



COMPLAINTS POLICY

REVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2027



1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Community Gateway Association (CGA) is committed to providing an excellent service and treating customers fairly and with respect. We recognise that sometimes things go wrong and when this happens, we will do our best to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.
- 1.2 CGA welcomes and values all feedback regarding our services. Listening to our customers and taking appropriate action will help us to continually learn and improve the services we provide.
- 1.3 This Policy sets out our approach to dealing with complaints, how to make a complaint, what customers can expect when they complain and how to progress it through our complaints procedure.
- 1.4 The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) "Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard" states that "Registered providers must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively and promptly." This Policy endeavours to meet this requirement.
- 1.5 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code provides a set of standards for complaint procedures that housing providers are required to comply with. CGA are committed to adhere to the Code.
- 1.6 This Policy aims to deliver on these commitments and ensure that we engage and listen to our customers at every opportunity.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 This Policy is designed to make it easy for customers to provide CGA with feedback about the services they receive, by offering a variety of ways for customers to get in touch with us.
- 2.2 We will set out clear timescales for responding to complaints and provide guidance to customers on the next steps should they not be satisfied with the first stage resolution.
- 2.3 We will ensure that the complaints process is clear, simple and accessible and that we investigate and respond to complaints in a timely manner and in line with our Complaints Procedure.
- 2.4 We will be sensitive to the needs of our tenants and will ensure that individual circumstances are always considered when handling complaints. This includes tailoring our approach, offering additional support where needed and making reasonable adjustments, such as providing information in alternative formats or offering assistance through interpreters or representatives to ensure that every customer can easily access and engage with the complaints service.
- 2.5 We will ensure that all employees and third-party representatives adopt a collaborative, accountable and professional approach to complaint handling. This includes working cooperatively across teams, taking collective responsibility for resolving issues and acting in line with our standards and values.
- 2.6 We will ensure that our employees receive appropriate training to enable them to effectively handle complaints and offer appropriate remedies in line with guidance from the Housing Ombudsman.

- 2.7 We will publicise this Policy, details of The Housing Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code on our website at www.communitygateway.co.uk
- 2.8 We will use feedback from complaints to improve our ways of working, ensuring that the customers voice shapes the services we provide.
- 2.9 We will inform customers about how complaints have been used to improve our services through newsletters, our website and an annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report. Customers can request this information in alternative formats if required.

3.0 What is a Complaint?

- 3.1 CGA has adopted the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint which is as follows:

'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 does not need to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such. Complaints can be raised when the customer expresses dissatisfaction with the response of their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.

4.0 How to make a complaint

- 4.1 A complaint can be made in person to any member of staff, via phone, email, letter, through CGA's social media channels or via CGA's website.
- 4.2 A complaint can be raised by the customer themselves or a representative on their behalf. This could include friends, family, MPs, Councillors,

advocates or support workers. The customer must give permission for a representative to act on their behalf.

- 4.3 Customers or representatives who wish to make a complaint will be referred to the Service Improvement Team to allow a full investigation to take place.
- 4.4 The Service Improvement Team will administer the full complaints process from receipt of the complaint through to identifying areas of improvement in service delivery.

5.0 How complaints will be handled – Stage 1

- 5.1 When a complaint is received, a member of the Service Improvement Team will acknowledge the complaint in writing within two working days, (working days are Monday to Friday 9am-5pm, excluding bank holidays and office closures).
- 5.2 The acknowledgement will set out the customer's complaint and their preferred resolution. It will also state any areas that CGA are not responsible for and unable to investigate.
- 5.3 The complaint will be assigned to an Investigating Manager who will respond to the complaint within 10 working days.
- 5.4 In some instances, this may take slightly longer. If so, we will inform you of the reasons for the delay and provide updated timescales.
- 5.5 If a customer disagrees with our findings, a request can be made for the complaint to be escalated to Stage 2, which means the complaint will be reviewed by an independent Head of Service (Senior Manager).

