

Bexley Churches Housing Association Ltd



Complaints policy

At BECHA, we try as hard as we can to deliver a good service, but we do recognise that on occasion, things can go wrong. This policy tells you what you can do if you have a complaint that you would like to pursue formally.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is where a resident(s) is not satisfied with the standard of service or the actions or lack of action by BECHA or its staff. A complaint is separate from an enquiry or a request.

A **Complaint** is when a resident contacts us to tell us that they are dissatisfied with a service we have provided or the way in which the service was delivered.

An **Enquiry** is when a resident contacts us to ask us something about their home or tenancy. For example, a resident might ask for information about their rent account. This is not a complaint. If we fail to provide this information then this could become a complaint.

A **Request** is when a resident contacts us to ask us to do something to their home or tenancy. For example, a resident may ask for a repair to their home. This is not a complaint but if we fail to carry out that repair this may become a complaint, although requests for improvements that are refused (i.e.: a new kitchen or bathroom where the existing one remains serviceable) will not be treated as a complaint.

Nuisance or anti-social behaviour

Complaints about neighbour nuisance and anti-social behaviour are not in themselves complaints about our service. These will be dealt with through our antisocial behaviour procedures.

Who can make a complaint?

If you live in a property owned or managed by BECHA or receive a service from us, you can make a complaint.

If you do not live in a BECHA property, and you do not receive a service from us (for example your complaint relates to one of our properties or one of our residents) we will not escalate your complaint beyond Stage 1. If you are not satisfied with our response and want to pursue matters further, you may wish to seek legal advice.

Some types of requests are not covered by the Complaints Policy. One of these, for example, is anti-social behaviour. We have special procedures to deal with nuisance and

harassment and a separate leaflet is available that explains how you can report anti-social behaviour. If your complaint is about something that cannot be resolved by the Complaint Policy we will explain why and make sure the right people are dealing with it.

If your complaint is about a service failure that happened more than 12 months ago, we will not be able to investigate it, unless it has only just come to light, and is not something you could reasonably have been expected to know about.

Similarly, if you are complaining about a service failure that you should have told us about earlier (for example, you didn't report a repair to us and it has got worse or caused damage) then we will not treat this as a complaint.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

Most of the time, you simply want us to put things right and we focus on sorting out the problem quickly. If you complain, we try (where possible) to resolve it within a week. We focus on sorting out the problem quickly, with no need for a written response. It may be possible to resolve your complaint immediately at the time you report it. We may need to get further information- for example, we may need to visit your property, carry out a survey or get professional advice. If this is the case, we will let you know how long it will take.

It is always better if we can sort things out relatively informally and at an early stage. BECHA is a small association and able to be quite flexible and responsive. If you are not happy with an aspect of our service, please speak to the officer you normally deal with.

Stage one

If you are still not happy, you can speak to our housing manager or finance manager, depending on the nature of your complain. They will review your complaint and provide you with a written response within two weeks.

Stage two

If you still feel that your complaint has not been resolved, you can write to our Chief Executive. She will respond to you within two weeks.

Stage three

Following this, if you remain dissatisfied, you can ask that BECHA's board consider your complaint. The board will then delegate two of its members to consider your complaint. You will be invited to provide any additional information you may wish the members to have. The Board will make every effort to convene a panel hearing within three weeks of you notifying us that you wish for the Board to consider your complaint.

Referring the matter to an outside body

If, having exhausted our complaints procedures, a resident is still dissatisfied, they can take their complaint to a 'designated person'. A 'designated person' can be an MP, a local Councillor or a Tenant Panel. BECHA does not currently have a tenant panel. A 'designated' person will help resolve the complaint either by trying to resolve the complaint themselves or by referring it straight to the Housing Ombudsman (HOS). If they refuse to do so, then the resident can contact the Ombudsman directly.

If a complaint is not referred to the Ombudsman by a designated person, there must be at least 8 weeks from the end of our complaint process before the Ombudsman can consider

the complaint. The law says that when the designated person refers a complaint to the Ombudsman, it must be in writing.

When a complaint reaches the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) they will decide if it is appropriate for them to consider the complaint. They will usually only consider investigating a case brought to them from residents of landlords and managing agents who receive services directly and if the resident has already been through our complaints process. The Ombudsman Service can be reached at the following address:

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN
Tel: 0300 111 3000

<http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

If you visit their website, it has a great deal of helpful information about how to resolve disputes with your landlord.

Other ways of giving feedback

We are always pleased to know what you think, so while you may not wish to make a formal complaint, but want to give your views or comments about a service you have received, or to make some suggestions as to how we could improve.

You may also want to give us some feedback if you've been pleased with an aspect of our service, or compliment a member of staff.

If so, then you can send us an email at enquiries@becha.org.uk

Alternatively you can write to us or simply make a phone call. We will always consider what you have to say seriously.