



## **Complaints Policy**

### **1. Policy Statement**

Bexley Community Housing Association recognises that people have a right to complain about the failure, non-provision or standard of services. This policy sets out the BECHA approach to resolving complaints and how resolutions are handled.

### **2. Scope**

This Policy covers complaint definitions, exclusions, process and reporting in accordance with the standards set out by the Housing Ombudsman Service and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

### **3. Principles**

At BECHA, we try as hard as we can to deliver an excellent service but we do recognise that on occasions things can go wrong. When they do, we need to respond quickly, put things right and learn from our mistakes.

### **4. Definitions**

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, staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or groups of residents.

For example:

- action or a lack of action in response to a request for service
- poor quality service
- the behaviour of BECHA staff or contractors working on behalf of BECHA
- failure to follow an approved BECHA policy or procedure

The following scenarios are not considered to be complaints:

- An initial request for service, such as the first request for a repair
- An initial request for information or an explanation
- A report of anti-social behaviour (ASB) as they are dealt under our separate ASB policy and procedure

- An appeal against action resulting in court proceedings or matters relating to ongoing court proceedings
- Insurance claims and appeals, including damage to personal possessions and personal injury accidents which will require referral to the relevant insurers
- Matters that have been determined under another BECHA policy
- The amount of service charge or rent increase set in line with BECHA policy

## **5. Exclusions**

If a 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. This will include:

- where legal proceedings have been started or are imminent
- where Insurance claims are outstanding or ongoing
- where the issue occurred more than six months ago, unless it has only just come to light and is not something that the customer could reasonably be expected to know about
- matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy
- where issues raised are considered unreasonable or vexatious

## **6. Methods of Complaint**

Complaints will be accepted verbally, in writing, by telephone, email or online. All complaints will follow the same process.

We will make reasonable adjustments to our complaints process where necessary, ensuring that customers with a specific need are not at a disadvantage when accessing the service. Where the correct authority has been obtained, we will liaise with an advocate, friend or family member on a complainant's behalf.

## **7. Complaints Process**

### **7. 1 Internal process**

Our focus will be on resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity. We will try to resolve a complaint within a week. We will focus on sorting out the problem quickly, if possible at the point it is reported. If this is not possible, for instance because we need to visit the resident's property, carry out a survey or get professional advice, we will advise the customer how long this is likely to take.

Complaints will be logged and acknowledged within five working days.

### Stage one

The complaint will be assigned to the housing manager or finance manager, depending on the nature of the complaint. They will review the complaint and provide a written response within ten working days. Where this is not possible, we will advise the customer of the reason for the delay and provide a full response within 20 working days.

### Stage two

Where the complaint has not been resolved to the customer's satisfaction, it will be progressed to stage two. The Chief Executive will respond within twenty working days. Where this is not possible, the customer will be advised of the reason for the delay and a full response will be provided within 30 days of the date of escalation.

## **7.2 External help**

If, having exhausted our complaints procedures, a customer is dissatisfied, they can take their complaint to a 'designated person'. A 'designated person' can be an MP, a local Councillor or a Tenant Panel, although BECHA does not currently have any of the latter. 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.

If a customer does not contact a designated person, they must wait at least eight weeks from the end of our complaint process before the Ombudsman will consider the complaint.

## **8. Legislation and Regulation**

BECHA will maintain membership of the Housing Ombudsman Service, comply with its Complaints Handling Code and respond promptly and fully to any enquiries from them.

BECHA will provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service as they can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint. This affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors.

A complainant who remains dissatisfied having exhausted our internal complaints procedure will be advised that a referral can be made to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Their contact details are:

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ  
Telephone: 0300 111 3000  
E-mail: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)  
Web: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

The Housing Ombudsman Service will usually only consider investigating a case brought to them from residents of landlords and managing agents who have already been through an organisation's complaints process.

### **9. Monitoring**

Complaints performance will be reviewed at least annually and any trends and learning shared with the Board of Management and customers.

### **10. Feedback**

BECHA will pay attention to any feedback received about its service by whatever means and seek to identify service improvements where appropriate.

---

**Review:** This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or sooner should there be a change in regulatory or legislative requirements.