



CHAPTER 7 SCHEDULE 4 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

Dovecotes Tenant Management Organisation (DTMO) are required by our Management Agreement to have in place a policy detailing how we respond to complaints and clear procedures we will follow when investigating a complaint.

This document, our Statement of Policy and Procedures describes how we will respond to complaints we receive.

This statement includes a description of our Complaints Procedure. This is a formal procedure that sets out how our staff will respond to a complaint.

When our customers express dissatisfaction with any of the services we provide, we welcome and value the opportunity to address their concerns and aim to resolve their complaint with minimal formality. We recognise that effective resolution of complaints will help us to:

- Target resources better and improve service delivery.
- Maintain our credibility and image with customers.
- Improve customer satisfaction and confidence.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in all areas of service delivery.
- Provide opportunities for us to improve and help prevent problems.

In addition, Dovecotes TMO also want to know when our customers are happy with a service they receive. When compliments are received they are reported to the Management Committee at monthly board meetings.

This is a single document that shows both policy and procedural statements for clarity.

Policy & Procedure

1. Complaint Definition

Dovecotes TMO use the following definition of a complaint:

‘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’.

A request for service is not a complaint; a service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but they will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.

Residents will be given the opportunity to raise a complaint whenever they express dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Dovecotes TMO would not stop their efforts to address the service request in the event of a resident complaining. Also, a resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such.

Complaints can be reported to Dovecotes TMO in person, in writing, email, over the phone, or via the organisation’s social media accounts and website. Reasonable adjustments will be provided where necessary under the Equality Act 2010 and are detailed in our Reasonable Adjustment Policy.

Dovecotes TMO welcomes complaints as an opportunity to hear from residents. As such, a high volume of complaints would not be seen as a negative, as this could be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process.

Where the complaint pertains to a service delivered by a third-party on behalf of Dovecotes TMO, the complaint will be overseen by DTMO to ensure that the response to the complaint is handled within timescales and is compliant with the Ombudsman’s expectations for a two-stage complaints process.

2. Excluded Complaints

Dovecotes TMO will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If we decide not to accept a complaint, we will evidence our reasoning in writing to the complainant. Each complaint will be considered on its own merits. Should we decide to exclude a complaint, the complainant will be informed of their right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.

Dovecotes TMO reserves the right to exclude complaints for the following reasons:

- The complaint is anonymous, where the complainant does not want to be associated with the complaint and we are unable to respond formally.
- A matter that has been or is subject to a legal claim or an insurance claim.
- A complaint regarding an issue that arose more than 12 months previous to the complaint being made. Dovecotes TMO would consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.
- A complaint that has been previously investigated and has been through our complaints process.
- If the complaint is solely related to a council-operated service, the resident would be referred to City of Wolverhampton Council's process.
- A complaint is considered vexatious, as detailed below:

3. Vexatious Complaints

A vexatious complainant is a complainant who is pursuing a complaint which is entirely without merit and is made with the intention of causing inconvenience, harassment or expense to employees or committee members of the TMO. These complaints can either slow down the investigation of a complaint, or be so time consuming to manage that the behaviour interferes with proper consideration of the complaint.

Based on the circumstances and behaviour of the customer and their complaint, restrictive actions will be tailored accordingly. If a decision is taken to apply restricted access, we will write to the complainant to explain:

- Why the decision has been taken.
- What it means for their contacts with the organisation.
- How long any limits will last and what the complainant can do to have the decision reviewed.

4. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made by any of the following methods:

- By email at:
 - generalenquiries@dovecotestmo.com
- By telephone:
 - 01902 552780
- In person:
 - Dovecotes Tenant Management Organisation, 86 Ryefield, Pendeford, Wolverhampton, WV8 1UD

- By asking a friend, relative, a trusted person or an advocate to contact us on a customer's behalf. In these cases, we will need customer consent to discuss any issues with them.

An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey will be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where we ask for wider feedback about our services, we will also provide details of how a complaint can be submitted.

5. Stage One

A complaint will be logged at the first point of contact with the resident. It will then be passed to a senior 'Complaints Officer' within the TMO. The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days of being received. It will be acknowledged in the form of a letter which will set out the TMO's understanding of the complaint and the outcomes that the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident will be asked for clarification at this stage.

The complaint will then be investigated and a full response shared with the resident within ten* working days of the complaint being acknowledged. This response will be in the form of a letter and may be accompanied with a phone call or a visit and discussion with the parties involved.

Should Dovecotes TMO decide that an extension to this timescale is needed due to the complexity of the complaint, the responsible officer will inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension will be no more than ten working days without good reason, and any reasons will be clearly explained to the resident. The resident will also be provided with the Housing Ombudsman's contact information.

