



## Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy

---

### POLICY PURPOSE

This Policy provides guidance on how to make a complaint, comment or compliment.

The Policy covers:

- Definitions
- Who can make a complaint
- How to make a complaint, give a comment or a compliment
- The complaints procedure
- Advice about the Housing Ombudsman service and the role of a designated person
- Vexatious Complainants
- Compensation and good will gestures

### Document Control

Implementation date	October 2018
Author	Annabelle Barwick
Equality impact assessment date	
Revised/updated	
Version control	2.0
Review required	

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Derby Homes aims to provide services that meet customer needs, both in terms of appropriateness and quality. When it goes wrong we want to be able to resolve complaints at the earliest available opportunity and learn lessons to help improve our services.

We are committed to making the process of complaining as simple and straightforward as possible in line with our Customer First Strategy.

## **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

Derby Homes aims to deliver a high quality of service and satisfaction to our customers.

We acknowledge that sometimes things go wrong and our customers may wish to make a complaint.

This policy provides customers with a simple way of telling us when they feel dissatisfied with the service they have received.

We want customers to be able to tell us so we can respond and put things right in a fair and timely manner.

We welcome customers giving us their views and opinions and we welcome compliments and praise when team members do things well or go the extra mile.

## **3. AIMS OF THE POLICY**

- To deliver a high quality customer experience, even when things have gone wrong
- To be fair, transparent and consistent in the way we manage complaints
- To put things right (where agreed) as swiftly as possible
- To learn from complaints
- To keep customers informed of progress throughout their complaint
- To maintain customer confidentiality
- Ensure complaints are assigned to the appropriate officer
- Enable customers to access impartial support and advice
- Recognise when individuals or services have exceeded customer expectations

## **4. DEFINITIONS**

### **Compliment**

We particularly welcome feedback where our staff, services, policies and procedures have exceeded customer expectations and delivered excellent customer satisfaction, we record these as compliments.

## **Comment**

We welcome customer comments and ideas about how we can improve the way we deliver a service.

## **Complaint**

‘A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with the actions or services provided which cannot be resolved at initial point of contact and requires a formal response.’

## **Petition**

Complaints that are submitted with more than 5 signatures (not of the same household) on are considered as petitions. See petition procedure. Petitions are subject to an additional level of scrutiny and a report is submitted to Operational Board.

## **What is not considered a complaint**

- A first request for service/ repair / to report Anti-Social Behaviour
- A request for information / explanation of our policies
- An issue raised more than 6 months after the event, unless there are exceptional circumstances
- Cases where legal action is already being taken about the issue raised
- Cases which have been or are being dealt with through Derby Homes Insurance Company
- Where Derby Homes can assist but the underlying issue is not within the control or remit of the organisation
- Where the request is beyond service standards
- Request from Members of Parliament and Councillors will be addressed as part of a separate policy and procedure
- Leaseholder service charge disputes
- Disputes about property attribute charges
- Disrepair cases – these are subject to a separate review and will be handled internally or via insurance

We will make a decision about whether a complaint is valid and reasonable before registering it as a formal complaint.

## **5. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT**

The policy applies to anyone who receives or requests a service from Derby Homes.

We will accept complaints from other sources, providing the customer has authorised them to act on their behalf.

## **6. HOW CAN CUSTOMERS COMPLAIN, GIVE COMMENTS OR COMPLIMENTS**

Customers can contact Derby Homes to make a comment, complaint or compliment in the most convenient way for them:

By emailing: [housing.complaints@derbyhomes.org](mailto:housing.complaints@derbyhomes.org)

By writing to:

The Customer Experience Officer, 839 London Rd, Derby, DE24 8UZ

Via the website: [www.derbyhomes.org](http://www.derbyhomes.org)

Via our online self-service portal: [www.my.derbyhomes.org](http://www.my.derbyhomes.org)

Via social Media

In person

By telephone: 01332 888777

## **7. COMPLAINTS PROCEEDURE**

We aim to resolve complaints first time. We recognise that every complaint is different and therefore will require individual complaint investigation, whilst maintaining our commitment to fairness, transparently and consistency. We have adopted a customer first internal approach to support complaint resolution. Our Customer First strategy means that we will always try and look at things from the customer's point of view.