6.0 How complaints will be handled – Stage 2

- 6.1 CGA aims to resolve complaints at Stage 1, however if the customer is dissatisfied with the response, they can request a review within 15 working days of the Stage 1 response.
- 6.2 The request for the complaint to progress to Stage 2 will be acknowledged in writing within two working days and will set out the customer's complaint, preferred resolution and any areas that CGA are not responsible for and unable to investigate.
- 6.3 The Stage 2 complaint will be passed to an independent Head of Service to investigate who will provide a response within 15 working days.
- 6.4 In some instances, this may take slightly longer. If so, we will inform you of the reasons for the delay and provide updated timescales.

7.0 The Housing Ombudsman Service

- 7.1 CGA are committed to working with customers to resolve issues raised and we will try our best to find a resolution. Unfortunately, there may be occasions where the customer is not happy with the resolution provided and in these cases the customer can request a review from The Housing Ombudsman.
- 7.2 The Housing Ombudsman is an independent and impartial organisation which is set up to help resolve disputes between tenants and social landlords.
- 7.3 Customers can ask the Housing Ombudsman to investigate their complaint if we have been unable to resolve the issue(s) raised during our two stage complaints process.

- 7.4 CGA will ensure customers are aware of The Housing Ombudsman Service and their contact details throughout the complaints process.

8.0 Exclusions

- 8.1 There are some circumstances where we may not accept a complaint or progress a complaint through our process. These are as follows:

- Anonymous complaints
- Complaints raised on behalf of a customer without their authority *(We will make all available efforts to seek authority from the customer)*
- Complaints that have previously been fully investigated in line with this Policy *(these will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis)*
- Where a customer is making a service request. A service request is when a customer is telling us about a problem for the very first time such as a repair *(except where the complaint concerns the behaviour of a member of staff)*
- Legal proceedings have started in relation to the matter being complained about. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court
- Where the issue took place more than 12 months ago *(unless the complaint relates to a health and safety or safeguarding matter)*
- Reports of anti-social behaviour – these will be referred to the Tenancy Management Team and handled in accordance with CGA's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy *(except where the complaint is regarding the handling of the case)*
- Reports that raise a safeguarding concern - these will be referred to the Tenancy Management Team and handled in accordance with CGA's Safeguarding Policy.

- 8.2 Should CGA decide not to accept a complaint, we will provide an explanation of the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process, details of The Housing Ombudsman Service and the right to take the decision to The Housing Ombudsman.

9.0 Responsibilities

- 9.1 CGA will ensure that a member of the Board holds the role of 'Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)' and that detailed information is provided to the MRC to allow effective scrutiny of all aspects of CGA's complaint handling. The MRC will be responsible for providing assurance to the Board that CGA is handling complaints appropriately and in accordance with the Policy.
- 9.2 CGA will ensure that a member of the Corporate Management Team is accountable for the organisation's complaint handling service. This person will assess themes and/or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.
- 9.3 The Service Improvement Team is responsible for implementing this policy and procedure and will also take the lead in liaising with the Housing Ombudsman.
- 9.4 The Head of Service Improvement will be responsible for:
- Ensuring our approach to complaints is clear, simple and accessible for customers
 - Ensuring appropriate resource, management arrangements and procedures are in place to deliver the requirements of the Complaints Policy
 - Ensuring the team has access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints

- Ensuring the MRC receives the necessary information to fulfil their role effectively and that complaints data is reported to the Board.

10.0 Monitoring and Review

- 10.1 The Corporate Management Team, CGA Board and any designated committee appointed by the Board will be provided with quarterly reports of complaints received, their outcomes and lessons learnt. The reports will also include any decisions made by the Housing Ombudsman (where applicable) and any actions or decisions arising.
- 10.2 This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis, with a full review taking place every two years, to ensure accuracy and that CGA complies with relevant legislation.

11.0 Data Protection

- 11.1 Personal data collected as part of the complaints process will be stored for seven years. In line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code a full record of the complaint will be stored.
- 11.2 Stored data will be reviewed monthly and all personal data will be removed after seven years unless the complaint is subject to an ongoing legal claim or Housing Ombudsman review. In these circumstances the personal data will not be deleted and will be held on our systems until the matter has been fully resolved.

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