

Complaints Policy

Author/s - Housing Group + Customer Forum

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CHS Group¹

Complaints Policy and Procedure

What is the Complaints Policy based on?

The Policy is based on the values of the CHS Group which are:

Respect - We treat everyone with fairness, respect and dignity

Approach - We put as much emphasis on the way we do things as on what we do

Partnership - We develop open communication and equal relationships with our customers, staff and partners which value their contributions and enable us to work together effectively

Openness - We are open, positive and flexible towards new ideas and encourage innovation and creativity that will improve the outcomes from our services

Deliver - We do what we say we will do and are accountable for our actions

How will we handle complaints?

We will:

- Receive complaints by phone, letter, email, or in person
- Do our best to find a solution as soon as possible
- Treat each complaint with equal importance
- Keep the complaints process simple
- Deal with complaints efficiently and courteously
- Keep customers informed about progress with their complaint
- Keep a record of complaints to monitor progress
- Routinely follow up completed complaints
- Compensate where we have caused harm or significant inconvenience over an issue
- Apologise where we have made mistakes

This Complaints Policy and Procedure will be reviewed every 2 years and ratified by the Operations Committee after consultation with the Customer Committee.

The Board will receive a report on complaints every 6 months. The report will include the number and type of complaints, how quickly they were handled, the amount of any compensation awarded and any lessons learnt. All complaints which go to the Housing Ombudsman Service will be reported to the Board.

1) What is a Complaint?

A complaint may be made where:

- CHS has failed to provide a service;
- CHS has failed to complete work by the time we agreed with you;
- CHS has not met the standard of service you expected

¹ CHS Group includes CHS services (housing, nurseries, advice, care, and support), as well as Cambridge and County Developments who build our homes.

You can make a complaint about any aspect of our service. Of course there are some things we cannot change, but we will always try to help. We will inform you if your complaint is about something over which we have no control. We will also let you know if your complaint is about something which is not covered by this Procedure – see section 2 below.

2) What complaints are not covered by this Procedure?

This Procedure does not apply to:

- The reporting of repairs or other issues unless we fail to respond satisfactorily, when it will become a complaint.
- Complaints which are criticisms or disagreement with CHS Policies or Strategies. (Although CHS is happy to accept feedback about policies & strategies) Complaints about the way in which these Policies and Strategies have been carried out are covered by this Procedure.
- Complaints which are a disagreement with or refusal to accept a legal or statutory requirement (e.g. gas servicing). Complaints about the way in which these legal or statutory requirements have been carried out are covered by this Procedure.
- Complaints which are made at the same time as you take legal action against CHS for the same or a related matter. We may take legal advice on whether it is appropriate or not to use this Complaints Procedure in this situation. We may, at our discretion, follow this Procedure at the same time as legal action is taken.

3) Complaints Panel

The purpose of the Complaints Panel assists CHS and its customers to resolve complaints effectively, quickly and locally. The Panel consist of CHS customers who are members of the Customer Committee. The Complaints Panel may:

- Act as advocates for complainants who need help to use the complaints process;
- Give informal advice to complainants at any stage of the complaint process;
- Review completed complaints to identify learning for CHS;
- When requested, to carry out the Formal Review of a complaint where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint.

The Complaints Panel may also act as a 'designated person' after a complaint has completed its progress with CHS (see section 9 below). The Complaints Panel has formal Terms of Reference setting out its role, membership and code of conduct.

4) How to complain

You must contact an employee of CHS Group to tell them that you want to complain. There are lots of ways of doing this and remember that others can make a complaint on your behalf. If someone else complains on your behalf, we will need to get your permission before we can discuss the issue with them.

- Telephone: 0300 111 3555
- Mini-com: 01223 713784
- E-mail: info@chsgroup.org.uk

- Write: CHS Group, Endurance House, Chivers Way, Histon, Cambridge CB24 9ZR
- Visit: The office and speak directly to one of our Customer Services Advisors.
- Website: www.chsgroup.org.uk

If you receive personal care from CHS, either in your own home, or at one of our Care Homes or nurseries, you can raise your concerns directly with the external regulators (see sections 9 and 10 for details). An external regulator is a government agency that oversees CHS's Older Peoples, Care Services and Nursery services.

We will provide a copy of the Complaints Policy if we fail to resolve your complaint in the first instance, or if you request one.

5) Initial complaint

If you have a problem with any aspect of our service, then please contact one of our employees and they will try to deal with it informally, if possible. If your issue cannot be resolved within 5 working days you will be contacted by the person responsible for dealing with your complaint, letting you know who they are and how long it will take to respond to your complaint. Some issues can be complex and/or rely on external input/advice e.g. from contractors, so cannot be answered in full within 5 working days. In this case we will agree a reasonable timescale with you when we inform you about progress.

At any stage you can ask for assistance from your MP, councillor or the CHS Complaints Panel to support you in making your complaint. You can approach CHS's Complaints Panel which consists of customers and is formally recognised by CHS Group for informal advice at any stage of a complaint. Email: ComplaintsPanel@chsgroup.org.uk.

6) Formal complaint

If you are dissatisfied with our response to your complaint then get in touch with us again and we will treat your concerns as a Formal Complaint. You must do this within 20 working days of receiving our response about your original complaint.

