



Ongo Homes

Complaints & Feedback

Policy

January 2021

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V6.0	Compliance Review	26/01/2021	Group Common Board	January 2022
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V4.0	Health Check	06/12/2018	Heads of Service	December 2021

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1. Our policy is...

- 1.1 A complaint shall be defined as 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.¹
- 1.2 At Ongo, we do our best to get things right and provide an excellent level of service. However, we recognise that things can go wrong and that there may be reason to complain.
- 1.3 We welcome all feedback to ensure that we continue to improve our services and learn from complaints and feedback to prevent similar problems in the future.
- 1.4 We recognise any dissatisfaction with the level of service you receive as a complaint. However, if we can help resolve your problem straight away we will, without you having to make a formal complaint.
- 1.5 We support you to make a complaint by making the process as easy as possible.
- 1.6 Your complaint will be resolved quickly and completely, ensuring we listen to your opinion and understand fully what your complaint is about.

2. It applies to...

- 2.1 All customers of Ongo Homes (OH) and those who may have been affected by a service we or someone working on behalf of us has provided.
- 2.2 Anyone helping to make a complaint on behalf of one of our customers (for example a family member, friend, support worker, MP or Councillor) or as part of a collective complaint, providing consent from the customer is given.
- 2.3 Non-tenants who have suffered or who have been negatively affected as a result of the actions of an employee, a contractor or work carried out by OH.
- 2.4 Only our employees and companies providing a service on behalf of OH are included in this policy. We cannot take complaints that are outside of our control (for example complaints about other landlords, Government Policies or external companies).

3. This policy does not apply...

- 3.1 We will accept all complaints unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- 3.2 We will not take complaints about damage to personal property unless it has been caused by something we have done or have failed to do. We advise you take out appropriate household contents insurances in the event of any unforeseen incidents.
- 3.3 We will only accept complaints if they are made within 2 months of when you first became aware of the problem, unless:
 - it is a reoccurring issue that has not been resolved;

¹ The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, July 2020

- it is a safeguarding or health and safety issue; or
 - if there are exceptional circumstances that prevented you from telling us about the complaint (i.e., hospital stays or seeking additional advice and support from professional organisations)
- 3.4 We will not investigate a complaint that has already been investigated through the OH complaints procedure unless it is a reoccurring problem that has not been resolved from your initial complaint.
- 3.5 Any complaints regarding anti-social behaviour or nuisance by your neighbours will be dealt under our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Although complaints about the way we have handled your anti-social behaviour case can be dealt with under this policy, reviews under the Community Trigger are subject to North Lincolnshire's Safer Neighbourhoods external process.
- 3.6 We will not investigate complaints where a complainant's behaviour is abusive or threatening in line with our Unacceptable Behaviour Procedure.
- 3.7 There are some customers that make unreasonable demands on our time and make repeat unreasonable or unjustified complaints about the same problem. This behaviour impacts on our ability to provide a high level of service and can disadvantage other customers. Where a customer makes repeat complaints, we will discuss with the customers in the first instance and if the unreasonable demands continue, we reserve the right to stop the complaint investigation and close the complaint in line with our Unacceptable Behaviour Procedure. Depending on the circumstance, the customer may be referred to a support service or contact will be restricted to a named person or method of contact. In reaching any decision in this regard OH will have regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.8 Decisions around the allocation of our homes will not be dealt with under this policy and will be under the appropriate appeals process. However, if you are dissatisfied with the way in which your allocation has been handled, it will be covered under this Complaints Policy.
- 3.9 No further action will be taken on a complaint under this policy and it will be passed to the in-house legal team or external solicitors to respond as appropriate if we are:
- a) dealing with a complaint from a customer under this policy that has not yet been resolved; and
 - b) a letter of claim is received from the customer's legal representative; and
 - c) The letter of claim relates to the same or similar issues as the complaint.
- 3.10 We will not accept the complaint under this policy and it will continue to be dealt with by the in-house legal team or external solicitors to respond to as appropriate if we have:
- a) received a letter of claim from a customer's legal representative and
 - b) we subsequently receive a complaint from the customer about the same or similar issues as contained in the letter of claim

3.11 A detailed explanation will be provided to the customer setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. Customers have the right to challenge this decision by taking their complaint to the Ombudsman. Where appropriate the Ombudsman will instruct the landlord to take on the complaint.

4. Making a complaint.....

4.1 We will make every effort to resolve any expressions of dissatisfaction in an informal way when you first contact us and will try to find quick resolutions to resolve your complaint.

4.2 If we cannot resolve your complaint when we first speak with you or you feel that a formal complaint should be made, we will let you know who will be dealing with your complaint and agree a preferred contact method and your availability for them to make contact with you.

4.3 A representative can deal with your complaint on your behalf, and you can be represented and / or accompanied at any meeting with us where this has been requested or offered and where this is reasonable.

4.4 We can only resolve your complaint if you provide us with all the relevant information and are clear about what you want us to do to resolve the matter. We cannot investigate anonymous, unsigned complaints but these may be kept on record.

4.5 You must co-operate with the person investigating the complaint and allow them access to your home where necessary to help resolve the complaint.

4.6 Complaints can be made through all communication methods which include social media platforms made directly to Ongo newsfeeds or pages. When a complaint is made through social media, we will endeavour to resolve the issue at first point of contact. Should we need further information we will ask you to discuss the complaint in a private setting to ensure your privacy and confidentiality is maintained.

