below (this list is not exhaustive):

- Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour, which is threatening, abusive or aggressive.
- Where the issue giving rise to the complaint happened over 6 months ago.
- The same matters have been fully addressed under a previous complaint.
- Where the complaint is a dispute over the term of a lease or legislation or is a matter that is already the subject of legal proceedings.
- The complaint is disputing the cost or reasonableness of a service charge or sinking fund/reserve fund contribution.



If we do not accept a complaint for any of the reason, including those described above, we will write to the complainant within 14 calendar days providing our reasons. The complainant will also be told of their option to appeal this decision by contacting the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Mediation

We will explore the use of mediation by an external organisation where it is appropriate.

Compensation

We may consider an offer of compensation or good will when we have, through our own actions or inactions, failed to deliver services of an acceptable standard.

Internal escalation and appeals

A resident (or representative) can request that their complaint be escalated to stage 2 if they are dissatisfied with the initial response at stage 1.

There may be rare and exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to immediately escalate a new complaint to the final stage of the internal process. This will be at the Customer Relations Manager's discretion.

Referring your complaint to an ombudsman

a) Housing complaints

A customer may refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman after;

- completing the internal process, and;
- waiting 8 weeks from the date the decision was made unless they chose to refer their complaint to Anchor's Independent Customer Complaints Panel, a Member of Parliament or a local councillor.

The Independent Customer Complaints Panel is made up of Anchor customers from rented and home ownership locations. These customers all have an interest in providing an impartial view on how a complaint has been handled throughout the process. If a customer decides to ask the Panel to look at their complaint, they will review all the correspondence relating to the matter and provide a response based on how they feel the case has been handled. Contact details for the panel are given below.

b) Care complaints

In the case of complaints relating to care, a resident may refer a complaint to The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman who provides a free, independent service. This can be done directly, or if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the internal process. However, the Ombudsman will require an internal process to be completed before they become involved.

Our care services are registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and although the CQC are unable to investigate individual complaints they are, however, happy to receive information regarding our services. Contact details are



provided below:

c) Contact details

The Independent Customer Complaints Panel

E-mail: ICCP@anchorhanover.org.uk

Telephone: 0345 602 5516

Post: ICCP, 2 Godwin Street, Bradford, BD1 2ST

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000

E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Local Councillor or a Member of Parliament (MP)

Names of local councillors can be found in local libraries or via the local council.

Names and contact details of MP's can be found by phoning the House of Commons Information Office on 020 7219 4272 or online at www.parliament.uk.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

Tel: 0300 061 0614

www.lgo.org.uk

Care Quality Commission Customer Service Centre

Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4PA

Tel: 0300 616161

www.cqc.org.uk

First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) - (leaseholders and tenants)

An application can be made to the Tribunal to address certain types of disputes (such as service charge disputes or rent increases). For a full list of their areas of jurisdiction please see the website detailed below.

Contact details for your regional office can be found by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-property-chamber>

We will co-operate fully with the relevant Ombudsman Service/ Designated Person during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting decision which will be binding on us.

Equality and diversity

We are committed to respecting diversity in all aspects of our work and meeting our obligations under the Equality Act. In line with this, we welcome feedback on any aspect of this policy where there is a question over its adherence to the above legislation.

Data Protection

We are committed to applying this policy in line with the General Data Protection Regulations as set out in our Data Protection Policy.

Other relevant documents



- Complaints Procedure and Helpsheet
- Compensation Policy
- Complaints & Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Guidance
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Recording and monitoring

Complaints and their resolution are recorded in KPI reports.

Commitment and review

The Group Board looks to the support and professionalism of staff at all levels in making this policy truly effective. This policy statement, along with other related supporting policies and procedures in use, will be regularly reviewed and revised as and when necessary.

Approved by Anchor Board on the 23rd September 2021.

Complaints policy

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Version Control

Version No	Purpose/Change	Author	Approved for publication by;	Date
AHG/AS/Com/1.0	Original	Sarah Jones, Chief Financial Officer, AHG	AHG Shadow Board	11 September 2018
AHG/AS/Com/1.1	Changes made to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code	Abigail Poole – Compliance and Policy Officer	Anchor Hanover Board	21 January 2021
AHG/AS/Com/1.2	Changes made following ARCO compliance assessment and Re-branding.	Abigail Poole Corporate Compliance and Policy Officer	Management Board	23 rd September 2021