We will also treat a complaint as a formal complaint if:

- it is a problem that has happened before
- it is a complaint about a serious failure in our services
- you have asked us to treat it as a formal complaint
- it is a major complaint about a CHS employee's conduct (or Board member)

Your complaint will be passed onto the appropriate manager or you can contact them directly yourself. They will usually be the manager of the person who dealt with your complaint originally. The manager will let you know within 3 working days who is dealing with the complaint and how long it will take to investigate. They will try to deal with your complaint and give you a full written reply within 10 working days. You will be informed if it will take longer and we will contact you every 10 working days to explain progress.

7) Formal Review.

If you are dissatisfied with our response to your formal complaint then contact us again within 20 working days of our response, letting us know why you feel the issue is not resolved and what you think should be done differently. Your complaint may be reviewed by a CHS Director who will let you know within 5 working days how long it will take to review

or to advise you that no further action will be taken by CHS. They will review the way your complaint has been handled and give you a full written reply within 10 working days. If it will take longer than 10 working days they will keep you informed of progress.

You may request that the Formal Review is carried out by the Complaints Panel, or CHS may suggest this where this would be an appropriate way to review the handling of the complaint or to help CHS learn from it. The Complaints Panel would be free to decline to accept such a referral where it believes it does not have the skills or resources to give it the proper consideration (e.g. due to legal or regulatory issues).

At any stage CHS reserves the right to decline further consideration of a complaint.

8) Final Review

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal review or the way we have dealt with your complaint, you can ask for it to go to a Final Review (or to the Cambridge and County Developments Final Review, if you are one of their customers). The Panel will consist of 3 people of whom at least 2 are Board members and 1 is a tenant. The tenant may be a Board member or may be a Customer Committee member. A member of the CHS Executive team will also be present in an advisory capacity. Cambridge and County Developments' Final Review Panel is made up of 3 members of the Cambridge and County Developments Board. You must let us know within 20 working days of receiving the response of your formal review and tell us why you feel it should be reviewed again. Again CHS reserves the right to decline further consideration of a complaint. This is the final stage of our Complaints Procedure.

9) After Final Review

If you are still dissatisfied with how we have dealt with your complaint and you disagree with the response from the Final Review, we will advise that your complaint has gone as far as it can within CHS.

If you have a tenancy with CHS you may decide to involve a 'designated person' at this stage, which may include the CHS Complaints Panel, or your MP or councillor. Any member of the Complaints Panel previously involved in the same complaint would not be involved in such a review. The designated person has the right to refer complaints to the Housing Ombudsman once CHS's complaints procedure has been exhausted. The role of the designated person is to assist in resolving complaints locally, and they will seek to achieve agreement between tenants and CHS. If the designated person is unable to facilitate agreement, they can then contact the Housing Ombudsman immediately who will consider your complaint. The Ombudsman may then make recommendations as a result of their involvement. The Ombudsman is an independent organisation which provides a service for tenants who have a complaint about their landlord that they have not been able to resolve through their landlord's complaints procedure.

After a minimum of 8 weeks (and within 12 months) of completing the CHS Complaints procedure, you may refer your complaint directly to the Ombudsman without having involved a 'designated person'. The address for the Ombudsman is:

Housing Ombudsman Service
Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152

Liverpool
L33 7WQ
Tel. 0300 111 3000
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

10) Complaints about Care Services

If you receive personal care from CHS, either in your own home, at an Extra Care Scheme, or at one of our Registered Care Homes, you can raise your concerns directly with the regulators:

The Care Quality Commission –

Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk
Telephone: or 0300 061 6161
Write: Care Quality Commission
Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4PA

Cambridgeshire Adult Social Care Team -

Email: feedback@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Write: Adult Care & Support
Castle Court
Castle Hill
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

All complaints investigated by the Care Quality Commission or Cambridgeshire Adult Social Care Team will be recorded by CHS, provided we are aware them.

11) Complaints about the Sunflower Nurseries

If you have a complaint about the Sunflower Nurseries the process is the same as the procedure set out above up to and including Item 7 – Final Review. If you are not happy with the outcome of your appeal you need to contact the Government agency OFSTED who can investigate your complaint.

OFSTED

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Minicom: 0161 618 8524
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

All complaints investigated by OFSTED will be recorded by CHS, provided we are aware of them.

12) Complaints about our housing managed by other agents.

If you are a Licensee living in CHS owned supported housing managed by an Agent, and you have a complaint about **services** provided by the Agent, you can complain to the Agent. The Agent will deal with the complaint in accordance with its own Complaints Procedure. If the Agent fails to deal with the complaint you can complain to an employee of CHS, and follow the CHS Complaints Procedure set out above up to and including a Final Review. If you are not happy with the outcome of this Final Review you can then contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman (see section 9 above).

If you have a complaint about a CHS service you can complain to the Agent. The Agent will check that CHS is responsible for the service and if so the Agent will help you raise the complaint with CHS, using the procedure set out above up to and including a Final Review. If you are not happy with the outcome of your review you can then contact the independent Housing Ombudsman (see section 8 above).