



## CO-OP HOMES

# COMMERCIAL CLIENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

Last approved by Board: 21 September 2023

### 1) Aim

This policy outlines Co-op Homes' (henceforth referred to as 'CHS') approach to complaints from its commercial clients. The aims of this policy are:

- To provide a non-contractual route to resolving issues between the client and the provider (CHS).
- To provide a framework for managing poor or non-provision of services through an accessible, confidential, and easy to use procedure, which offers rapid action and response.
- To ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively and fairly, even where complaint outcomes are not to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- To ensure that complaints are taken seriously and used positively to improve how CHS operates.

### 2) Who can complain under this Policy?

Clients who receive services from CHS under contract. CHS welcomes complaints from its commercial clients and they do not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as a complaint.

### 3) What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with services provided under contract, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by CHS, our colleagues, or those acting on our behalf which affect a client and which fall within the scope of the management contract.

A complaint, whether justified or not, may be about something that CHS should or should not have done, has done badly, or has done or not done in accordance with the terms and conditions of the management contract. A complaint may also be about a complainant feeling that they have not been treated fairly or they have been discriminated against in the provision of a service.

CHS will accept, act on, or escalate complaints unless there is a valid reason not to do so. The following would **not usually** be accepted or escalated through CHS's client complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to consider them:

- Requests for a particular service. A service request is a request from a client to CHS requiring action to be taken to put something right. However, a complaint may subsequently be raised if the client raises dissatisfaction with CHS' response to their service request and if there has been a service failure that should be investigated, put right and learnt from.
- Complaints being dealt with through the dispute resolution procedure as set out in the management contract.
- Complaints relating to an active legal claim about or against CHS, or when a client is taking CHS to court.
- New issues that arise during a complaint investigation, unless they are relevant to the complaint under investigation. Additional complaints will be incorporated, however, if they are relevant and the response has not yet been issued.

- Anonymous complaints.
- Complaints about something more than six months old, unless it is a recurring issue that has been continuing for longer than 6 months and is still persisting.
- Matters that have already been considered under this complaints policy.
- Issues relating to how CHS is governed which need to be dealt with through CHS's Code of Conduct.
- Unreasonable or vexatious complaints from clients or their representatives. We will consider and review whether there are matters that may be contributing to the way the complainant is choosing to do business with us, and may consider reasonable adjustments. We will review whether the complainant is being appropriately supported prior to deciding whether to refuse to investigate the concern.

If CHS chooses not to accept or escalate a complaint for one of the above reasons when asked, CHS will formally write to the client setting out its reasons why.

#### 4) **Receiving complaints**

Client complaints may be received through any route, however the preferred method is by email to [homes@coophomes.coop](mailto:homes@coophomes.coop) or by submitting an online complaint at <https://www.coophomes.coop/about-us/compliments-and-complaints/log-a-complaint-online/>.

#### 5) **Client Complaints procedure**

CHS will manage complaints as follows:

- **Acknowledgement (and logging)** - complaints will be acknowledged (and logged internally) within 5 days of receipt. Co-op Homes will encourage clients to be specific about what they are complaining about and what outcomes they are seeking from CHS.
- **Stage 1** - Complaints Officers independent to the complaint will investigate the complaint – giving the complainant and any other parties to the complaint the opportunity to state their views on the subject matter of the complaint. Matters that are easily resolvable in the complaint will be addressed as soon as possible. Once the report is finalised and agreed, the Complaints Officer will communicate this to the complainant.
- **Stage 2** – if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, they can request a review within 20 days of us issuing a stage 1 reply. The Managing Director of CHS will review the complaint. Once the report is finalised and agreed, the Managing Director will communicate this to the complainant. This concludes CHS's complaints procedure.

CHS follows the maximum target times for the complaint procedure:

Complaints procedure	Timescales
Acknowledgement of the complaint (and logging)	5 working days from receipt
Stage 1 - Results of the investigation of a complaint	10 working days from acknowledgement of the complaint
Stage 2 - Results of a subsequent review of a complaint	20 working days from the request for a review

If it is not possible for CHS to achieve these timescales, CHS will communicate how much extra time is needed to the complainant and the reasons why there will be a delay.

#### 6) **Communications**

When communicating with clients about complaints, CHS will use plain language to address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

At the end of the complaint investigation and at the end of the review (if there is one) CHS will write to the client to say:

- what the outcome of their complaint is
- the reasons why decisions have been made
- what offers CHS is making to put things right
- what actions remain outstanding.

This will be kept on file and the progression of any remaining actions will be communicated to the client.

During the complaint investigation and in any review, clients will be given a fair opportunity to set out their views, and comment on any findings before a final decision is made.

Communication with the complainant will not generally identify individuals involved in delivering the service (volunteers, staff, service provider or contractors) because all are acting on behalf of CHS.

CHS will keep complainants regularly updated and informed even where there is no new information to provide.

CHS will at all times comply with the Equality Act 2010 and adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs (this includes the CHS Unacceptable Behaviour Policy).