

Bedford Citizens' Housing Association Limited

Policy 510 : Complaints Policy

Introduction

BCHA seeks to provide a consistently high standard of service to all people and organisations that come into contact with us.

However, we understand there are occasions when we might not meet expectations. This policy describes how you can let us know if you are not happy with our performance and what we will do to try and resolve your complaint.

BCHA is committed to ensuring views about our services are valued and we actively encourage feedback. Complaints, compliments and suggestions give us the opportunity to continually improve our service. We foster a culture which welcomes customer feedback and listening and responding effectively is very important to us.

Objective and Scope

The Board of BCHA reviews the type and number of complaints annually to ensure complaints are effectively resolved. We aim to learn from our mistakes and to address any concerns raised in accordance with guidance from our regulators and best practice.

If there is problem with something we've done or haven't done, let us know as quickly as possible. Initially we will try and put it right. Wherever possible, we'll aim to get back to you within 7 working days. We will treat this as an informal complaint.

If you are still unhappy, and feel that we have not resolved the issue, you can make a formal complaint.

We want to hear about anything that goes wrong so we can improve what we do and do better in the future. This policy applies to all our services including tenancies and residential care.

Policy Statement

What is a complaint?

We regard 'any expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service provided, actions or lack of action by BCHA (its staff or contractors) which affects you adversely' as a complaint. We will always endeavour to deal with complaints informally in the first instance. This allows us to resolve issues quickly for complainants, without the need of a more formal process.

- When making a complaint, we ask complainants to let us know what the issue is, who they have contacted, what action has been taken so far and how they would like us to resolve this.

- However, we do not include an initial request for a service (e.g. asking maintenance to be carried out or a care review to be completed) as a complaint. If the service is subsequently carried out ineffectively, or not within a reasonable time, then you may wish to complain;
- We do not deal with neighbours or harassment disputes via the complaints procedure. We handle these matters through the mechanisms set out in your resident contract or your tenancy agreement. If you consider that we are not effectively dealing with a neighbour dispute or an harassment issue, then you may wish to use the complaints procedure; and
- We will investigate all complaints. We will log anonymous complaints and act on them, if necessary, but prefer to solve problems jointly with complainants.
- If we decide that your feedback does not fall within the scope of this policy, we will give you a detailed explanation of the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.

Who can complain?

- Anyone who is dissatisfied with BCHA can complain (except staff who have a separate internal procedure). This includes tenants i.e. people living in self-contained accommodation and paying rent, residents i.e. people living in Bedford Charter House, prospective tenants and residents or any organisation or individual with whom we do business. Complaints can be made individually or collectively.
- A person, such as a relative or advocate, can complain on behalf of a complainant as long as written confirmation is received that they are acting on a complainant's behalf.
- We encourage complainants to contact BCHA within 6 weeks of experiencing the service failure and will not normally consider a complaint made more than 6 months after the event.

How to complain

You can make a complaint

- Verbally – in person or by phone;
- In writing;
- Electronically via e-mail to enquiries@bchal.org.

What Happens Next?

We operate a two-stage complaints procedure, the timescales for responses are:

- Logging and acknowledgement of a complaint – 3 working days, we will tell you who is handling the complaint for you and agree arrangements for providing updates and agree a preferred method of communication with you

Stage one decision – 10 working days from receipt of the complaint – if this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date by when the stage one response will be received. This will not be more than a further 10 working days without good reason.

- Stage two (response to any appeal made on a stage 1 decision) – 20 working days from request– if this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date when the stage two response will be received.

Complaints relating to services provided by Bedford Charter House will be dealt with by the Head of Care Services or the Care Home Management Team.

Complaints relating to other services will be dealt with by a manager in the service area.

The allocated manager will investigate your complaint and may contact you for further information or clarification about your complaint.

Once a complaint has been raised any further or unrelated issues to the original complaint will be dealt with as a new complaint.

If required, we can arrange an interpreter through a number of different methods including a, a telephone interpreter or a sign language service

If you remain dissatisfied with the Stage one decision

If you are not happy with the response, then you can complain to the Head of Service for the relevant business area

- Verbally – in person or by phone;
- In writing;
- Electronically via e-mail to enquiries@bchal.org

If you are not satisfied with our response to your complaint and would like to appeal our decision(s) you should inform us within 7 calendar days of our final decision being made.

The CEO will investigate any complaints dealt with by a Head of Service under stage one of our process.

What if you remain dissatisfied?

Bedford Charter House

Residents and relatives of residents at Bedford Charter House can contact the following organisations if they remain dissatisfied with the way a complaint has been handled:

- If your fees are partially or fully funded by the Local Authority, you can contact Social Services at Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP, tel 01234 267422.
- Alternatively you can contact the Care Quality Commission on 0300 0616 1613,

via e-mail at enquiries@cqc.org.uk or via their feedback form – details of how to do this are on the CQC’s website at www.cqc.org.uk.

- If you are responsible for your own fees (commonly referred to as self-funded care), you can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH, tel 0300 061 0614 or by using the complaint form available on their website at www.lgo.org.uk.

Extra Care, Sheltered and General needs Housing (all tenancies)

If Tenants or leaseholders are still dissatisfied with the outcome of BCHA’s internal complaint process they can refer their complaint to a designated person who may be able to recommend other ways for it to be resolved. A designated person could be a:

- Member of Parliament
- Local Councillor

The designated person may decide to refer the matter directly to the Housing Ombudsman. You must wait for at least eight weeks after receiving our response before doing so and this must be done within six months of ending our complaints process.

Tenants can complain to:

	The Housing Ombudsman PO Box 152 Liverpool L33 7WQ
Tel:	0300 111 3000
Website:	www.ombudsman.org.uk

Complaints we cannot deal with

We cannot deal with complaints relating to issues outside our control. We will endeavour to direct you to the organisation or person who may be able to resolve such complaints.

Some of the complaints we cannot deal with are:

Housing Benefit or Universal Credit	Contact Bedford Borough Council or Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
-------------------------------------	---

The level of rents set or The level of service charges set	Contact First-Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber - Residential Property) or CAB see https://www.gov.uk/housingtribunals/overview
--	--

Unreasonable, persistent or vexatious complainants

Complaints may be considered to be unreasonable, persistent or vexatious in the following circumstances:

- unreasonable demands with regards to timescales, information requests and specifying who should be dealing with the complaint

- recurring complaints with only slight amendments
- seeking an unrealistic outcome
- unacceptable and threatening behaviour towards employees or employees of partner agencies

Putting Things Right

When something has gone wrong, we will tell you how we will put it right, we will:

- Makes changes where our policy or procedures are at fault
- Outline the remedy and timescale in agreement with you
- Balance the remedy we offer to the level of detriment or inconvenience suffered without causing unfairness to others
- We may make a gesture of goodwill or pay compensation this will be aligned to the detriment suffered as a result of BCHA getting things wrong.

Responsibilities

All staff must respond to informal complaints and, if they are unable to resolve the problem, must ask for help from a manager.

SMT members will usually respond to formal complaints and the CEO will deal with any appeals. The CEO will respond to appeals against any decisions made or responses given to formal complaints so is unable to respond to formal complaints in the first instance.

Date of this review	May 2022
Date of next review	May 2023