



Complaints Policy

Approver	EMT
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Policy owner	Director of Housing
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Related Documents	N/A

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 C&C's Board of Management expects complaints to be responded to in a timely manner and that learning from complaints is recorded and shared in order that the services we provide continuously improve.
- 1.2 C&C always tries to resolve issues quickly and effectively when they arise. However, there are circumstances whereby a complaint or issue will be formally addressed through our complaints policy.
- 1.3 There are also some circumstances whereby we will have to manage a vexatious complainer.

2 PURPOSE

- 2.1 This policy sets out how we handle complaints and vexatious complainers.
- 2.2 This policy is in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service code for complaint handling.
- 2.3 This policy ensures we comply with the relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and Housing Act 1996.

3 SCOPE

- 3.1 Any resident from Housing or Care can make a complaint.
- 3.2 Potential residents in the application stage can also make a complaint.
- 3.3 Former residents can make a complaint within 12 months of their tenancy or licence with C&C ending.
- 3.4 Those acting on behalf of residents, such as relatives or advocates can make complaints on behalf of residents.
- 3.5 This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers and Board and Committee members. It also applies to those employed by agencies under agreements with C&C. All of these will be referred to as 'Workers' in this policy.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 The Director of Housing has overall responsibility for this policy and ensures it is reviewed and updated in a timely manner.
- 4.2 The Office and Feedback Manager is responsible for implementing this policy.
- 4.3 The Director of Housing has overall responsibility for approving key decisions within this policy.

5 POLICY

- 5.1 A complaint is defined 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.”

- 5.2 A complaint may be made by e-mail, telephone, online, letter or in person.
- 5.3 C&C will accept complaints which are made within twelve months from the issue occurring.
- 5.4 Complaints will not be accepted if the matter has already been addressed within a previous complaint and an outcome provided.
- 5.5 Any legal proceedings such as a disrepair claim will not be handled through the complaints process and will be handled through legal channels.
- 5.6 We operate a two stage complaints process in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service code of complaint handling.
- 5.7 The Feedback team will log and acknowledge complaints within 2 working days of receipt.
- 5.8 The Feedback team will investigate the complaint and respond with an outcome within 10 working days. If an outcome is not possible within 10 working days, the complainant will receive an update on its progress within this period with a revised target date for a full response.

- 5.9 If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, they have the right to escalate the complaint to the Appeal review stage. All documents relating to the first stage of the complaint including the outcome required from the Appeal will be given to a Director and two resident members of our Service Scrutiny Panel for review. We will then provide an outcome to the Appeal within 20 working days. If an outcome is not possible within 20 working days, the complainant will receive an update on its progress within this period with a revised target date for a full response.
- 5.10 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may escalate the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). The HOS will generally not investigate a complaint until 8 weeks have passed since the date of the outcome letter. An MP/Local Councillor can escalate this sooner, within 8 weeks of the Appeal review stage outcome. For complaints about care services, escalation will be to the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- 5.11 We will always ensure that we carry out any reasonable adjustments to the complaints process for residents that require us to do so. This is in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Impact Assessment.
- 5.12 We will publish updates on our performance on a regular basis through our Annual Review and on our website.
- 5.13 *Vexatious Complaints***
- 5.14 A vexatious complaint is one that is unreasonable, without foundation and can be repetitive and solely to harass. For example, a historical complaint which is made regularly despite reaching a conclusion. Complaints can also be considered vexatious if they are made numerous times to different members of staff.
- 5.15 Each case will be judged on its own merits and new complaints from a resident cannot be assumed they are vexatious even though a resident may have made unreasonable complaints before.
- 5.16 We reserve the right to deal with unreasonable, vexatious and repeat complaints using the Vexatious complaints procedure.
- 5.17 In line with the procedure, where a vexatious complaint is identified, we will provide one verbal warning. If the vexatious behaviour continues, we will provide one written warning. If there is no improvement in this behaviour, we will assign the complainant a single point of contact for all communications. We will review the status every 6 months.
- 5.18 If unreasonable behaviour continues beyond this point, we reserve the right to take enforcement action.