

Management Complaints Policy & Procedure

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1 Key Objectives

The co-operative recognises that members have a right to comment upon and complain about the provision, or non-provision, of services; as such, the co-operative aims to provide an accessible, fair and effective Complaints Procedure for members. The co-operative takes complaints seriously as an important part of a commitment to member care.

2 Key Policy Standards

- 2.1 We aim to provide high quality services to our members at all times. However, we recognise that in any organisation service provision may not always be satisfactory, and to address this problem, a Management Complaints Policy and Procedure is necessary.
- 2.2 We will publish a procedure setting out how members can ensure that their concerns are dealt with. We will ensure that information about member care and complaints are widely distributed and that it is available in formats that will accommodate the needs of those who do not understand and / or read English.
- 2.3 We will ensure that training is given to officers in member care and complaints techniques.
- 2.4 The purpose of our Policy is to ensure that:
 - Any member who is not happy with the service received (or not received) from the co-operative has an accessible, confidential and easy to use method for making a complaint, which offers rapid action and response
 - The member can be confident that their complaint will be dealt with effectively and fairly, even if the outcome is not to their satisfaction
 - The co-operative uses complaints positively, so that by listening to its members and taking subsequent action to learn from its experience, it will continue to maintain and improve service provision and quality

2.5 Definition of a Complaint

Complaints may be received on official forms, by letter, fax, e-mail, telephone / text message or personal visit, or via a Councillor or MP.

A complaint is defined as when a member expresses dissatisfaction about the work of the co-operative and wants corrective action to be taken. It would include such matters as:

- Providing wrong or misleading advice
- Failure to act within agreed policies and procedures
- Delays in undertaking work which cannot be explained within the terms of policy and procedure
- Bias or inequality of treatment
- Rudeness
- Failure to keep appointments

Areas where individuals may express dissatisfaction which may not be regarded as complaints would relate to:

- The general law, unless wrongly applied
- Persons or bodies over which the co-operative has no control
- The co-operative's overall policies which are agreed by members (e.g. rent levels)
- Matters which are related to retained responsibilities of the landlords of properties managed by the co-operative
- Matters which are, or could reasonably be expected to be the subject of court or tribunal proceedings, or which are in the hands of the co-operative's insurers

In cases where a complaint identifies a policy or procedural problem (i.e. not service delivery), the co-operative will consider the situation and where appropriate, make every attempt to amend practice accordingly.

3 Complaints Procedure

(a) Informal approach

The first objective must be to try and resolve the matter informally. These are likely to form the bulk of complaints and effective and speedy resolution at this stage will usually satisfy the member. A complaint will normally be informal if it is the first time it has been made. The approach of officers at this first stage must be to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. If the matter can be resolved to the member's satisfaction by the provision of information or action taken at the time the complaint is made then no further action of a more formal nature need be taken. However a note should be made of the complaint and how it was resolved as all complaints must be recorded for monitoring purposes.

If the complaint can still be resolved informally but more time is required to achieve a remedy a note should be taken of the complaint and the member's contact details and a clear indication given to the member of the action to be taken and the timescale. That indication should be given in writing unless the circumstances do not justify such action in the opinion of the officer receiving the complaint. If the complaint is not resolved as promised it is the responsibility of the officer who received the complaint to ensure that the member is informed as to the reasons for the delay or other problem and what the new timescale will be. It is not uncommon for an informal complaint to become a formal one about the manner in which the initial complaint was handled.

(b) Formal procedure

Stage 1

Where the matter cannot be so resolved to the satisfaction of the member, information about the formal Complaints Procedure should be given if that has not already been supplied to the member.

All complaints will be registered, and an acknowledgement sent within 5 working days of receipt. The complaint will then be forwarded to the officer with direct responsibility for the area of service that the complaint relates to; that the officer will:

- Investigate the complaint thoroughly

- Send a full reply within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint setting out the findings of the investigation and the action proposed
- If further investigation is required, send a holding response stating when a full reply can be expected (usually within 15 working days of receipt – however for full replies (which may involve outside organisations), a period of 28 working days may be more appropriate

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the investigating officer to keep the member up to date with the progress of their complaint, highlighting reasons for any delay.

In accordance with good practice, many complaints can be resolved by a telephone call or personal visit, rather than by protracted correspondence. Officers should not be afraid to admit mistakes, and should ensure that any lessons to be learned from complaints are acted upon and reported to the General Meeting for policy changes, or appropriate alterations are made to procedures.

When a complaint is resolved verbally or action already undertaken, a full record of the conversation must be made and then confirmed in writing. In all cases, members must be informed of their right to appeal.

Stage 2

If the member is still dissatisfied with the response they can ask for the complaint to be referred to the General Meeting.

The next available General Meeting will establish an Appeals Panel of 3 members not connected with the complaint which will meet within 10 working days to consider all the information submitted with the complaint and review the decision taken. The Appeals Panel will consider whether the response to the complaint so far was appropriate and fair.

When the case has been reviewed fully, a full written reply will be sent to the member explaining the outcome of the investigation and the response of the co-operative. This will be within 28 days of the Stage 2 complaint being

received by the General Meeting. This is the final stage of the co-operative's internal procedure.

4 External Referral

Members who are not satisfied with the outcome of the Complaints Procedure following Stage 2 will be advised that it is their right to make a formal complaint to the landlord or their property and/or the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Version control

Date	Amendment (note change to wording)	Version