

Making a Complaint

PCHA aims to provide an excellent service to all our residents and we welcome suggestions, comments and views on how to improve the services we offer. We recognise that, from time to time, things go wrong, and when they do, our aim is to put things right as soon as possible. Our Complaints Policy applies to all PCHA homes, whether owned or managed.

What is a complaint?

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code defines a complaint 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 an individual resident or group of residents". In broader terms, a complaint could be when a resident feels:

- We have failed to adequately respond to their initial request
- We have been unhelpful or rude
- We have failed to meet our stated standards or promises
- We have given unclear, misleading or unsuitable advice
- We have not complied with our policies or procedures.



What is *not* a complaint?

A complaint is **not** a first attempt to request a service, such as a repair, or let us know something has gone wrong. A service request is "a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right". This will usually be the first time we have been made aware of dissatisfaction with our service. Service requests are not considered to be complaints but they will be recorded and reviewed regularly.

A complaint is **not** a report of anti-social behaviour. We have special procedures for reporting anti-social behaviour and neighbour/nuisance disputes (please see our Anti-Social Behaviour leaflet) and these will not be dealt with through our complaints process unless we have failed to meet our stated standards or promises.

We will not be able to deal with the following via the complaints process:

- Complaints about other residents
- Any matter that is being (or has been) dealt with by a solicitor
- Any matter that is being dealt with by our insurers
- Complaints already being dealt with by the Ombudsman or MP
- Any matter that occurred more than 12 months ago
- Complaints that have already been through the complaints process or that, in PCHA's opinion, are being pursued in an unreasonable manner
- Complaints that fall outside our jurisdiction (e.g. complaints about utilities)

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How can I make a complaint?

You can make a complaint on the telephone, in writing by email or letter or in person to any member of our staff, via social media or our website. We see complaints as an opportunity rather than a threat and so our staff are encouraged to actively identify complaints. A representative may deal with your complaint on your behalf and you may be represented or accompanied at any meeting with PCHA. Residents are encouraged to let us know if there is any support needed or circumstances we should be aware of when responding to or reviewing a complaint.



How will we respond to your complaint?

We will do everything we can to deal with any query or complaint as quickly as possible. All staff will try and find resolution as quickly as possible to any service request. If this cannot be achieved within two working days it will automatically be escalated to our 2-stage complaints process.

Our Complaints Procedure

Complaints Officer

The officer responsible for complaint handling is the Head of Resident Services.

Stage 1 Complaint

We will acknowledge, define and confirm your desired outcomes and log your complaint within 2 working days of a complaint being received. Wherever possible we will discuss this with you in person. At this point the staff member will agree a timescale with you. They will aim to complete the investigation as quickly as possible and will feed back to you, normally in person, followed by an outcome letter detailing the outcome and any agreed actions.

Stage 2 Complaint—Review

If you feel that we have not dealt with your complaint effectively at Stage 1, you can request for your complaint to be reviewed. Requests to escalate to Stage 2 must be received within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 1 response. We will acknowledge, define and confirm your desired outcome and log the complaint within 2 working days of the request to escalate being received.

For residents of LB Bromley, any Stage 2 complaints will be reviewed by the Head of Housing Schemes at Bromley Council and the CEO of PCHA.

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Timescales for responding to formal complaints:

Our timescales for a decision at each stage will aim to comply with the timescales set out by the Ombudsman, as follows:

- Stage 1 decision—10 working days from acknowledgement of a complaint. If this is not possible, you will receive an explanation and a date by when the stage one response should be received. This will not normally exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.
- Stage 2 decision—we aim to issue a full response within 20 working days from the request to escalate being received. If this is not possible, you will receive an explanation and a date when the stage two response will be received. This will not normally exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

What if I am still not satisfied with the outcome of my complaint?

If a complaint is not resolved at the end of our internal complaints process you can refer the matter directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

For more information about the Ombudsman, you can visit the Ombudsman's website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or phone them on 0300 111 3000.

You may also access the Housing Ombudsman Service at any time throughout your complaint for assistance.

Unreasonable complaints

We reserve the right to refuse to consider or review complaints when a resident's actions or behaviours are deemed to be unreasonable or unacceptable. We will always try to find a way to work with residents before reaching this stage and we always aim to respond in a proportionate and fair way. However, very occasionally, we will have to use this clause in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff and protect PCHA's resources. We are a small organisation and one complainant behaving in an unreasonable manner can take up significant resources in a very small team; this in turn can have an impact on the service offered to other residents.

The following are examples of when a complaint may be deemed to be 'unreasonable':

- The resident is using threatening, aggressive or offensive language or behaviour
- The volume of emails or calls received are extensive and unmanageable
- The outcomes sought are completely unreasonable
- There is nothing further PCHA can reasonably do to assist
- The complainant continues to raise the same or a closely related complaint even after the complaint process has been fully exhausted
- The resources needed to deal effectively with the complaint are disproportionate to the benefit of the outcome being sought.



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Unreasonable complaints (continued)

If we identify a complaint as being unreasonable, in the first instance we will:

- Explain this clearly to the resident and set out our expectations going forward
- Assess the resident's needs and refer them for support if required.

If the above does not result in a change to behaviour, we will warn the resident that this is deemed unacceptable and that the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy will be applied.

This is a summary of our Complaints Policy and a full copy is available on our website.

For further advice or information:

Contact us on **020 8659 3055** or email housing@pcha.co.uk.



Housing
Ombudsman Service

**www.housing-
ombudsman.org.uk**
0300 111 3000