

Policy Title	Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy
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Tenants Consultation	Tenant Surveys and Complaints Cases raised 2023-2024
Approved by Operations Committee	June 2024
Date of Next Review	June 2027

1. Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

Nehemiah Housing is committed to providing a high-quality service to all its customers however we recognise that there may be occasions when things go wrong and the service, we provide may not meet your expectations.

Our mission is to build successful, sustainable, and diverse communities by providing housing and well-being services in a culturally sensitive way to our current and our future customers.

We recognise that comments, compliments, and complaints are valuable customer feedback and a positive contribution to the development and improvement of our services. Nehemiah Housing welcomes all feedback from customers.

2. Policy statement

Comments, compliments, and complaints will be used to continuously improve our services to customers. We will deal with all complaints fairly and without bias.

We will use this policy to:

- Align with our strategic objective of delivering excellent customer service with respect
- Provide services customers want and need
- Identify problems and thereby improve services
- Be part of a positive can-do culture
- Be a learning organisation which highlights areas for improving customer service
- Reveal where processes are not user friendly
- Improve customer relations, employee morale and company credibility
- Prevent repeat problems
- Record all comments, compliments, and complaints
- Resolve complaints effectively with set targets
- Deal with all complaints fairly
- Promote conciliation in all cases

- Resolve complaints at an early stage in the process, whilst giving customers a fair opportunity to appeal against the decisions if they remain unhappy
- Provide a clear outcome of the investigation of the complaint to the customer

3. Policy purpose and aims

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that staff and contractors, (working on behalf of Nehemiah), continue to be committed to listening to complaints and putting things right, treating them seriously, and learn from them as well as comments and compliments so that we can continuously improve our services. This is also to comply with the new Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code.

Nehemiah Housing is committed to providing a high-quality service for its customers and working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect.

We know that on occasions sometimes things go wrong, and customers may be dissatisfied and wish to complain. Comments, compliments, and complaints give us valuable customer feedback which we use to develop and improve our services. We will listen to our customers and address issues where our customers are unhappy with our services.

This policy is designed to comply with our legal and regulatory responsibilities.

Nehemiah Housing has a procedure within this policy to comply with the Complaint Handling Code 2024.

4. Nehemiah Responsible Members for Complaints

Complaint Officer

- We have a lead Complaint Officer (Director of Operations) who will take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaising with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to our governing body.

Member Responsible for Complaints

- We also have appointed an MRC (Member Responsible for Complaints), that is part of our governing body on our Board, (Operations Committee Chair). This person has lead responsibility for complaints and their role is also to support a positive complaint handling culture within our organisation.

5. Our Policy

Who can offer us feedback?

Anyone who receives or requests a service from us or is affected by a decision or action taken by us can give us feedback. This includes:

- tenants, leaseholders, shared owners, and owner occupiers.
- Former tenants/leaseholders
- Applicants for housing
- Partnership agencies
- Contractors or consultants
- Applicants for employment
- Any other person or organisation affected by our services, including those representing our customers (e.g., legal services, advice agencies)

such as the CAB, MPs, or Councilors) providing necessary authority to act has been provided.

6. What is a complaint?

Definition: *‘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’ (Source: Housing Ombudsman)*

We will investigate a complaint when a customer tells us:

- We have done something they are not satisfied
- We have not done something that we said we would
- Staff have demonstrated poor attitude/conduct/performance
- We have not followed our policy or procedure

When an individual expresses dissatisfaction, Nehemiah will register the issues as a complaint and implement our complaint procedure.

7. What is a compliment?

Definition: A compliment is an expression of satisfaction with the services we provide. We want to hear from customers when they have received excellent customer service. Compliments can be given to us by telephone, in writing, via email, our social media sites, via our website, using our feedback leaflet or talking to us at customer appointments.

8. Customer Comments

We welcome constructive comments or suggestions that customers believe would improve our service or benefit their neighborhood. Comments can be given to us by customer surveys, phone, in writing, via email, our social media sites, via our website, using our feedback leaflet or talking to us at customer appointments.

9. When should the complaints process not be used?

The complaints process should not be used if a customer:

- Requesting a new service: Is asking for a service from us for the first time (for example the reporting of a repair). A service request is a request from a tenant to Nehemiah Housing requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.
- Is making an initial request for information or an explanation of a decision made.
- Wants to report incidents of anti-social behaviour or racial harassment. These issues are dealt with under other procedures.
- The complaint relates to a legal claim or personal injury claim. When proceedings have commenced and have been filed at court then these will be dealt with through the legal process and handled by our insurance and legal advisors and not through our complaints process.
- An issue which happened over 12 months ago, (a complaint should be within 12 months of the issue occurring), or the individual becoming aware of issue. Unless there are exceptional circumstances which mean the complainant was unable to notify us of their concerns sooner. We may consider any historical complaint outcomes, to resolve the issue for the complainant.

