Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Cornwall Rural Housing Association Limited (CRHA) aspires to provide a good quality housing service meeting the needs and wishes of people living in our homes in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Our Policy aims to get things right first time, however, there may be times when we do not meet our standards. This procedure covers the steps to deal with a complaint.

We define a complaint 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".

Examples include:

- *Length of time take to provide information*
- *Failure to keep you informed of a decision*
- *Attitude or behaviour of staff or contractors*
- *Any kind of discrimination*

We 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. We will aim to resolve a service request within 48 hours.

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. We will not stop our efforts to address the service request if our customer complains.

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.

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.

We will also 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. We will ensure that no customer would go through two complaint processes.

How to make a Complaint?

CRHA operate a variety of communication channels and a complaint can be made through any of these means:-

In writing	-	Cornwall Rural Housing Association Limited 19 Callywith Gate, Launceston Road, Bodmin Cornwall PL31 2RQ
Face to Face	-	During customers visits with any of our visiting colleagues
By Telephone	-	01208 892000
By Email	-	info@crha.org.uk
Website	-	www.crha.org.uk
Tenant Portal	-	My CRHA - https://crha.org.uk
Twitter	-	@CornwallRuralHA
Facebook/ Facebook Messenger	-	Cornwall Rural Housing Association

Under the terms of the tenancy agreement or lease it is important that customers tell us if we fail to deliver the service, we commit to provide so that we can take the necessary steps to improve our service.

It is our policy to respond to complaints quickly and try and resolve any disputes within the set timeframes.

We record and analyse the number of complaints we receive about our various services to help us to review and improve them. This procedure refers to “working days” which for this purpose means Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.

If you wish to make a complaint, please provide as much detail as possible and to state clearly what you think should be done to solve your problem. It would be helpful if you can tell us if you have reported the problem previously and, if so, to whom and when.

We will need details of your name, address and telephone number.

An issue will be treated as a complaint if a customer tells us that we have failed in our service delivery. Customers are asked to contact us as soon as possible and complaints must be made within 12 months of the incident taking place. Wherever possible, customers are asked to bring the problem to the attention of the person concerned. Sometimes complaints arise from a misunderstanding which can be explained and resolved quickly once a member of staff is made aware of the problem.

A complaint will be dealt with confidentially and without bias.

