



## Cornwall Rural Housing Association Limited

### Complaints Policy

#### 1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Cornwall Rural Housing Association Limited (CRHA) is committed to the provision of high quality services. Our vision is to provide homes to make life better, we also take pride in being a people business. Our customers have the right to complain about a service failure and there will be occasions when customers will express dissatisfaction about something we have done or have failed to do or about a decision we have taken.
- 1.2 In line with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 CRHA will comply with all the provisions in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (the Code). CRHA aim to operate an open and accountable complaints procedure, based on clear service standards. We will implement this policy following a stage- by-stage process to investigate all expressions of dissatisfaction.
- 1.3 This policy encompasses all aspects of service delivery to customers and includes services provided by our contractors.

#### 2.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 2.1 CRHA aim to treat all complainants fairly and equitably, in a non-discriminatory manner and without prejudice. We seek to embed equality, fairness, inclusivity, diversity and respect in our complaints handling policy and processes.
- 2.2 CRHA recognise that some customers may wish to be represented by a “designated person” such as Citizens Advice or any other appropriate agencies who may be able to provide support with making a complaint. CRHA will refer and assist customers to appropriate agencies in order to provide support with making a complaint.
- 2.3 If a customer does not have the mental capacity to make a complaint, we will accept complaints from an advocate, an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) or Legal Representative.

#### 3.0 Legal Obligations

- 3.1 The policy will comply with the Localism Act (2011), Housing Act (1996), General Data Protection Act (GDPR) (2018), Equality Act (2010), Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code, the Regulator of Social Housing Transparency Influence and Accountability Standard and the Health and Social Care Act (2008).
- 3.2 This policy is compliant with the requirements of our Regulators, specifically the Housing Ombudsman’s Service Complaints Handling Code and the Regulator for Social Housing’s Transparency Influence and Accountability Standard.
- 3.3 It is important that customers understand and appreciate that CRHA will treat all complaints in the upmost confidence, complying with all aspects of the General Data Protection Act (2018).

#### 4.0 Policy

- 4.1 For the purposes of this Policy a complaint is defined as: “an expression of dissatisfaction, however, made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the CRHA, its own staff, or those acting on behalf, affecting a customer or a group of customers”.
- 4.2 CRHA recognises that a customer/s does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated

as such. Whenever a customer/s expresses dissatisfaction CRHA will give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative will be handled in line with the CRHA's complaints policy.

- 4.3 CRHA will treat all initial reports of dissatisfaction as a "service request" unless our customer wishes to make a formal complaint. A service request is when a customer/s requests CRHA to put a matter right. CRHA will try and resolve a service request within 48 hours. An example of a service request is when a customer is chasing a repair. All service requests will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.
- 4.4 CRHA will raise a complaint when our customer/s expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request. Our complaint process comprises of two stages (Stage 1 and Stage 2) investigated and dealt with by senior Officers and Management. CRHA will not stop their efforts to address the service request if our customer complains. All complaints will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.
- 4.5 CRHA will respond to all recorded complaints within set timescales. We will monitor complaints to ensure that our complaint policy and procedures are followed, and regular contact is made with the complainant throughout the process.
- 4.6 CRHA will ensure that any customer complaint handled by a third party (for example a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage will form part of the 2 stage complaints process as set out in the code. We will ensure that no customer would go through two complaint processes.
- 4.7 Publicise our complaints service as widely as possible and also provide copies of the policy on request to customers or advocates.
- 4.8 Promote a positive culture about complaints to ensure that staff understand the policy and procedure, and are appropriately trained and supported.
- 4.9 Accept complaints in person, by telephone, letter, email, social media portal or via the website. We will also accept complaints submitted by advocates on behalf of complainants who have consent in place.
- 4.10 CRHA will not accept complaints or offer escalation to the next stage of our internal complaints procedure in the following circumstances:-
  - Where the problem is a recurring issue, and we consider we have previously resolved the matter.
  - Where a complainant is not engaging with CRHA and failing to provide relevant information relating to their complaint.
  - Where legal proceedings have started.
  - Where a customer displays behaviour which CRHA consider to be unreasonable or vexatious.

If CRHA decide not to accept a complaint, for any of the above or any other reason, we will explain why, and the customer will have the right to challenge this decision by bringing the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

- 4.11 A complaint about anti-social behaviour from a CRHA customer would not be regarded as a complaint (anti-social behaviour is covered by a separate policy), unless the complaint is about CRHA's handling of their anti-social behaviour service.

- 4.12 Any expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey will not be defined as a complaint. CRHA will, wherever possible, make the person completing the survey aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to.

## **5.0 Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report**

- 5.1 CRHA will carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure that its complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.
- 5.2 CRHA will publish to its staff and Board members on a quarterly basis information relating to complaint handling including qualitative and quantitative analysis.
- 5.3 CRHA will publish any findings of non-compliance with this Code to the Housing Ombudsman together with any other reports or publications produced by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to the work of CRHA.
- 5.4 CRHA will publish the annual complaints performance and service improvement on an annual basis in a designated Customer Report showing the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints.

## **6.0 Member Responsible for Complaints**

- 6.1 CRHA will appoint a member from their Board of Management to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. We will refer to this person as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).
- 6.2 CRHA will provide the MRC and our Board of Management regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance.
- 6.3 CRHA will carry out regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling and report the outcomes to the MRC and Board of Management.
- 6.4 CRHA will give regular updates to the MRC and Board of Management on any outcomes of investigations carried out by Housing Ombudsman together with progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings.
- 6.5 CRHA will ensure that the annual complaints performance and service improvement report is provided to the MRC and the Board of Management for scrutiny.

## **7.0 Compensation**

- 7.1 CRHA will acknowledge when something has gone wrong and will set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put matters right.
- 7.2 CRHA will take account of the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies for compensating any customer/s who have been affected by a service failure.
- 7.3 CRHA will compensate anyone who has suffered a financial loss because of our service failure with a fair and reasonable sum. In line with our Compensation Policy we will explain how the sum has been determined and provide customers with a reasonable period of time in order to accept that offer. If the complainant is a CRHA tenant in rent arrears, we will offset any financial compensation against any debt owed to CRHA.

## **8.0 Compliments**

- 8.1 Any compliments received will be passed to the relevant team and team member. Compliments will be recorded and included in our regular reporting to CRHA's Board of Management.

## **9.0 Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

- 9.1 CRHA will record performance on complaints on a designated dashboard and report findings to the Board of Management on a quarterly basis.
- 9.2 CRHA will publish their performance on complaints in the annual report.
- 9.3 CRHA will carry out induction and refresher training for all employees to ensure they are aware of our commitment to excellent service delivery standards and targets.
- 9.4 The Complaint's policy will be reviewed every three years.