



# Customer Complaints Policy

---

Date Authorised: 31 July 2018

---

Review Date: 2021

---

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Rosebery Housing Association encourages and welcomes complaints as an important form of customer insight. This policy sets out how we will investigate and respond to complaints, whilst ensuring lessons are learnt and used to deliver longer term improvements to our services to customers.
- 1.2 It is equally as important for us to know when we get things right. Customers will be encouraged to provide feedback when they are impressed with our services or where they feel staff have gone 'the extra mile'.

## **2. Who can complain?**

- 2.1 Complaints can be made by anyone receiving a service from us. This will include residents; leaseholders; those applying for housing with us or any person or organisation receiving a service from us.
- 2.2 Where a customer is unable to raise a complaint themselves, a third party can raise it on their behalf. The response will be communicated to the customer unless they have given permission for us to communicate with the third party. Where complaints are received from a third party, the third party will be contacted to confirm receipt of the complaint and how we will communicate our response.

## **3. How to complain?**

- 3.1 Complaints can be made in writing, by email, online, over the telephone or face to face with a member of our staff.

## **How will we respond to complaints?**

### **4. Acknowledgement and Communication**

- 4.1 All complaints will be acknowledged by the Customer Experience Team within 2 working days. Where possible, this will be done by telephone and followed up with an acknowledgement letter or customer's preferred means of contact (e.g. e-mail, text message etc.).
- 4.2 Staff will be encouraged to resolve complaints through telephone or personal contact at the earliest opportunity. Where a complaint is resolved in person or by telephone a letter or customer's preferred means of contact (e.g. e-mail, text message etc.) confirming the resolution will also be sent.
- 4.3 Rosebery Housing Association will maintain open communications with all parties involved in the complaint.

### **5. Stage 1 Complaint**

- 5.1 Rosebery has a two stage complaints process. All Stage 1 complaints will be assigned to a member of the Customer Experience Team to investigate, acknowledge and respond to. All responses will be approved by the Customer Experience Team Leader. We will acknowledge the complaint in writing (letter or email) within 2 working days of receiving it. A member of the Customer Experience Team will also contact the customer within 3 working days from the acknowledgement of the complaint, to discuss the issue and agree actions that can be taken to resolve the issue.
- 5.2 Within 10 working days from acknowledging the complaint, a member of the Customer Experience Team will confirm in writing the outcome of the investigation. Where possible this will conclude the matter having fully resolved the issues highlighted in the original complaint. In some cases the issues will be more complex and will require further time to investigate and resolve issues fully, in such cases a complaint extension letter will be sent. We will regularly update the customer on the progress of these actions through to completion. Complaints will only be closed if all actions identified have been completed. Customers will be informed in writing once their complaint is closed.
- 5.3 Our complaint procedure focuses on staff and customers working together and communicating clearly to resolve the complaint positively, we ask customers to tell us what resolution they are seeking. If we are unable to resolve the complaint through taking the action the customer requests, we will explain in full the reasons for this.

5.4 All customers will be encouraged to provide feedback on their experience of our complaint handling service. This feedback will be used to highlight potential service development areas.

## **6. Stage 2 Complaint**

6.1 If a customer feels we have not addressed their complaint in a reasonable or fair way and they remain dissatisfied with our response, they can request a review of their complaint case. We ask customers to request a review within 20 days of receiving our final response. All Stage 2 complaints will be acknowledged by the Customer Experience Team within 2 working days.

6.2 In order to ensure the focus of an escalated complaint is clear, customers will be asked to explain why they remain unhappy with our original response, their reason for wanting to progress the complaint to Stage 2 and how they would like to see the complaint resolved. Where necessary we can provide support to ensure an accurate record of the request is made.

6.3 When customers are not willing to do so, we will confirm, in writing within 10 working days our understanding of the escalation request and the requested outcome before the escalation is considered. Customers will be asked to confirm to us in writing within 10 working days, that they accept our understanding. Where the customer does not agree with our understanding; they will be required to state specifically and in writing the reasons for their escalation and the outcome they seek before we will consider their complaint further.

6.4 The complaint will be assigned to a Head of Service for them to review. All responses will be received by the customer within 10 working days.

6.5 The focus of the review is to find a resolution for the customer as quickly as possible, recognising delays cause further impact on customer satisfaction and increase the costs of managing complaints.

6.6 Complaints will only be closed if all actions identified have been completed. Customers will be informed in writing once their complaint is closed.

## **7. Unreasonable Behaviour**

7.1 Rosebery uses the Housing Ombudsman Service guidance on unacceptable behaviour to manage complaints where the complaint or behaviour of the complainant is unreasonable. This will include behaviour which is likely to impact on the investigation and resolution of their complaint, other complaints or may result in unreasonable use of Rosebery's resources. These may be characterised by:

- 7.2 Repeated complaints on an issue where the complaint procedure has already been fully implemented and exhausted
- 7.3 Continual changes to the substance of the complaint
- 7.4 Unwillingness to accept documented evidence
- 7.5 Threatened or actual physical violence or verbal abuse towards staff or families or associates
- 7.6 Persistent approaches to several people in the organisation at the same time about the same issues
- 7.7 In these instances when the contact from the customer is unreasonably persistent or vexatious, we may choose to close the complaint with a final letter outlining our actions and response to the issues originally raised by the customer.

## **8. What if they are still unhappy?**

- 8.1 Customers who have been through our internal procedure but remain unhappy with the outcome of their complaint will have the following options:
  - They can contact a designated person for help in resolving their complaint at a local level, as defined in the Localism Act 2011
  - They can wait eight weeks and then refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.
- 8.2 First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) – complaints about service charges may be referred to the First Tier Tribunal  
A designated person is defined as:
  - Any MP in England
  - Any Councillor from the local authority for their area
  - A recognised Tenant Panel
- 8.3 Here complaints are referred to a designated person; the designated person will try to find a local solution to the complaint. Rosebery Housing Association will be open, supportive and co-operative with the designated person. A tenant panel, that is recognised by Rosebery Housing Association may act as a designated person
- 8.4 Where potential solutions are proposed by the designated person, we will review them and respond accordingly. Where appropriate, we will assist them in finding a local solution.
- 8.5 We will only be able to discuss specific details of a complaint with the designated person if the complainant has given their permission for this.
- 8.6 The designated person may choose to refer the complaint on to the

Housing Ombudsman, but only if the complainants permission has been sought first.

- 8.7 The management and retention of all complaints received by Rosebery will be investigated to comply with our policy and procedures for the recently introduced General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

## **9. Monitoring and Reporting**

- 9.1 All complaints will be recorded and response timescales monitored.
- 9.2 Performance against the standard set out in this policy will be recorded and reported to the Executive, Board and Virtual Scrutiny Panel as required.
- 9.3 Success measures include:
- % of complaints acknowledged within timescales (quarterly)
  - % of complaints responded to in timescale (quarterly)
  - % of remedial actions resolved in agreed timescales (quarterly)
  - % of complainants satisfied with handling of complaint (annual)
  - % of complainants satisfied with outcome of complaint (annual)