

	Policy Name:	<b>CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS POLICY</b>
	Version	<b>008</b>
	Review Date	30 JUNE 2024

Effective complaint handling should be a customer friendly process that enables customers to be listened to and understood. The starting point for this is a mutual understanding of what constitutes a complaint. In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, a complaint is defined as:

*“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 a resident or group of residents.”*

While customers may not use the word ‘complaint,’ if it is evident that they are dissatisfied, we will always give them the option to make a complaint.

Customers may also make a service request which requires action to be taken by us to put something right. Complaints will be raised when a customer expresses dissatisfaction with our response to their service request.

### **Purpose**

This Policy is to ensure that all residents, customers and other relevant parties are aware of the procedure to raise issues regarding the quality of the service delivered by the Landlord, Affordable Housing Communities Limited (AHC) and Housing Services and Property Management Agent, First Port Limited.

It is also to ensure that all complaints are monitored; any underlying causes effectively identified and managed; and that relevant issues are shared throughout the organisation to learn from, assist in service development and quality improvement across all AHC and Platinum Skies Developments.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all residents, relatives, visitors, contractors and any others who may be affected by our service provision.

This policy will be published on our website and is available on request via email or telephone.

### **Policy:**

Our policy is intended to develop an environment of fairness across Platinum Skies developments, encouraging residents, relatives, and their representatives to provide feedback on any aspect of the service.

When issues are raised, it is our policy to ensure that feedback and complaints are fully investigated and dealt with promptly and in a fair and effective manner. Many complaints can be avoided by dealing with concerns as they arise, so we ask that issues are raised directly with the Community Manager or Property Manager in the first instance, in order to achieve a pragmatic outcome.

This policy will be made readily available and easily accessible for all residents and visitors. Different formats (such as braille or large print) can be made available on request. If you require support to make a complaint, please let us know and we will assist wherever possible.

All staff receiving a complaint, either verbally or in writing must report this to the Customer Relations Team as soon as possible; this will enable trends to be spotted and remedial measures identified. It is hoped that most complaints can be dealt with immediately by the employee receiving the complaint.

It is the Customer Relations Team's responsibility to encourage customer feedback in all forms, and to provide any help or assistance that is required. Residents can ask for assistance in finding an advocate without revealing the reason for making this request. To achieve this, we will ensure that contact information for local services is available when requested.

A record of the complaint received will be kept together with the details of the ensuing investigation and any action taken as a result of the complaint. All complaints will be investigated and resolved to the satisfaction of the person raising the complaint unless:

- The complaint falls outside the remit of Affordable Housing Communities' or First Port's responsibility
- The complaint is considered vexatious, or the complainant's behaviour is considered unacceptable (Please refer to the Unacceptable Resident Behaviour Policy)
- The complaint cannot be upheld.
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred more than twelve months ago (excluding matters relating to health and safety or safeguarding),
- Legal proceedings have commenced or a letter before action has been issued.
- We have already provided a formal stage 2 response to the issue.

All outcomes will be carefully considered and used to reflect on AHC/FP's ability to achieve standards and adhere to required regulations or to assess any risk of being unable to do so.

### **Raising a formal complaint**

We aim to get things right first time, however, we accept that things can go wrong. We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible but recognise that there are some occasions where it might take a little longer to resolve the problem. If this is the case, we will let you know.

Our commitment to you:

- We will listen to your complaint and make sure that we understand your concerns.
- We will try to put things right straight away.
- We will respond to your complaint in a positive, open and timely way.
- We will keep you informed on the progress of your complaint.
- We will treat you with respect and courtesy.
- We will also explain what we are going to do to put things right and will confirm this with you in writing.

Please email Customer Services at [customerrelations@firstport.co.uk](mailto:customerrelations@firstport.co.uk) to raise a complaint or telephone 0333 3214041.

## **Our Complaints Process**

When we receive your complaint, we will aim to resolve it immediately. If we're not able to resolve it straight away, the complaint will be handed over to the Customer Relations Team. We will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receiving it.

There are two stages to the complaints process, stage one and stage two.

### **Stage One**

At stage one, we will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and aim to respond to it within ten working days. If you are unhappy with the response at stage one, you can ask for the complaint to be escalated to stage two.

### **Stage Two**

A senior manager will be asked to look at your complaint. At stage two, we aim to respond to your complaint within twenty working days.

## **When we can't reach an agreement**

When we've done all we reasonably can to resolve a complaint but you are still unhappy, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to look at your complaint.

The ombudsman service is a free and independent dispute resolution service. The ombudsman will contact us to get the facts of the case from our point of view.

The ombudsman will then make a final decision and inform you and us.

## Housing Ombudsman

You have the right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout the duration of your complaint. They will offer support and guidance throughout the complaint process and will ensure we remain compliant with their Complaint Handling Code.

The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

- [Online complaint form](#)
- Phone: 0300 111 3000
- [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- Postal address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

## First Tier Tribunal (property Chamber) Southern region

If the complaint relates to leaseholders' service charges or the terms of a lease, please refer the matter to the First Tier Tribunal

- Residential Property, Havant Justice Centre, The Court House, Elmleigh Road, Havant, Hampshire PO9 2AL
- Email: [rpsouthern@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rpsouthern@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk)
- Phone: 01243 779394

Version	Date	Author	Sections Updated	Principal Changes
002	31/03/21	Mike Lyons	All	Added Housing Ombudsman definition, added procedure, added escalation
003	26/10/21	Claire McKenna	"When we can't reach an agreement"	Addition of non-exec board member independent option
004	08/03/23	Claire McKenna	Full review in accordance with Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code	Simplified and updated in accordance with the Ombudsman's prescribed response times
005	04/07/23	Claire McKenna	Removal of stage 3 in accordance with the Ombudsman	Stage 3 escalation to AHCL NED removed. Circumstances when a complaint will not be investigated added.

			Complaint Handling Code	
006	09/01/2024	Claire McKenna	Removal of PSM and replaced with FP Ltd.	Updated with First Port's details.
007	30/04/2024	Claire McKenna	When a complaint will not be investigated.	Extension of time where a complaint will be considered – 12 months from 06 months
008	30/06/2024	Claire McKenna	Added service request definition	