



Customer Feedback – Complaints, Comments and Compliments

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Owner	Customer Insight Manager
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1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy sets out the way that B3Living will respond to all customer feedback, including but not restricted to complaints, comments and compliments received from customers.

2. Scope

- 2.1. The policy relates to any feedback received from customers of B3Living, or by others on their behalf. Customers will include any tenant, leaseholder, housing applicant, members of the public directly affected by our services or anyone else requesting a service from B3Living.
- 2.2. A customer may provide us feedback on our services using the method they find easiest:
- By phone – call a member of staff directly or via our main office number
 - In person – make an appointment to visit our office or talk to our staff
 - In writing – by email, letter, or on-line.

¹ Please check the Compliance Programme (maintained by Corporate Services) to confirm the current review cycle.



- 2.3. If a customer needs support to provide us with feedback, we will arrange for a member of staff to support the customer in the most suitable way to meet their needs.
- 2.4. We will accept complaints made by representatives when they have been requested by the customer. We will seek to ensure that a customer has given permission for the representative to make the complaint on their behalf, including seeking written permission where this is appropriate.
- 2.5. Comments and/or complaints can generally be regarding:
 - failure to provide a service, or delays in providing a service
 - failure to meet a published service standard or a promise we have made
 - poor quality repair, maintenance work or grounds maintenance work
 - unacceptable behaviour by a member of staff or a contractor
 - disagreement with a decision that we have made, where there is not another procedure (for example, an appeal) to resolve the matter
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- 2.6. There are some things which we will not deal with as complaints, including:
 - service request, such as reporting a repair or antisocial behaviour
 - the matter is being or has been dealt with through legal action or an insurance or liability claim
 - issues being pursued in an unreasonable manner including frivolous or vexatious complaints
 - the cause for complaint is more than 6 months old but is only reported now, unless there is good reason for delay
 - the complaint has been considered already and is an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint, or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
 - disagreement with a decision we have made where this is another procedure to appeal the decision.
- 2.7. Anonymous complaints will not normally be dealt with under this policy, however, feedback from these complaints may be used alongside other forms of customer feedback to consider future development of policies and services if relevant.
- 2.8. It is not necessary for a customer to make a formal complaint if they are requesting compensation. Where a customer states they wish to complain but the subject is about seeking financial redress, we have a compensation policy.

3. Policy statement and aims

- 3.1. A complaint may be defined as “An expression of dissatisfaction however made, about the, standard of service, actions, or lack of actions by the



organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or groups of residents.” .

- 3.2. B3Living aims to provide a good standard of service for its customers, however, we recognise that occasionally things can go wrong, and customers may have cause to complain.
- 3.3. B3Living welcomes complaints and sees them as an opportunity to identify service improvements.
- 3.4. B3Living will operate a clear, accessible complaints procedure. We will aim to:
 - make it as easy as possible for customers to complain by accepting written or verbal complaints from customers or their representatives
 - where we have channels to communicate with customers via social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, then a complaint that comes in through these channels will be logged in line with the policy and if the customer is identifiable they will be contacted privately to resolve the complaint. This will ensure confidentiality and privacy is maintained. If the customer is not identifiable, we will encourage them to make a complaint directly with us and offer support to do be able to do this if needed.
 - ensure customers are given the opportunity to explain their point of view about the outcome they are seeking before a decision is reached
 - ensure customers are given a chance to respond and challenge any areas of dispute as the complaint progresses through the complaint stages.
 - offer those who complain a clear response to their complaint, provided within clearly defined timescales and in an appropriate format.
 - we will make customers aware of the complaints policy and procedure through the B3Living website, policies, leaflets, and articles in customer newsletters, and as part of regular correspondence with customers.
 - manage the complaints process efficiently and objectively, resolving problems as soon as possible, in a manner which respects confidentiality and privacy
 - monitor and review complaints on a regular basis to identify trends and service weaknesses, to prevent recurrence and to actively identify possible service improvements resulting from comments and complaints made
 - regularly include details of complaints received on our website and within the Home newsletter, including numbers upheld and lessons learnt
 - we reserve the right not to investigate a complaint beyond stage 1 of our formal complaint procedure

B3Living will ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code and promote this and the Ombudsman service to its customers.