We will aim to:

- Acknowledge all complaints within 2 working days
- Investigate and respond to the customer within 10 working days.
- Review all available evidence relevant to the investigation
- Discuss the outcome of the investigation with the customer and provide a written record of this
- Record all information on our Housing Management system

In circumstances, where a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily and the customer can provide reasons why the complaint has not been fully investigated a single stage appeal process may be invoked. Your appeal must be requested within 15 working days from receiving your response.

Appeals will be considered by either the relevant Head of Service or Customer Service and Equalities Manager. They will appoint a Manager to investigate the appeal.

On receipt of an appeal we will aim to:

- Acknowledge all complaints within 2 working days
- Investigate and respond to the customer within 10 working days.
- Review all available evidence relevant to the investigation
- Discuss the outcome of the investigation with the customer and provide a written record of this

- Record all information on our Housing Management system

## **8. PETITIONS**

If your complaint is classified as a petition, this will be looked at under the Petitions procedure, but is still considered a complaint under the overarching complaints policy. This petitions procedure is designed to provide an additional level of scrutiny (to that contained within complaint process), through a review of investigatory process by the Operational Board.

### **[Petitions Policy](#)**

## **9. COMPLAINT CLOSURE**

Once a full response to the complaint has been provided the complaint is closed. If you wish to initiate an appeal, this must be done within 15 working days of your response being received.

## **10. LOCALISM ACT 2011 (DESIGNATED PERSON)**

Since 1 April 2013, all registered providers have been required to adhere to guidelines as set out in the Localism Act. Tenants of registered providers are able to request their complaints be considered by a 'designated person' once the internal complaints procedure has been completed.

A designated person can be an MP, a local Councillor or a recognised Tenant Panel.

The designated person can help resolve the complaint in one of two ways; they can try and resolve the complaint themselves, or by referring the complaint straight to the Housing Ombudsman.

Their role is to provide a fresh independent insight on complaints from a tenant, Councillor or MP perspective – playing a critical friend role suggesting views and approaches that may not have been considered by Derby Homes or others in handling the complaint.

The only legally defined powers of designated persons are to refer complaints from social housing tenants to the Housing Ombudsman. If the problem is still not resolved following the intervention of the designated person, either they or the resident can refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

The complainant may also approach the Ombudsman directly if more than eight weeks have elapsed since the completion of Derby Homes internal complaints procedure.

## **11. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE**

If a customer is still not satisfied with the complaint after going through the complaints procedure, they will be advised how to access the Housing Ombudsman Service for an independent external review.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about housing organisations. The service is free, independent and impartial.

The Housing Ombudsman has the power to consider complaints and decide what is 'fair in all circumstances of the case'.

When things go wrong they can make orders and recommendations to put things right or to improve service failure.

## **12. PERSISTANT, UNREASONABLE, VEXATIOUS AND SERIAL COMPLAINERS**

On occasion Derby Homes receives contact from and or complaints from customers which are deemed vexatious.

We define vexatious as abusive, excessive and/or intimidating contact from customers which causes disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress.

Derby Homes will treat as abusive any behaviour that seeks to harass, verbally abuse or otherwise intimidate our employees.

Excessive means that in the course of addressing an issue, the number of contacts with Derby Homes places unreasonable demands on staff time or resources. (A contact may be in person, or by telephone, letter, fax, social media or e-mail.) Judgement will be used in determining what an "excessive number" of contacts is and this will be based on the specific circumstances of each individual case.

Derby Homes will treat 'intimidating' as forcing someone into or deterring someone from taking a particular course of action by inducing fear.

Customers do not need to have made an official complaint to be considered vexatious.

### **Vexatious Policy**

## **13. COMPENSATION AND GOODWILL GESTURES**

Generally compensation will only be paid if it is concluded that Derby Homes has been negligent or neglectful and where financial disadvantage can be proved. Derby Homes may then compensate so the complaint is returned the position they were in before the event. Compensation is not remedy for the complainant to gain financially.

Occasionally in exceptional circumstances a payment in recognition of distress or inconvenience a payment may be made.

Compensation payments will be made as a rent account credit. Compensation will be offset against any debt owed by the applicant.

### **[Compensation Policy](#)**

## **14. PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND LEARNING**

Derby Homes recognises the importance of learning from complaints, listening to comments and feedback and learning where we have done things well. We use this information to help us improve our services.

We record and analyse and provide quarterly reports for the Operational Board.