

## MAYNARD AND ROSS WALK COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Aims of the complaints policy

- To ensure that members and others have the right to complain about the provision, or non-provision, of services through an accessible, confidential and easy to use procedure, which offers rapid action and response
- To ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively and fairly, even where complaints outcomes are not to the satisfaction of the complainant
- To ensure that complaints are taken seriously and used positively to improve how the co-op operates
- To ensure the complaints procedure complies with the Involvement and Empowerment standard and with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

- 1 **Welcoming complaints** – The Co-operative welcomes complaints from its members and encourage anyone using or directly affected by its services to make complaints. A member does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as a complaint.
- 2 The Co-operative accepts complaints from agencies and others representing complainants (as long as we have written evidence that anyone representing a complainant is authorised by the complainant to act on their behalf). The Co-operative will usually allow such representatives to attend meetings with the complainant if the complainant wishes them to.
- 3 A complainant could also be anyone who is affected by a decision or action taken by co-operatives, including:
  - any non-member service users and ex-service users
  - applicants for housing
  - partnership organisations and agencies
  - contractors or consultants
  - neighbours to co-op properties
  - other members of the public.
- 4 **Resolving complaints informally** – The Co-operative offers complainants the opportunity to have their complaint resolved informally without the need to use the complaints procedure. Resolving a complaint informally means logging the complaint, agreeing how the problem will be resolved with the complainant, and then ensuring that the action agreed is carried out. It should be the decision of the complainant whether their complaint is dealt with informally and they should always have the right to make a formal complaint that is dealt with in accordance with the complaint procedure.
- 5 **What is a complaint?** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction,

however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the co-op, by PA Housing acting for the co-op or by others acting on its behalf, affecting an individual member or group of members.

A complaint, whether justified or not, may be about something that a co-op should or should not have done or has done badly or has done or not done in accordance with its policies. A complaint may also be about a complainant feeling that they have not been treated fairly or they have been discriminated against in the provision of a service.

- 6 The Co-ops will accept and act on complaints unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- 7 The following would not usually be considered through this complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to consider them:
  - requests for a particular service (eg. a complaint about a repair or something else that has not yet been requested)
  - requests to deal with an Anti-Social Behaviour or harassment issue or Neighbour Nuisance or Neighbour Disputes which should be dealt with in accordance with relevant policies. If a complainant has asked the co-op to address an Anti-Social Behaviour issue, neighbour nuisance or a neighbour dispute and is not happy with the way that the co-op has managed it, they may then make a complaint under the Complaints Policy.
  - new issues that arise during a complaints investigation unless they are relevant to the complaint under investigation
  - anonymous complaints
  - matters that relate to legal proceedings that have started
  - complaints about something more than six months old
  - matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy
  - issues relating to how the co-op is governed which need to be dealt with through the co-op's Code of Conduct.
- 8 If the co-op chooses not to receive a complaint for one of the above reasons, it will formally write to the complainant setting out its reasons why.
- 9 **Receiving complaints** – There are multiple ways that members can make complaints. This might be by phone, by letter, by email, through the managing agent website, through speaking to someone who represents the co-op, or by other means.
- 10 Co-ops will maintain confidentiality in the handling of complaints. Every appropriate effort will be made to resolve complaints straight away and without a formal process. Emphasis is placed on correcting any service that has failed.
- 11 Co-ops will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt their normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual member's needs.
- 12 **Complaints Officers** – The co-op will designate a Complaints Officer for each complaint based on the subject of the complaint. This will normally be a member of staff of the managing agent, or could be a member of the co-op's

governing body.