4. Complaints procedure



- 4.1. We hope that customers will normally tell a member of staff delivering the service of a problem and allow them to resolve the matter first-hand.
- 4.2. Any comments made about our services where the customer states they are not happy, or our service has fallen short of their expectations, will be logged as an informal (stage 0) complaint. Such issues tend to be:
 - about a single issue within one service area
 - relatively simple / straightforward
 - resolvable within a short time period, usually within 5 working days but resolution can take up to 10 working days with the customers agreement
 - not high risk
- 4.3. If a customer makes us aware that they are not happy we will log the matter as an informal (stage 0) complaint, even if no remedial action is required. This is so we can learn from customer feedback.
- 4.4. If action is required to resolve the matter, but the customer is happy for this to be done informally, without the need to formalise the response; the member of staff logging the informal (stage 0) complaint will confirm what action will be taken, by who and when the customer can expect a response. This will usually be by phone or email within 5 working days and we will keep the customer informed and updated during the process of their complaint.
- 4.5. If a customer is not happy with the resolution of their informal (stage 0) complaint we can escalate the matter to our formal procedure.
- 4.6. We will acknowledge receipt of all formal complaints (stage 1 and stage 2) in writing within 2 working days. This will confirm which stage the complaint is being logged at and who will be responsible for investigating the complaint.
- 4.7. The stages of the formal procedure are as follows:
 - **Stage 1: A full investigation of the complaint which is dealt with by the manager responsible for the service.** We will respond within 10 working days of receipt, in the most appropriate or preferred format for the customer. We will fully investigate the complaint, and if we uphold it, we will set out an action plan with realistic timescales to resolve the matter and keep the customer informed about our progress in completing the agreed actions until the complaint is resolved and closed. If it is not possible to respond within this timeframe, we will then provide an explanation and a date as to when the customer will receive their response. This extension should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.
 - **Stage 2: A senior manager review of the complaint alongside reasons for the escalation.** A stage 2 escalation allows customers to challenge any areas of the dispute before any final decisions are made. We will respond in full within 20 working days of the request to escalate, in the most appropriate or preferred format for the customer. This will be conducted by a member of the Leadership Team or an Executive Director. In some circumstances this review may also be referred to a different department.



We will review how your complaint was dealt with, whether the outcomes of the investigation are upheld and if more action is needed to fully resolve your complaint. If it is not possible to respond within this timeframe, we will then provide an explanation and a date as to when the customer will receive their response. The extension should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. In some circumstances, there may be a decision that a complaint will not be escalated. If this is the case then we will provide an explanation to the customer and confirm that B3Living's internal complaints process has been exhausted. We will offer advice on the next steps a customer can take if still dissatisfied. We will not unreasonably close a complaint at stage 2 without further investigation, however, there may be grounds to close a complaint where:

- The customer has not provided specific reasons for escalating their complaint and all actions previously agreed to resolve the complaint have been completed
- The resolution requested by the customer relates to something outside of B3Living's ability to change or influence
- The customer is behaving unreasonably or has refused to engage with our staff in resolving the complaint through reasonable actions
- We have shown that we have followed policy/legal requirements and stated that we have provided our final position on a matter
- The customer has escalated their complaint solely to seek a higher award of compensation when the amount originally offered is fair, proportionate and in line with our policies and procedures.

4.8. In all cases staff members dealing with complaints will keep customer regularly updated and informed in the way they have asked to be kept in contact with, even where there is no new information to provide.

4.9. We will maintain records of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This will include the original complaint, and the date received; all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared. This will be retained in line with our data retention policy.

