**Complaints and Compliments Policy**

1. What this policy is about

This policy sets out the approach of Leazes Homes Limited (‘Leazes Homes’) to complaints and compliments from their customers. Complaints and compliments made under this policy will be dealt with by Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), who are the managing agent for Leazes Homes.

For the purpose of this policy, references to ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’ include YHN acting in its capacity as the managing agent for Leazes Homes.

We always strive to deliver the best service possible. However, we understand that sometimes things go wrong, and in some cases, we do not meet the expectations of our customers. This policy recognises that any feedback from customers, whether a complaint or a compliment, is a valuable source of information. We are committed to taking all feedback seriously and using it to help us learn and improve our services.

2. Who this policy is for?

This policy applies to all customers who YHN deal with on behalf of Leazes Homes. A customer can include anyone who receives a product or service from us including tenants, leaseholders, and any other users of our services. For the purpose of this policy, a customer can also be someone who does not receive a service from us but who is directly affected by the services we deliver, for example a neighbour of a tenant or someone visiting one of our neighbourhoods.

3. Definitions

3.1 A **complaint** is “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”.

3.2 A **customer** can be a tenant, leaseholder or any person, group or organisation who has reason to make a complaint or compliment.

3.3 The first request for a service, such as a repair, will be handled as a **service request** and passed to the relevant department to be dealt with.

3.4 A **compliment** is an expression of satisfaction, delight, or thanks in relation to customer service from us, or from someone acting on our behalf. Compliments help

us to know when we are getting things right and will be recorded by YHN’s Customer Experience Team to help us share good practice.

4. Exclusions

4.1 We will investigate a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to. In these circumstances, we will provide the customer with a detailed written explanation setting out the reasons why we cannot investigate. We will not investigate complaints when: -

a) **The issue which gave rise to the complaint happened over twelve months ago.** In such cases, the complaint will be considered to determine if there are any exceptional circumstances which may cause us to investigate it.

b) **Legal proceedings have been started** and details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, have been filed at court**.**

c) **The issues raised have already been considered under the complaint’s policy.**

d) **The complaint does not fall within the remit of this policy.** In this instance, where possible, we will signpost the customer to the appropriate internal process or external organisation to deal with the complaint (e.g., the Police).

Customers have the right to challenge this decision and seek advice from an Ombudsman Service. Details of how to do this will be provided on the letter explaining why we cannot investigate the complaint.

5. Accessibility

5.1 We want to ensure that when a customer decides to make a complaint, the process is easy to follow and accessible. A complaint can be made using several channels including:

a) In writing (to The Customer Experience Team, Your Homes Newcastle, YHN House, Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7LX or email to YHNComplaints@yhn.org.uk)

b) Over the telephone on 0191 2788600

c) In person (for more information visit www.yhn.org.uk/our-offices)

d) Using our [online form](https://newcastlecc-self.achieveservice.com/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish%3A//AF-Process-f253d29d-3359-499b-bb4b-9db22e7a1980/AF-Stage-d1e01196-1ade-468a-be10-d36094012174/definition.json&redirectlink=/en&cancelRedirectLink=/en&consentMessage=yes)

e) On our social media channels (as a direct message)

5.2 Complaints received via social media channels will be taken offline to progress and investigate. No further discussion about the issue will be entered into via the social media channel to ensure confidentiality and privacy are maintained.

5.3 When we receive a complaint, we will ask the customer about any individual needs they have and take reasonable steps to accommodate those needs. For example, if the customer would like to receive correspondence in large print, in another language, or if they want to communicate only by email about the complaint.

5.4 A customer can ask for a representative to deal with a complaint on their behalf. In these instances, we will always seek permission from the customer to ensure they are happy for us to correspond with the third party on their behalf.

5.5 We will comply with the Equality Act 2010, and we are committed to ensuring that people are not disadvantaged in accessing our services or in their ability to make a complaint. This is reflected in our Equality and Diversity Framework which can be found online.

5.6 We will consider requests for reasonable adjustments by talking to the customer and seek to reach agreement on what is reasonable in the circumstances. We will not make assumptions about whether a disabled person requires any reasonable adjustments or about what those adjustments should be. Some examples of the adjustments that we may make include:

* providing information in appropriate alternative formats for example large print, or on coloured paper
* use of email or telephone in preference to hard copy letters (where it is appropriate to do so). The final complaint response will always be provided in writing

5.7 At any point during the complaint investigation, customers have the right to access the relevant Ombudsman service. We will publicise this on our website and include contact information for the Ombudsman service in our correspondence during the life cycle of the complaints we investigate.