4.7 Stage 1 complaint investigation

4.7.1 We will acknowledge your complaint during your initial contact and let you know who will be dealing with your complaint.

4.7.2 Your complaint will be investigated and completed within 10 working days. If we are unable to do this we will inform you, explain the reasons why and we will then agree a new date to complete your complaint with you. You will be given a fair opportunity to set out your position.

4.7.3 We will keep you informed throughout the investigation.

4.7.4 We will discuss the findings of the investigation with you before reaching a decision. We will try to find a solution to make the matter right where this is possible. We will then let you know when you can expect the matter to be fully closed. We will provide you with a written summary of our decision.

4.8 Stage 2 complaint investigation

4.8.1 If you are unhappy with the outcome or handling of the stage 1 complaint, you can ask for your complaint to be looked at again. You must do this within 2 weeks of receiving our decision under Stage 1.

4.8.2 You will be asked to explain the reason why you are still unhappy and what your expectations are.

4.8.3 We will let you know who will be dealing with your complaint and agree a convenient time for them to make contact with you. They will need to review your initial complaint, but we aim to review the investigation and provide you with a final decision within 10 working days of you asking for your complaint to be escalated. You will be given a fair opportunity to set out your position.

4.8.4 We will keep you informed throughout the investigation and agree any extensions to timeframes with you.

4.8.5 We will discuss the findings of the investigation with you before reaching a decision. We will try to find a solution to make the matter right where this is possible. We will then let you know when you can expect the matter to be fully closed. We will provide you with a written summary of our decision.

4.9 If you are still unhappy

4.9.1 Although we will make every effort to resolve your complaint, if you are still unhappy with the outcome you have the following options:

- If you are a tenant, leaseholder or housing applicant, you can take the issue further either:-
 - through a “Designated Person” (an MP, Local Councillor, or independent customer panel) within 8 weeks of the Stage 2 decision; or
 - by contacting the Housing Ombudsman directly (see below). We will ensure that the information on how to contact the Housing Ombudsman is easily available during every stage of the complaints process
- If your complaint is in relation the reasonableness and costs relating to service charges, you can contact the First Tier Tribunal Service for further guidance

4.10 Housing Ombudsman

4.10.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service can assist throughout the lifetime of a complaint. Complainants have the opportunity to discuss their ongoing complaint with the Housing Ombudsman Dispute Support Advisors.

4.10.2 The Housing Ombudsman will only investigate a complaint if you have completed our complaints process fully. You can contact the Housing Ombudsman to investigate your complaint once 8 weeks have passed from the date of our Stage 2 decision. If you have chosen to contact a Designated Person, they can decide to refer the case to the Housing Ombudsman on your behalf. We will co-operate fully with all requests from the Housing Ombudsman to support them in their findings and comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman are:

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Online complaint form: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/

5. Compensation

- 5.1 We may feel that compensation can be offered in some circumstances as an outcome of a complaint. Compensation can take a range of forms - a financial payment, a gesture of goodwill, or replacement of an item. There is a separate compensation policy which explains how we decide where compensation may be payable and in what form.
- 5.2 If it is found that compensation should be given as part of a complaint remedy, we will deal with it under this policy and not the compensation policy.

6. Making sure we do what we say.....

- 6.1 Our customer facing staff and those involved in complaint investigations will receive full complaints training, with periodic refresher training. Each manager will receive regular reports on complaint handling in their service area.
- 6.2 We will ensure our complaint policy and procedure complies with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- 6.3 We will monitor that we keep to agreed timescales through various performance reports to our management teams.
- 6.4 We will monitor that we have kept you informed, resolved your complaint fully and how happy you are with the handling of your complaint. We will do this via a satisfaction survey. This information will be reported to our Leadership Team, Customer Engagement structures and our Group Common Board.
- 6.5 Our overall performance will also be monitored by our Tenant Complaints Monitoring Group which provides us with a customer perspective on the quality of our complaints handling, what trends are emerging and what we've done to prevent similar complaints happening again.
- 6.6 We will report on our performance and how we have improved our services through complaints to our customers at least once a year.

7. Other things to bear in mind....

7.1 Other policies and legislation

Document or legislation	What it is
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	Any complaints from one resident about another are dealt with under the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. We will only investigate complaints about the Ongo Homes Anti-Social

Document or legislation	What it is
	Behaviour service. We cannot investigate complaints that refer to the Safer Neighbourhoods Community Trigger.
Compensation Policy	Any compensation offered as part of a complaint will follow the guidelines set out in the compensation policy.
Choice Based Lettings Policy	Initial appeals against an allocation decision are dealt with under the Choice Based Lettings Policy.
Customer Charter	We will ensure we follow the principles of the customer charter whilst investigating complaints.
Designated person	The designated person can be an MP, a local councillor or a Tenant Panel. Their role is to help resolve disputes between tenants and their landlords which they can do in whatever way they think is most likely to work. If the designated person cannot help they can refer a complaint to the Ombudsman .
Equality and Diversity Policy	We believe everyone has the right to fair and equal treatment and recognise that people who use our services come from diverse backgrounds. We ensure we follow the principles set out in this policy.
First Tier Tribunal	The First-tier tribunal – Property Chamber (Residential Property) provides an independent service for settling disputes involving leasehold property.
Housing Ombudsman Service	The Housing Ombudsman is set up by law to look at complaints about housing organisations. The service is free, independent and impartial. Only tenants and resident leaseholders can use this service.

8. We'll look at this again.....

- 8.1 In a year's time and then three yearly after that. An earlier review will be completed if required.