- 13 Complaints Officers will be competent, empathetic and efficient. They will be able to act sensitively and fairly; be able to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset members; will have access to individuals in the co-op at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints. Wherever possible, they will have the authority in the co-op to make decisions to resolve the complaint, although it is often the case that complaints are complex and refer to matters that are not covered by co-op policies and therefore may require consideration by the governing body.
- 14 Complaints Officers will take responsibility for ensuring that receipt of the complaint is acknowledged; that an investigation of the complaint takes place; and that there is communication with the complainant throughout and regarding outcomes.
- 15 **Complaints procedure** – co-ops will manage complaints as follows:
- **Acknowledgement and logging** - complaints will be acknowledged and logged when received.
  - **Confirmation of the complaint** - The co-op will confirm in writing to the complainant what the complainant is complaining about. The co-op will encourage complainants to be specific about what they are complaining about and what outcomes they are seeking from the co-op.
  - **Investigation** - Complaints Officers will investigate the complaint – giving the complainant and any other parties to the complaint the opportunity to state their views on the subject matter of the complaint. Matters that are easily resolvable in the complaint should be addressed as soon as possible.
  - **Decision-making** – Complaints Officers will decide their approach to resolution of the complaint, and this should be communicated to the complainant
  - **Review** – if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, they may request a review and this should be heard by the governing body of the co-op, someone independent of the complaint so far, – offering the complainant and other parties to the complaint the opportunity to put forward their views. The outcome of the review should be communicated to the complainant and this concludes the co-op’s complaints procedure.
- 16 The co-op has set the following maximum target times for the complaint procedure:

Complaints procedure	Timescales
Logging and acknowledgement of the complaint	One week or 5 working days
Results of the investigation of a complaint	Two weeks or 10 working days from receipt of the complaint
Results of a subsequent review of a complaint	Four weeks or 20 working days from the request for a review

- 17 If it is not possible for the co-op to achieve these timescales, the co-op will

communicate how much extra time is needed to the complainant and the reasons why there will be a delay. The target times for the investigation and review stages will not be exceeded by more than two weeks or 10 working days without good reason.

- 18 If the co-op chooses not to either investigate a complaint or to hold a review when asked, it will be clear about its reasons why it is not so doing, and these reasons will be communicated to the complainant.
- 19 **Communications** – co-ops will make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for members. It will be publicised in leaflets, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with members. Co-ops will provide copies of the complaint policy to members on request. The complaints policy will also be made easily available and downloadable on the website.
- 20 Co-ops will provide members with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of their regular complaint correspondence with members. Co-ops will tell their members that they can access the Housing Ombudsman Service when they wish to and not just when they have exhausted the co-op's complaints process.
- 21 When communicating with members about complaints, co-ops will use plain language. The Co-op will address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
- 22 At the end of the complaint investigation and at the end of the review (if there is one) the co-op will write to the member to say:
  - what the outcome of their complaint is
  - the reasons why decisions have been made
  - what offers the co-op is making to put things right
  - what actions remain outstanding
  - how the complainant can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or what the co-op is offering
  - that the complainant may refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 23 During the complaint investigation and in any review, members will be given a fair opportunity to set out their views, and comment on any findings before a final decision is made.
- 24 Communication with the complainant will not generally identify individuals involved in delivering the service because all are acting on behalf of the co-op. Whilst the co-op will seek to put right any problems and learn from mistakes, the co-op should not seek to blame the co-op's staff or service provider to the complainant.
- 25 The co-op will keep complainants regularly updated and informed even where there is no new information to provide.
- 26 **The Housing Ombudsman Service** – As the co-op is a Registered Provider

and if the member remains dissatisfied at the end of the co-op's complaints procedure, they may bring their complaint to the Ombudsman. Co-ops will cooperate with the Ombudsman's requests for evidence and provide this within 3 weeks or 15 working days. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, the co-op will provide the Ombudsman with an explanation for the delay. If the explanation is reasonable, the Ombudsman will agree a revised date with the co-op.

- 27 **Keeping records** – The co-op will document all informal and formal complaints and their follow through and should keep copies of all complaint correspondence to and from the complainant. The Complaints Officer will be responsible for ensuring that outcomes to complaints are implemented.
- 28 **Learning from complaints** – The co-op's governing body should consider all complaints it has received and what could be improved as a result of the complaint.