6. How we will handle the complaint

6.1 Complaints Stages

The complaints process has two stages:

**Stage 1**: The complaint will be logged by YHN’s Customer Experience Team as a Stage 1 complaint. The Complaint will be acknowledged and logged at Stage 1 within 5 working days of receipt.

A full written response will be sent to the customer within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. If this is not possible, an explanation will be provided to the customer along with a date by which the Stage 1 response will be received – this date will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

The complaint will be investigated by an appropriate and independent YHN manager. The manager will produce a written response which will include the Stage 1 outcome and provide reasons for the decision they have reached. The response letter will include details of how to escalate the complaint to the next stage of the process and information about the Ombudsman service.

**Stage 2:** If the customer remains dissatisfied following the Stage 1 response, they can ask for their complaint to be escalated. The complaint will be considered at Stage 2 by an Assistant Director (AD) or equivalent. The person considering the escalated complaint will not be the same person that considered the complaint at Stage 1. The customer should make their request to escalate within 20 working days of the date of the Stage 1 outcome letter. An acknowledgement will be sent to the customer within 5 working days of their request to escalate.

6.2 A full written Stage 2 response will be sent to the customer within 20 working days of the escalated complaint being acknowledged. If this is not possible, an explanation will be provided to the customer along with a date by which the Stage 2 response will be received – this date will not exceed a further 20 working days without good reason.

6.3 The AD will review the initial investigation and Stage 1 complaint response. They will also consider any new information as part of their review, including any evidence submitted by the customer.

6.4 A further written response will be provided to the customer’s preferred method of contact. The final response will also include information on the customer’s right to refer the complaint to an Ombudsman Service.

6.5 There may be occasions where we decide not to escalate a complaint. In this instance, an explanation will be provided to the customer in writing. The customer will be advised that the Stage 1 response was the final response, and they will be provided with information on how to refer the complaint to the Ombudsman. We will not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through the complaints process and will only do so when there are clear and valid reasons.

7. Ombudsman service

7.1 If the customer is dissatisfied with our handling of their complaint, they can take their complaint to the relevant Ombudsman service.

7.2 The Housing Ombudsman service is an independent body set up to look at complaints about housing providers. The service is free and impartial. Customers can approach the Ombudsman service at any time during a complaint investigation.

7.3 There are some complaints which may require escalation to a different Ombudsman service. If this is the case, you will be informed of the relevant Ombudsman service in correspondence relating to your complaint.

8. Learning from your complaint

8.1 When something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions that have been taken, or will be taken, to put things right and prevent the issue from happening in the future.

8.2 We will always be accountable for our actions and transparent in the way that we handle complaints. Creating and embedding a positive complaint handling culture is very important to us.

8.3 We will look beyond the circumstances of individual complaints and consider whether there are any opportunities to learn in terms of processes and systems which will benefit all customers.

8.4 We will ensure that learning and improvement from complaints is a central feature in the Leazes Homes Annual Report. Learning from complaints is shared with Leazes Homes Board members. Leazes Homes Board members listen to, and learn from, complaints so that they directly hear the customer voice.

9. Compliments

9.1 A central record of all compliments will be held by YHN’s Customer Experience Team. All compliments will be logged within two working days of receipt and sent to the relevant manager to share with their team.

9.2 We will report on the number and nature of compliments in the Leazes Homes Annual Report.

10. Monitoring and Review

10.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to good practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.

10.2 We will involve customers in the review of this complaint policy and report on a regular basis on themes and trends to customers via our website, newsletter, and other communication channels.

Key Legislation

Key legislation and guidance applicable to this procedure includes but is not limited to the following:

* Data Protection Act 2018
* Equality Act 2010
* Localism Act 2011
* Housing Act 1996
* General Data Protection Regulation
* Social Housing (Regulation) Act 20 July 2023
* Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code, 1 April 2024
* The consumer standards April 2024 (Transparency, influence and accountability standard)
* The consumer standards Code of Practice April 2024

For policy queries or more information, contact the author or the People and Policy Team.

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