4.10. At the completion of each stage we will write to the customer advising them of:

- the complaint stage
- the outcome of the complaint
- the reasons for any decisions made
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right
- details of any outstanding actions
- details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied



- any other relevant information

5. Escalations

- 5.1. Customers who wish to take their complaint beyond stage 1 are requested to do so within four weeks of B3Living's formal response. The escalation request can be written or verbal
- 5.2. In some circumstances a customer may raise an issue with us as a complaint which needs to be escalated to a senior member of staff for investigation straight away, bypassing our initial stage 1 process.
- 5.3. For example, complex complaints may need to be assigned to a more senior member of staff in the organisation. The reasons for escalation can include:
 - High-profile or reputational risk to the business
 - Health and safety risks where serious detriment could be implied
 - Historic or very complex cases which cover multiple areas of the business
 - Vexatious complainants (see section 6 for definition)
 - Gross misconduct allegations
 - Vulnerable customers who require a home visit to facilitate this process
- 5.4. If a complaint is determined as needing escalation for one of the above reasons, it will be assigned to the most appropriate senior manager to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days and to investigate and respond to the customer within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- 5.5. Once a complaint has exhausted our internal complaints procedure, if the customer still feels the matter has not been put right, they may refer their complaint to a designated person or the Housing Ombudsman.
- 5.6. You can go directly to the Housing Ombudsmen eight weeks after you have had your final response to your complaint from us. They will work to resolve your complaint in several ways.
- 5.7. You can contact the Housing Ombudsman by: writing to them at: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ. Telephone: 0300 111 3000. Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk, for more information about the Housing Ombudsman service visit - www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- 5.8. The Housing Ombudsman will also assist customers throughout the life of the complaint, and not just after the complaint's procedure has been exhausted.

6. Vexatious complainants

- 6.1. It is recognised that complainants can become frustrated and feel aggrieved. However, there are a small minority of complainants that become vexatious.



The term vexatious for this purpose is not a legal definition but is viewed as behaviour that causes annoyance, harassment or intentional annoyance.

- 6.2. If a complainant is found to be vexatious we will take appropriate action in line with our approach to tenancy management. (See the complaint handling procedure for further details.)

7. Roles and responsibilities

- 7.1. The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that all staff and Board Members comply with this policy. Staff and managers are responsible for responding to complaints in accordance with the agreed timescales, having undertaken the appropriate investigation.
- 7.2. Complaints are assigned to the member of staff that is best placed to answer them depending on the nature of the complaint. Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of the procedure for logging and handling of complaints. The Customer Insight Manager can provide support with this.
- 7.3. The Customer Insight Manager has a co-ordinating role for complaints. The Customer Insight Manager has the autonomy to intervene and work with members of staff to assist in resolving complaints and also disputes that involve multiple service areas. Complaints are assigned to different members of staff depending on their nature and who is best placed to answer them. The Customer Insight Manager is responsible for reporting on our performance and advises best practice, and acts as a contact for the Housing Ombudsman.

8. Compliments and Comments

- 8.1. B3Living staff will log, monitor, and report on compliments received from our customers. Compliments are defined as any expression or gratitude, or praise received from our customers about the service they have received from either an individual member of staff, operative, team or contractor operating on our behalf. Compliments will be forwarded to the relevant team, contractor or staff member's manager so that staff and teams receive the recognition for their work.
- 8.2. Any feedback or comments received from customers about our services that does not fit within our policy definition of a complaint or compliment, such as a suggestion for a service improvement (but not based on a personal experience or previous service failure), will be recorded and forwarded to the Customer Insight Manager for consideration.

9. Recording and Monitoring

- 9.1. The Customer Insight Manager is responsible for monitoring customer feedback and producing monitoring information about complaints for the



Executive, senior management team and the Board. This information will include giving details of numbers of complaints at each stage, any trends identified, and actions taken where complaints are found to be justified.

- 9.2. This information will feature in the annual report for customers. We will also provide more regular information on complaints via our customer communications.
- 9.3. A complaints log will be maintained on the housing management system (QLx). All staff and managers are responsible for ensuring that complaints, however received, are logged and responded to on time
- 9.4. The log will be used to generate management information as required

10. Relevant regulation and policies

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (HCA, July 2017)

Compensation Policy