

# Customer Feedback Policy

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### 1. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Date Policy approved by LMH / HMS Board	
Replacing / Updating	Complaint & Compliment Policy
Next Review Date	July 2019
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Responsible Executive Director and Board Champion	Angela Forshaw - Executive Director (Operations)
Circulation list	Available to all LMH / HMS staff electronically

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

Liverpool Mutual Homes is committed to providing excellent customer service that represents value for money to our customers and partners. The Policy is designed to make it easy for customers to provide the LMH Group with feedback regarding its services.

Listening to customer feedback and taking appropriate action will help LMH Group to continually improve services.

The Policy sets out LMH's approach to managing and resolving informal complaints and a two stage process for managing and resolving more complex, formal complaints. It also sets out how customer feedback will be used to inform continuous learning and improvement.

## 3. POLICY AIMS AND KEY OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of this Policy are summarised as follows:

LMH Group will:

- Welcome all customer feedback on service standards and make it easy for customers to provide feedback;
- Resolve all complaints at the first point of contact, informally wherever possible;
- Ensure all complaints are addressed and dealt with within published timescales;
- Consider appropriate awards for proven loss or inconvenience;
- Record, monitor, and analyse feedback in order to examine service performance to improve service delivery; and,
- Learn from customer feedback and promote how feedback is used to improve services.

## 4. INTRODUCTION

The Policy provides customers with a mechanism to provide feedback and to hold the LMH Group accountable for the services it provides. The purpose of setting out the principles within this Policy and its associated procedures is to ensure that there is a clear and transparent approach to the handling of customer feedback.

The Policy will enable customers to raise any issues or concerns in an easy, comfortable and fair way; whilst at the same time taking every opportunity to continually improve as a result of listening to our customer's views and taking appropriate action.

## 5. DETAIL

### 5.1 Definition of a complaint - the LMH Group defines a complaint as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about the standard of service, actions provided by LMH, affecting an individual customer or group of customers, whether expressed in writing, on the telephone, or in person”.

## 6. STRATEGIC LINKS

- 6.1 The Policy reflects the principle within the Regulatory Framework of ‘local resolution’ as defined by the Housing Ombudsman Service and their approach to managing complaints. It also reflects the principles set out within the ‘Involvement and Empowerment Standard for Tenant Scrutiny and Complaints. This ensures that all complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

The Customer Feedback Policy will work in conjunction with the

- **Compensation Policy and**
- **Vexatious Complainants Policy**

## 7. HANDLING COMPLAINTS

- 7.1 Staff will be trained in handling complaints and will be empowered to deal with complaints as and when they arise. Where LMH Group has got things wrong staff will apologise and explain what went wrong and what action will be taken to put things right. Remedies for resolving a complaint will be considered if a complaint has been upheld or where there has been a failure in service provision that is the responsibility of LMH.
- 7.2 Formal complaints will be investigated and responded to using a two stage process. Officers will be trained to try to resolve a problem straight away. Customers will be informed of their options throughout the process. This will include the right to progress their complaint externally via the Housing Ombudsman Service or to seek assistance via local Advocacy Services.
- 7.3 The LMH Group recognises that there are occasions when it is unnecessary to enter into a formal process; customers may choose to raise an issue or problem but do not wish to make a formal complaint. Therefore issues or first time service requests can be dealt with by any member of staff at any office.

## 8. INFORMAL COMPLAINTS – RIGHT-IN-FIVE

- 8.1 The decision about whether a complaint should be treated as an informal ‘RIGHT-IN-FIVE’ or whether it requires a formal written response via the ‘RESOLVE-IN-TEN’ approach, may be dependent on whether the problem has a high likelihood of being resolved within five working days, and whether the complainant would be happy with this option being used.
- 8.2 ‘RIGHT-IN-FIVE’ is the *informal* process which encourages the investigating Officer to resolve the complaint within five working days. The emphasis is on communication, understanding the issue, and providing the complainant with the

confidence that the issue will be resolved by a certain date along with a commitment to managing their expectations and the issue through to resolution and the outcome would be communicated by phone or face to face.

- 8.3 If the informal process fails to resolve the complaint, the investigative work already undertaken would contribute towards a *formal investigation* and written response.
- 8.4 The final written response would be issued by the tenth working day from the date the informal complaint was recorded on the Complaint Management System (CMS).

### 9. FORMAL COMPLAINTS – RESOLVE-IN-TEN

- 9.1 Not all complaints are suitable for informal resolution; some complaints will warrant a more formal investigation. The formal process will provide a greater emphasis on the investigation and resolution procedure with a formal written outcome. This allows up to ten working days to conclude the investigation and the provision of a written response detailing the outcome of the investigation.
- 9.2 Failure to resolve complaints at this stage may result in complaints escalating to Appeal.

