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1. INTRODUCTION

Coastal Housing Group is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. We will aim to put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service that you are entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we got something wrong, we'll apologise and where possible we'll try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

2. WHEN TO USE THIS POLICY

When you express your concerns or complaints to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right to appeal and so, rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us, (for example decisions on whether or not you are nominated by the Local Authority to be allocated one of our properties or certain planning issues, etc.), and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

Also, this policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue. In those circumstances you should contact the associations appointed Data Officer.

3. HAVE YOU ASKED US YET?

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time (e.g. reporting a faulty street light, requesting an appointment, etc.), then this policy doesn't apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service, and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

4. INFORMAL RESOLUTION

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try and sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you are dealing with. He or she will try and resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn, from addressing your concern, then the member of staff will draw them to your attention. If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

5. HOW TO EXPRESS CONCERN OR COMPLAIN FULLY

You can express your concern in any of the ways below:

- You can speak with any member of staff. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern formally.
- You can also complain via Live Chat and / or other social media channels if you would prefer. So long as your message is headed "Complaint" we will be sure to pass it on to our Customer Service Team.
- You can ask for a copy of our complaints form.
- You can get in touch with our Customer Service Team on 01792 479200.
- You can use the form at our website www.coastalha.co.uk
- You can email us at ask@coastalha.co.uk
- You can write a letter to us at: Complaints & Concerns, Coastal Housing Group, 3rd Floor, 220 High Street, Swansea, SA1 1NW.

We aim to have concern and complaint forms available at all of our service outlets and public areas.

We will also try to ensure that our caretakers have forms available should you require them.

Copies of the policy and the complaint form are available in:

- Welsh
- Polish
- Mandarin
- Bengali

The policy and associated forms will be translated to further languages if required.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for those persons wishing to complain who are living with disabilities. This will include, for example, the policy and associated forms being made available in large print / audio recording.

6. DEALING WITH YOUR CONCERN

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example if you have a disability.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 6 months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. (In any event, regardless of circumstance, we will not consider any concerns that took place more than 3 years ago).

If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their agreement to discuss matters with you.

7. WHAT IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE BODY INVOLVED?

If your complaint covers more than one body, (e.g. more than one housing association, includes repairs contractors, the local authority, private landlords etc.), we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf, (for example, contractors), or another tenant / leaseholder etc., you may wish to raise the matter informally and directly with them first. However if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

8. INVESTIGATION

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is

straightforward, we'll usually ask somebody from the service to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from another organisation or in certain cases, we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we've got it right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for. The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us. We will try to find a solution to this that ensures the investigator can fully investigate whilst addressing the complainants concerns.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it. We will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within one month. If your complaint is more complex we will:

- Let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- Tell you how long we expect it to take
- Let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- Give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of the investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We'll look at the relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails, or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved, and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

9. OUTCOME

If we record your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or email or face-to-face, for example. If necessary, we'll produce a longer report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we'll tell you what and why it happened. We'll show how the mistake affected you.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we'll always apologise.

10. PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

If we didn't provide a service that you should have had, we'll aim to provide it now if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we'll aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we'll try to put you back in the position you would have been if we'd got it right.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, when you should have had one from us, we will usually aim to make good what you have lost.

If you are not happy with the outcome of our investigation, you can ask for the Director of the relevant service within the association to review your complaint before the matter is referred to the Ombudsman. Such requests should be made to the Customer Service Team. You will then be kept up to date on how your complaint will be reviewed.

11. OMBUDSMAN

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all governmental bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it.
- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

Phone: 0845 601 0987
E-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
The website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
Writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd Yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Commissioner, about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

12. LEARNING LESSONS

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made.

Managers in the housing and maintenance teams consider a summary of all complaints monthly to ensure timescales are being adhered to, lessons are being learned quickly and follow up actions are being taken. The senior management team considers a summary of all complaints quarterly as well as details of any serious complaints. Our Board of Management also considers our response to complaints annually.

Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we've promised have been made.

13. WHAT IF I NEED HELP?

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact, for example Shelter Cymru, your AM or MP, other local independent legal specialists etc., who may be able to assist you.

You can look up your Welsh Government Assembly Member here: www.senedd.assembly.wales
You can look up your Member of Parliament here: www.parliament.uk

You can look up Shelter Cymru here: www.sheltercymru.org.uk

You can also use this concerns and complaints policy if you are someone under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline (phone 080880 23456, www.meiccymru.org) or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

Freephone: 0808 801 1000

Phone: 01792 765600

Email: post@childcomwales.org.uk

Website: www.childcomwales.org.uk

Writing to: South Wales Office: Oystermouth House, Phoenix Way Llansamlet Swansea SA7 9FS

14. WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

15. COMPLAINT FORM

A: Your details

Surname	Forename(s)	Title: Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, other (If so please state)
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Address and postcode:	
Your email address:	
Daytime contact telephone number:	
Mobile number:	

Please state by which of the above methods you would prefer us to contact you:

Your requirements: if our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill out this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B. Please note that before taking forward the complaint, we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.

B: Making a complaint on behalf of someone else: Their details

Their name in full	
Address and postcode	
What is your relationship with them?	
Why are you making the complaint on their behalf?	

C: About your concern / complaint

(Please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary).

C1 If known, name of the service you are complaining about

C2 What do you think they did wrong / failed to do and when?

C3 Describe how you personally have suffered or been affected?

C4 What do you think should be done to put things right?

C5 Have you already put your concern to the frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so?

C6 If it is more than 6 months since you became first aware of the problem, please give the reason why you have not complained before now.

IF YOU HAVE ANY DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT YOUR CONCERN / COMPLAINT PLEASE ATTACH THEM WITH THIS FORM.

Signature.....

Date.....

When you have completed this form please return it to:

Complaints, Customer Service Team, Coastal Housing Group, 3rd Floor, 220 High Street, Swansea, SA1 1NW.