
Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. WHEN TO USE THIS POLICY	2
3. ASKING US TO PROVIDE A SERVICE	2
4. INFORMAL RESOLUTION	2
5. HOW TO EXPRESS CONCERN OR COMPLAIN FULLY	3
6. DEALING WITH YOUR CONCERN	3
7. WHAT IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE BODY INVOLVED?	4
8. INVESTIGATION	4
9. OUTCOME	5
10. PUTTING THINGS RIGHT	5
11. OMBUDSMAN	5
12. LEARNING LESSONS	6
13. WHAT IF YOU NEED HELP?	6
14. WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU	7
15. APPENDIX A - COMPLAINT / CONCERN FORM	8

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 concerns, 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.

This policy does not apply to data access issues (often referred to as 'Freedom of Information'), such as data subject access requests or other data protection matters. Please contact the associations appointed Data Protection Officer in those circumstances.

If your concern or complaint is about the conduct or behaviour of another resident of Coastal and/or their visitors, you may wish to raise the matter informally and directly with them. You will find more information in our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policy about how Coastal is able to support you to do this. Concerns and complaints of this nature are not dealt with under this policy, unless there is a concern or complaint about how we have responded.

3. ASKING US TO PROVIDE A SERVICE

If you are approaching us for a service (e.g., reporting a repair, or requesting a meeting), then this policy doesn't apply as we need an opportunity 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 described below.

4. INFORMAL RESOLUTION

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you are dealing with. They 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:

- ✓ Tell the staff member you are in contact with that you want us to deal with your concern formally
- ✓ Ask for a copy of our complaints form or view it on our website <https://www.coastalha.co.uk/making-a-complaint/>
- ✓ Get in touch with our central complaint contact point (the Customer Service Team) on 01792 479200
- ✓ Use the form on our website www.coastalha.co.uk
- ✓ Email us at ask@coastalha.co.uk
- ✓ Message us via Live Chat and / or other social media channels
- ✓ Write a letter to us at:
Complaints & Concerns, Coastal Housing Group, 3rd Floor, 220 High Street, Swansea, SA1 1NW.

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

- ❖ Welsh
- ❖ Traditional Chinese
- ❖ Simplified Chinese
- ❖ Bengali
- ❖ Arabic
- ❖ Polish

The policy and associated forms will be translated to further languages and in audio, large print, etc. as required.

6. DEALING WITH YOUR CONCERN

We will formally acknowledge your concern within five 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 six 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 explain 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, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three 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, repairs contractors, 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, (e.g., repairs contractor), 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 respond to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere in the organisation or in certain cases, we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we are 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.

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 a calendar 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 firstly aim 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 relevant evidence. This could include information you have provided, our case 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, any legal entitlement and guidance.

9. OUTCOME

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we find. If necessary, we will produce a report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we made a mistake, we'll tell you what happened and why.

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 make a mistake, we will always apologise for it.

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 done things properly.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, when we should have provided it for you, we will try to refund the cost.

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.

The Director will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority of escalated complaints within a calendar month.

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 service provider
- ❖ 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 to give us a chance to put things right.

You can contact the Ombudsman by:

Phone: 0300 790 0203
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's Office deals with complaints 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 relevant 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 system 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 YOU 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 agencies like those listed below who may be able to assist you.

Find your Member of the Senedd (MS)	https://senedd.wales/find-a-member-of-the-senedd
Find your Member of Parliament (MP)	https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP
Find a solicitor	https://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk/
Shelter Cymru	https://sheltercymru.org.uk/

Age Cymru	https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/
Advocacy Support Cymru	https://www.ascymru.org.uk/
Advocacy Matters Wales	https://www.advocacymatterswales.co.uk/

A full list of advocacy and advice bodies can be found on the Ombudsman website - <https://www.ombudsman.wales/advocacy-template/>

You can also use this concerns and complaints policy if you are under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline:

- ✓ Phone 0808 802 3456
- ✓ Website www.meiccymru.org

or contact the Children’s Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

- ✓ Phone 0808 801 1000
- ✓ Email post@childcomwales.org.uk
- ✓ Website www.childcom.org.uk

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. 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 someone’s actions are unreasonable and/or unacceptable.

15. APPENDIX A - COMPLAINT / CONCERN FORM

A: Your details

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

Please state how you would prefer us to contact you	
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Your requirements: if our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English or Welsh 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.

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

Please note: We have to be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person who has experienced the problem

Their name in full		
Address and postcode		
What is your relationship to 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 department/section/service you are complaining about

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

C3	Describe how you personally have suffered or been affected?

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

C5	When did you first become aware of the problem?

C6	Have you already put your concern to the staff member responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so?

C7	If it is more than six 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 complaint/concern, please attach them with this form.

Signature.....

Date.....

When you have completed this form, please return it to:

Complaints and Concerns – Customer Services Team, Coastal Housing Group, 3rd Floor, 220 High Street, Swansea, SA1 1NW.