- If your complaint is in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), for example, behaviour by someone else that makes you feel frightened, annoyed, or intimidated, this will be addressed through Nehemiah's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- Complaints that refer to statutory or external obligations (i.e. things we must do by law: In these circumstances, where the facts are clear, the issue cannot be changed so investigating the complaint would not offer resolution. An explanation of such obligation will be provided to our tenant or stakeholder.

Complaints will not usually be considered when the case is already going through a court or tribunal (including disrepair cases). In these circumstances court procedures, timescales and judgements would take precedence. Any complaints received regarding our policies will be considered for any potential inclusion in the next review of the policy concerned. Consultants, contractors, and partnership agencies may have features and steps contained within their contracts or management agreements. Where this is not the case, this policy and the complaints procedure should be used. If further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the complainant requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.

10. Service Request

A service request is a request from a tenant requiring action to be taken to put something right. A complaint arises when the tenant expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their request. If the tenant remains unhappy, they can raise a complaint, and the complaint procedure will be implemented at Stage 1. An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person/staff member completing the survey will make tenant aware of how they can raise a complaint.

11. How can our customers complain?

Complainants can tell us about their complaint in the most convenient way to them. We will accept complaints in any way the customer wishes, including but not limited:

Letter

Email

Internet (includes social media platforms, e.g., google review)

Face-to-Face

Telephone

Via an advocate (e.g., a relative, support worker, tenant advocate)

A complainant does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. A complaint submitted via a third party or representative will still be handled in line with our complaint process. Individual can raise their complaint in any way and to any member of Nehemiah staff.

We aim to communicate and respond quickly and appropriately, in the style, language and format requested for further information please contact:

Nehemiah Housing, Telephone: 0121 358 0966, Email: contact@nehemiah.co.uk

Write: 1-3 Beacon Court, Birmingham Road, Great Barr, Birmingham, B43 6NN, or visit our website: www.nehemiah.co.uk/your-home/our-complaints-process

12. Role of the Regulator: Housing Ombudsman

Nehemiah Housing is a member of the Housing Ombudsman service and will cooperate fully with them throughout any investigation and will abide by any decisions reached by the ombudsman. As members of the Housing Ombudsman scheme Nehemiah is committed to implement and follow the new complaints handling code when dealing with complaints.

A tenant or their representative can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage during the complaints process if they are not happy with how their complaint is being handled.

The Housing Ombudsman contact details are:

- Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents
- Call: 0300 111 3000
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Write to the: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET,

13. Anonymous complaints

If a complaint is made anonymously, it should be logged and investigated via the complaints' procedure, bearing in mind it will not be possible to contact the customer to investigate further or supply them with a response. However, there may be substance to the complaint that could result in a service improvement.

14. Complaints about contractors

Nehemiah Housing retains the responsibility for investigating complaints about contractors and responding to customers about this type of complaint. Complaints about contractors/managing agents etc. will be investigated by a senior officer or manager. When a managing agent or contractor deals with a complaint directly from a tenant, the process will not be more than two stages in line with the Complaint Handling Code.

15. Complaints Process

Nehemiah Housing's complaints process has 2 stages. We will not normally consider complaints regarding a problem that occurred more than 12 months prior to the complaint being made. Where an individual raises additional complaint during the investigation, these will be incorporated into 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 complaint is unrelated to the existing complaint already being investigated, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues raised will be logged as a new complaint.

Stage 1 – Investigation

An officer will take responsibility for investigating the complaint and advising the customer of the outcome. If the complaint is about a staff member, their line manager will investigate it. Complaints relating to staff may result in Nehemiah using its disciplinary procedures.

Timescale: Nehemiah will acknowledge a complaint at Stage 1 of its process within 5 working days and supply a written response within 10 working days from the date of acknowledgment. Where the complaint is complex, for example, the involvement of a third party/ statutory agency, we will speak to complainant and agree a reasonable resolution date and will try not to exceed more than a further 10 working days where possible with the consent of the complainant.

Stage 2 – Review

Where a customer is unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, they can appeal to a member of the management team or Executive Team who will review the initial resolution. For example, if the complaints are in relation to a member of staff or service in our sheltered the first stage will be the senior supported housing officer and then this will escalate to the Housing Services Manager at Stage 2.

Timescale: Nehemiah will acknowledge and log complaint at Stage 2 within 5 working days of the escalation request being received. We will investigate your complaint and respond within 20 Working days from letter of acknowledgement. Where the complaint is complex, for example, the involvement of a third party/ statutory agency, we will speak to complainant and agree a reasonable resolution date and will try not to exceed more than a further 10 working days where possible with the consent of the complainant.

Tenants can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage when they raise a complaint if they are unhappy with how the complaint is being handled or if they are unhappy about the outcome at the end of Stage 2.

16. Persistent, Unreasonable and Behaviour

Nehemiah Housing is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. Staff are trained to respond with professionalism, patience, and empathy to the needs of all those making a complaint. However, staff or contractors are not expected to tolerate behaviour by complainants that is unreasonable, for example abusive, offensive, or threatening behaviour or a complainant makes a large number of unreasonable and persistent demands.

