

COASTLINE HOUSING LTD

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1.0 Introduction and Overarching Principles

- 1.1 We are committed to providing a high quality service to all our residents, client and customers in an efficient, effective and economic way, which meets their diverse needs. For the purposes of our Complaints Policy, the term “customers” will be used to represent any individual or organisation that has dealings with our Company.
- 1.2 While we strive to maintain the highest standards, we recognise that sometimes our services might fail to meet those standards. When a customer complains we will:
- always listen to their point of view;
 - always act fairly and with courtesy;
 - respect their privacy and treat the information they give us in confidence; and
 - wherever possible, act on comments made about our services.

2.0 Customer Complaints

- 2.1 A complaint is also feedback and by investigating and acting on complaints, we will learn from our customers. Where mistakes have been made and where genuine grievances have arisen, we will ensure that these are rectified to the satisfaction of the customer, wherever possible and that the circumstances do not recur.
- 2.2 We will establish and publish a customer complaints procedure, which is set out in Appendix A to this policy. The procedure adopts the following principles:
- 2.2.1 Where possible, complaints will be resolved by the front line staff responsible for service delivery. It is envisaged that most complaints will be resolved in this way.

Stage 1:

- 2.2.2 Where a customer is not satisfied with the response from front line staff, he/she may make a formal complaint, in writing via an official complaints form, letter, email, through the website or by telephone to the Complaints Officer. Customer Service Advisors are also available to assist in the completion of complaints forms. All complaints will be acknowledged within two working days by the Complaints Officer, who will advise the complainant of the member of staff dealing with their complaint. A target time will be set for a detailed response to include any areas where the complaint has been used to improve, review or change services to all customers. In all but

the most complex cases, this will be within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint. This is Stage 1 of our Complaints Procedures.

Stage 2:

- 2.2.3. If the complainant is still dissatisfied, they will be given the opportunity to escalate their complaint to the next stage via the completion letter sent out by the Complaints Officer at the end of the Stage 1 investigation.
- 2.2.4. At Stage 2 the decision will be reviewed by an appropriate senior manager who will investigate the decision in full within 10 working days.
- 2.2.5. The investigating officer will respond in full to the complainant identifying any areas where the complaint has been used to improve, review or change services to all customers.

Stage 3:

- 2.2.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she will be given the opportunity to escalate the complaint to the next stage via the completion letter sent out by the Complaints Officer at the end of the Stage 2 investigation.
- 2.2.6 At Stage 3 the decision will be reviewed by an Appeals Panel consisting of the relevant service Director, another member of the Executive Team and the Chair of the Board, the Deputy Chair or another Non-Executive Director. The meeting will be convened within 15 working days from the request of progression to Stage 3. The Appeals Panel will be chaired by the Non-Executive Director.

Only the most serious of complaints should need to be resolved at this level. At this stage mediation between the complainant and the Company should be considered and offered if the Appeals Panel considers this would be beneficial in resolving the complaint.

- 2.2.7 The complainant will be given the opportunity to meet privately with the Appeals Panel prior to the Appeals Panel meeting to state their case. The Complaints Officer will supply the Appeals Panel with an executive summary and a timeline since receipt of the original complaint. The complainant is entitled to be accompanied by a non-legal person acting or speaking on their behalf or for support, as long as the Company is advised prior to the private meeting. In addition, the investigating officers from stages 1 and 2 will attend a separate pre-meeting to discuss any concerns and to advise why certain judgements were made. Following the Appeals Panel meeting the Chair of the Appeals Panel will write to the complainant within 10 working days highlighting:
 - any remedial actions to be carried out;

- any significant changes to policies, procedures and working practices which need to be undertaken; and
 - feedback to the complainant on how their complaint has been used to improve, review or change services to all customers.
- 2.3 On completion, a satisfaction questionnaire will be sent to the customer. Statistics summarising customer complaints will be reported quarterly to the Board as well as an annual report to the Board. Significant levels of customer complaints in relation to a particular service, whether through official or unofficial complaints, will result in a policy and service review.
- 2.4 Customers will also be made aware of the Housing Ombudsman Service and how, and in what circumstances, a complaint can be made to it. The Housing Ombudsman Service is only available to customers of the Company who are legally bound to make payments to the Company for services, ie; rental customers, leaseholders and service charge payers. They will not undertake any investigations until the full internal complaints procedure has been completed.
- 2.5 Individual complaints will be monitored by the Complaints Officer, senior managers and the Executive Team to ensure that lessons are learned and policies improved, where possible, to ensure that recurrence is minimised. The Complaints Officer will collate information on points learned, changes to services, policies and procedures and/or day-to-day working practices via the Complaints Tracking Sheet and report the information supplied to senior managers via the monthly complaints update. This information will also be reported to customers annually within the Customer Newsletter and as part of the Company's Annual Review.
- 2.6 In line with Best Practice, this policy will be reviewed by the Complaints Officer, in conjunction with the Executive Team, at least every two years, and benchmarked against areas of current Best Practice via the Housing Ombudsman Service and Housemark.
- 2.7 The Complaints Officer will ensure that house-files are updated where new information is identified about the customer and/or their disabilities to ensure that both the complaint and future services are delivered in the customer's best interest.