Should the resident raise additional complaints during the investigation, the organisation would determine whether the new issues are related to the original complaint. If they are related and a response has not yet been communicated to the resident, then the new issues would be incorporated into the original complaint. Where the stage one response has already been sent, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.

In responding to the complaint, Dovecotes TMO will address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

The response to the stage one complaint will confirm the following in writing:

- The complaint stage.
- The complaint definition.

- The decision on the complaint.
- The reasons for any decisions made.
- The details of any remedy offered to put things right.
- Details of any outstanding actions.
- Details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the individual is not satisfied with the response.

6. Stage Two

Stage two will come into operation when all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage one. Requests for stage two will be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage two of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.

The person considering the complaint at stage two will not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.

The Chief Officer will convene and chair a panel of representatives, one of whom must be a tenant, who will review the decision made at Stage One and either uphold the decision, or propose an alternative solution in writing to the complainant. The target for completion of this stage is within 20* working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

In responding to the complaint, Dovecotes TMO will address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

*The primary objective of this policy is to resolve complaints within agreed timescales. If required, an extension of ten working days can be applied with the agreement of the complainant. Requests must be approved by the Chief Officer at Stage one and the Chair of the Board at Stage two. All extensions must be evidenced and recorded on the complaint monitoring log. When the resident is notified of a potential extension, they must be provided with the Housing Ombudsman's contact information.

7. Resolution of Complaint

At each stage of the complaints process, Dovecotes TMO will:

- Deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind.
- Give the resident a fair chance to set out their position.
- Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

The TMO will listen to a resident's complaint and, where a mistake has been made, try to put things right. There are a variety of potential resolutions, including:

- Speaking to the resident directly to ensure we are clear about the concerns and to provide opportunity for the resident to be clear about their concerns and the resolution sought.
- Addressing any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Acknowledging when something has gone wrong and making an apology.
- Providing a full explanation and reasons where something has gone wrong and take action if there has been a delay.
- Amending or correcting a record.
- Reviewing a decision that has already been made.
- Reviewing our procedures to ensure we capture any learning and improvements.

A complaint response will be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.

A lack of response from the complainant at any stage will be recorded as 'resolved' once the target deadline date is reached. Reasonable adjustment will be applied if the complainant cannot respond within the target deadline; in this instance, the customer should notify the TMO of this and give their reasons.

Dovecotes Tenant Management Organisation's Complaints Policy is designed to ensure that it meets its service obligations and tackles poor performance at the earliest possible stage. Dovecotes TMO will always endeavour to provide reasonable explanations and propose reasonable solutions.

8. Compliments

Dovecotes Tenant Management Organisation values not only complaints it receives from customers, but also any 'compliments' about service delivery. It is good to know when services are being provided well and when changes in service delivery have made a positive impact on tenants. Each compliment is recorded, acknowledged with the customer and reported to the management committee at monthly board meetings.

9. Promotions of the Service

The complaints policy and procedure will be publicised within the office, at the start of new tenancies, on the organisation's website and a copy will be always available in the office or by post on request.

10. Accessibility of the Service

Dovecotes TMO is committed to ensuring that it is easy for all residents to raise a complaint. The organisation will make reasonable adjustments on a case-by-case basis, in line with DTMO's reasonable adjustment policy.

Tenants are entitled to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with Dovecotes TMO.

11. Performance Monitoring and Targets

The aim is to resolve 100% of complaints at each stage of the process.

Complaints will be used to highlight service areas tenants are most dissatisfied with and aid in the prioritisation of service for investigation and improvement.

12. Continuous Learning and Improvement

Dovecotes Tenant Management Organisation have a positive complaint handling culture and use complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve our relationship with members. We proactively use learning from complaints to revise policies and procedures, to train staff and contractors and to improve communication with our members.

At each stage of the procedure we will act with accountability, transparency and provide feedback to residents where we have failed and the actions taken to learn and improve. Learning and improvement from complaints will also be included in our Annual Report.

We are a tenant led organisation and value the importance of resident involvement. Committee Members are fully compliant in the organisation's complaints policy and procedure and included in stage two panel hearings as part of the dispute resolution process, where appropriate.

At closing stage, the complainant will be asked to complete an online survey to enable the TMO to gather feedback for future and continuous improvement.

13. Housing Ombudsman.

At any point a complainant can refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service via the contact details set out below:

In writing to:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET

Via the organisation's website:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/bring-your-complaint-to-the-housing-ombudsman/>

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

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