In these instances, we will reserve the right to restrict or change access to our complaints service. We will tell the person in writing why we have decided to restrict access, what the restrictions are and how long they will last.

In cases where unreasonable behaviour is identified while a member of staff is addressing a complaint raised by a tenant, restrictions will be implemented. The tenant's behaviour will be reviewed before any restrictions are lifted. Should the unreasonable behaviour persist, the restrictions may be extended together with implementing the housing management procedure.

17. Information for Customers

All customers will be kept informed of their complaint throughout the investigation. Each complaint raised will be considered on its own merits by the investigating officer. We will publish details of our complaints process including timescales for dealing with complaints. We will notify complainants if we are unable to meet the target response times. Where an investigation about individual colleagues and their actions is undertaken in line with our Staff Policies, we will not disclose the detailed outcome directly to the customer due to the confidentiality rights of our staff.

18. Reasonable Adjustments

Nehemiah will ensure where possible reasonable adjustment is made for tenants where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010 when investigating, review and resolving complaints raised. Reasonable adjustments will be made depending on the individual needs of the complainant.

We will discuss the requirements with the complainant concerned and seek to reach agreement on what may be reasonable in the circumstances. We will not make assumptions about where a disabled person requires any reasonable adjustments or about what adjustments should be. In some cases we may have to seek advice from experts that can assist with signposting and other form of support.

19. Compensation

At any stage we can offer an apology or discretionary payment of compensation. Compensation will be offered in accordance with our Compensation Policy, (discretionary Payment reviewed June 2024).

20. General Data protection (GDPR) and Third Parties

Nehemiah has a responsibility under the Data Protection Act 2018 to hold, obtain, record, use and store all personal data relating to identifiable individual in a secure and confidential manner.

We are committed to safeguarding the rights of our customers to confidentiality and privacy. All Nehemiah colleagues are required to maintain a duty of care towards information regarding customers and applicants, in line with data protection legislation and Data Protection Policy 2018. The Data Protection Policies applies to all Nehemiah's employees, members, volunteers, contractors and to staff members of any other bodies with whom we work who handle data jointly.

When we receive a complaint on behalf of a customer, we will only deal with the third party on receipt of a signed Authorization from the complainant for the organisation/ individual to act on their behalf. This will include Councilors or MPs letters.

21. Governance Oversight: Learning from Complaints and Monitoring

- All comments, compliments and complaints will be logged on to a database to maintain a record for the organisation.
- Every comment, compliment or complaint is a learning opportunity for Nehemiah Housing and should be encouraged.
- We will record any service development or customer care issues identified during a complaint investigation. These will be recorded, and evidence gathered to support changes made or planned to improve our services and learn from complaints, comments, and compliments. We will regularly review issues and trends arising from complaint handling,
- Where we have made changes to services or improvements due to complaints, comments, or compliments, we will report these to our customers in our customer annual report.
- Complaints data will be reported to the Board & Operations Committee quarterly in terms of numbers, nature of complaints and when resolved at either stage 1 or stage 2.
- We will monitor any individual complaint and their outcomes where necessary, including cases referred to the Ombudsman or referred to regulatory bodies. We

will track any implementation of management responses to ensure we are delivering to agreed timescales.

- We will review the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code.

22. Customer feedback

We will aim to obtain feedback from complainants about their experience of making a complaint to Nehemiah Housing. We will use the information collated in this survey to continually evaluate and improve the complaints service and will include the survey outcomes in our performance reports to the Operations Committee and our customers. We conduct both internal and independent surveys of our services. So, we can capture any form of dissatisfaction in all service areas.

Although an expression of dissatisfaction is not defined as a complaint, where possible, the person carrying out the survey will make our tenants aware of how they can pursue a complaint.

23. Training and Support for Staff

All Nehemiah Housing staff will be fully supported in the operation of this policy through training on the policy principals, the procedure for implementing the policy, and use of IT to record, monitor and report on complaints. Nehemiah will have a recognised Complaints Champion who will develop a level of expertise in dealing with complaints and enable staff to reflect on issues from a customer's point of view. The role of the Complaints Champion (Customer Engagement Officer) will be to help staff with specific complaints if required. All staff are required to complete the Data Protection: Compliance Following GDPR training annually, which is monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee via the Data Protection Officers annual review.

24. Related Policies, Acts and Strategy

- Compensation Scheme Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Customer Complaints Leaflet
- Data Protection Policy: General Data Protection Act 2018, (GDPR)
- Equality Act 2010
- Customer Engagement Strategy
- Complaints Handling Code 2024
- Nehemiah Complaint Handling Self-Assessment
- Safeguarding Adults and Children Policy
- Tenant and Involvement Empowerment Standards.
- Damp and Mould Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

25. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if legislation or good practice dictates. All policies are accessible on our website, hard copies (which can also be translated) can be provided on request.