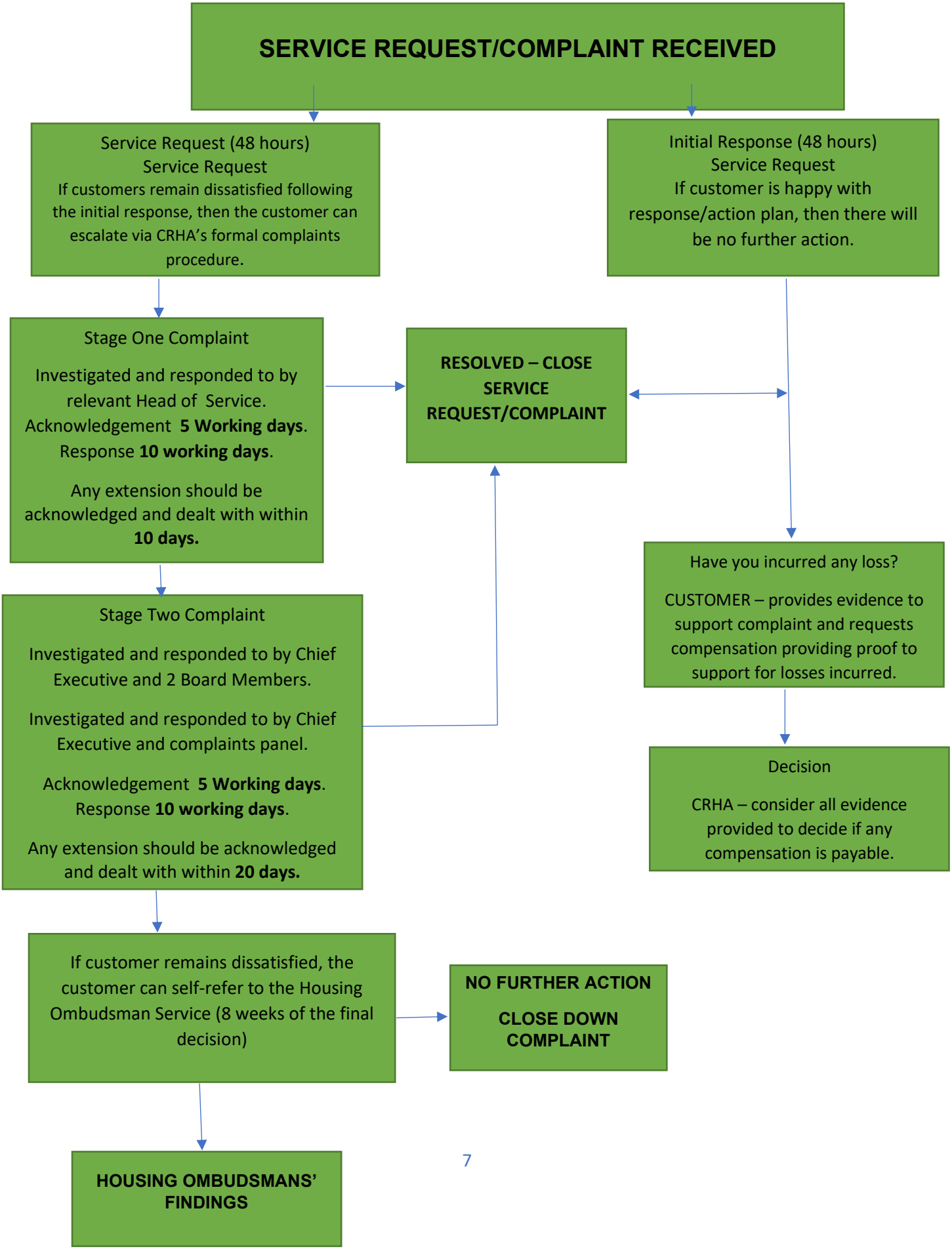
Complaints Procedure

Stage When and Who	Action and Steps	Comments and follow up
Service Request **Investigated and responded to by front line officer (relevant Service)** **48 Hours**	Record dissatisfaction from customer and explain complaint handling process. Are they happy for us to treat this as a service request and resolve in 48 hours or do they wish to formally complain (if do they wish to formally complain go straight to the complaint process pass to relevant Officer/Manager). Whilst Stage 1 process is initiated Officer dealing with service request should continue to resolve the issue. Ascertain from the customer what outcome they want in order to resolve the dissatisfaction. Report and log dissatisfaction on SDM and on the Complaints spreadsheet. If necessary, assign to another Officer/Manager. Timescale – 48 hours from the time the customer reported the issue.	Officer dealing with the service request should action tasks to resolve the customers dissatisfaction. Contact customer to explain what action has been taken and ask if they are satisfied with the outcome. If they are happy with the outcome the service request can be closed. If the customer is not happy with the resolution, then this gets escalated to a Stage 1 complaint. Officer to complete Complaints spreadsheet and if need be, assign to relevant Service Manager to proceed with Stage 1 complaint.
Stage 1 Complaint **Investigated and responded to by relevant Head of Service/Manager** **Acknowledgement 5 Working days** **Response 10 working days** **Extension 10 working days**	Formal complaint must be acknowledged, defined and logged at Stage 1 **within 5 working days** by Manager assigned to complaint. The customer must be issued a full response to stage 1 complaints **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged. The Manager investigating the complaint must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the customer of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be **no more than 10 working days** without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident. The customer must be informed of the extension, the reasons why and be issued with the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.	Acknowledge complaint within 5 working days and send complaints leaflet. Update SDM and Complaint spreadsheet. Customer Satisfaction sought (preferred method of communication – writing, email, text). Consider any loss the complainant has had and refer to compensation policy (evidence required for any financial loss). If customer remains unsatisfied notify Chief Executive of escalation so that Stage 2 complaint can be processed.