### 10. THE APPEAL PROCESS

- 10.1 The Appeal will be the final stage in the process and involves a review by a Director / Manager along with up to three Tenant Representatives; however, a complainant can choose not to have Tenant Representatives in attendance.
- 10.2 The Appeal will be managed and coordinated by the Customer Feedback Officer. The decision about whether a complaint can be considered at Appeal will be taken in cooperation with the appropriate Executive Director / Director. The decision will be taken based on whether there is the potential for the complaint to have an alternative outcome following an independent review of the complaint.
- 10.3 An Appeal will be accepted where there is evidence of fault within the previous investigation process and/or where there is additional information which hasn't been previously considered.
- 10.4 The Appeal would be attended by a Director / Manager, although not necessarily from the service to which the complaint relates. This will provide an independent review of the complaint to identify if there have been any service failings that have not been addressed or identified during the first stage process.
- 10.5 Appeal hearings will be scheduled to take place every two weeks on a rota basis and at times to maximise accessibility, but will be cancelled if not required. This will ensure that complainants should not have to wait longer than two weeks for their Appeal to be heard or to plan for a date which suits their circumstances.

- 10.6 Where a complainant is unable to put forward a coherent case for Appeal or is displaying signs of not coping with the complaints process, the complainant will be directed towards local Advocacy Services.
- 10.7 Where a complainant is displaying signs of vexatious and / or persistent behaviour, officers will be directed to utilise the Vexatious Complainants Policy.
- 10.8 In consultation with an Executive Director, the Customer Feedback Officer reserves the right to end the escalation of a complaint; this includes a failure to provide a suitable explanation to justify escalating a complaint to the next stage.

### 11 EXCLUSIONS FROM THE POLICY

There are times when LMH will not consider complaints under this Policy, this includes:

- Initial request for a service, for example reporting a repair. A complaint can only be made after the issue has been reported and LMH has had an opportunity to respond.
- Complaints about anti-social behaviour (ASB) or nuisance; such complaints will be handled in accordance with LMH's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Complaints will only be accepted where someone is dissatisfied with the way LMH has dealt with a case of ASB.
- Complaints where the complainant is taking legal action about the same issue; legal action will supersede this Policy.
- Complaints in relation to an issue which is over 6 months old.
- Complaints which have already been dealt with under this Policy.

Any allegations about alleged inappropriate conduct of LMH Board Members or staff will be handled separately in accordance with good practice guidance. These complaints will be taken seriously and will be investigated by an independent party.

### 12. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN FOCUSES

The Customer Feedback Policy will impact on **Communities and Customers**. The Policy will reflect the design principles relating to customer experience by ensuring that the LMH Group responds to customer contact efficiently and cost effectively. By ensuring that we are easy to deal with and there are opportunities for customers to provide feedback on their experiences and to shape future services.

The Policy will support effective complaint resolution and service improvement which should ultimately lead to improved satisfaction and value for money services.

## 13. CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

This Policy will impact on standards for monitoring complaints:

The Standard	Outcome provided within
RIGHT-IN-FIVE	5 working days
RESOLVE-IN-TEN	10 working days
APPEAL	20 working days

## 14. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance is monitored on a monthly basis by Leadership Team, and a more detailed Quarterly Performance Report is provided to Social Landlord Operations Committee. LMH Board also receives performance information on complaints KPIs on a quarterly basis.

Complaints performance information is also displayed on LMH's web site and included in the quarterly tenant newsletter.

## 15. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction with complaint management process will be monitored and reported on a monthly basis.

## 16. CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT

The review process sought to engage the views of officers and customers. The feedback from both was considered and incorporated within the Policy.

## 17. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

The Policy applies to all LMH customers irrespective of their protected characteristics; however, there could always be comprehension issues through culture and language. LMH Group is therefore committed to working with third party organisations representing people with recognised characteristics.

All customers who have completed the complaint process are consulted regarding their satisfaction and ease of access to the complaint process.

Customer profile information and the ability to measure customer satisfaction are available which allows for the specific targeting of customers in order to determine ease of access to the complaints process. Trends can also be identified to ensure no barriers exist for customers wishing to make a complaint.

## **18. VALUE FOR MONEY**

There are identified savings within the Policy in relation to removing the need for acknowledgement and response letters within the RIGHT-IN-FIVE process. This will also free up Officer time to focus on service resolution.

## **19. POLICY REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK**

This Policy has been reviewed in line with LMH Policy Review Framework.

The next review will be completed in 2019 subject to any changes in Legislation and changes to the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England.

In line with LMH Group's continuous improvement strategy the review will incorporate an assessment of key internal and external influencers to ensure the Policy reflects best practice together with all legal and statutory requirements.