	A complaint response must be provided to the customer when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the customer. All points raised in the complaint definition must be addressed and clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. Where customers raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related, and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint. The following should be included in any Stage 1 communication (clear, plain language) :- a. the complaint stage b. the complaint definition c. the decision on the complaint d. the reasons for any decisions made e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right f. details of any outstanding actions g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response Complaint reviewed and resolution in place and customer notified. Case closed if resolved in 10 working days with customer's consent. If customer remains unhappy with all or part of the complaint, they can appeal decision and escalate to Stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure.	

Stage 2 Complaint **Investigated and responded to by Head of Service/Chief Executive and 2 Board Members** **Acknowledgement 5 Working days** **Response 20 Working days** **Extension 20 Working days**	Head of Service to notify customer and update SDM and Complaint spreadsheet, before briefing Chief Executive. Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined, and logged at stage 2 of the complaint procedure within **5 working days** of the escalation request being received. Chief Executive and Board Member panel must issue a final response to the stage 2 **within 20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged. The Chief Executive must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the customer of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be **no more than 20 working days** without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident. The customer must be informed of the extension, the reasons why and be issued with the Housing Ombudsman's contact details. A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident. All points raised in the complaint definition must be addressed and clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. The following should be included in any Stage 2 communication (clear, plain language) :- a. the complaint stage b. the complaint definition c. the decision on the complaint d. the reasons for any decisions made e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right	Acknowledge complaint within 5 working days. Update SDM and Complaint spreadsheet. Customer Satisfaction sought (preferred method of communication – writing, email, text). Consider any loss the complainant has had and refer to compensation policy (evidence required for any financial loss). If customer remains unsatisfied advise them that they can escalate, and that the complaint can be investigated by the Housing Ombudsman.

	f. details of any outstanding actions g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman if the customer is not satisfied with the response Complaint reviewed and resolution in place and customer notified. Case closed if resolved in 20 working days with customer's consent.	
Complaint Closed	The Chief Executive to notify customer that the internal complaint handling procedure has been concluded and has been closed. If customer remains dissatisfied, they can then approach the Housing Ombudsman service (within 8 weeks of the final decision) and escalate the complaint.	Chief Executive to ask that the complaint is closed on SDM and the Complaint spreadsheet updated.


SERVICE REQUEST/COMPLAINT RECEIVED
Service Request (48 hours)
Service Request
If customers remain dissatisfied following the initial response, then the customer can escalate via CRHA's formal complaints procedure.
Initial Response (48 hours)
Service Request
If customer is happy with response/action plan, then there will be no further action.
Stage One Complaint
Investigated and responded to by relevant Head of Service.
Acknowledgement 5 Working days.
Response 10 working days.
Any extension should be acknowledged and dealt with within 10 days.
RESOLVED – CLOSE SERVICE REQUEST/COMPLAINT
Have you incurred any loss?
CUSTOMER – provides evidence to support complaint and requests compensation providing proof to support for losses incurred.
Stage Two Complaint
Investigated and responded to by Chief Executive and 2 Board Members.
Investigated and responded to by Chief Executive and complaints panel.
Acknowledgement 5 Working days.
Response 10 working days.
Any extension should be acknowledged and dealt with within 20 days.
Decision
CRHA – consider all evidence provided to decide if any compensation is payable.
If customer remains dissatisfied, the customer can self-refer to the Housing Ombudsman Service (8 weeks of the final decision)
NO FURTHER ACTION
CLOSE DOWN COMPLAINT
HOUSING OMBUDSMANS' FINDINGS