

## Talk to Us Policy

### Document Details

<b>Version</b>	4
<b>Target Audience</b>	Colleagues/Customers/Board Members/Contractors
<b>Issuing Department</b>	Homes & Services – Customer and Neighbourhoods
<b>Accountable Executive (Name and Job Title)</b>	Kathryn Fox-Rogers, Chief Operating Officer

### Links to Regulatory Framework for Social Housing

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard: ‘have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.’





We recognise the importance and value of Customer Feedback and that it is imperative that we have the correct systems and monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure performance and targets are being met; and to provide assurance to Customers, Executive & the Board that reasons for complaints are being thoroughly investigated and addressed to avoid reoccurrence where possible.

We have undertaken a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and included the language from the code in our policy. Through our work relating to the range of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, revised Consumer Regulation, and our Customer First approach we aim to ensure we hear the Voice of the Customer clearly to inform service provision and delivery.

### Links to Strategic Objectives:

Outstanding Services

### Link to Values

Empowering	One Team	Outstanding	Pioneering
			

### Outcomes for Customers:

A clear, simple and accessible customer feedback process to ensure complaints are dealt with fairly, consistently and in a timely manner with the Voice of the Customer being heard.

### Version Control

Version	Revision Date	Author: Name & Job Title	Change Description (Where a document has been reviewed without any amendments, insert ‘N/A’)
1	Mar-17	Kate McArdell, Customer	N/A

		Support Team Leader	
2	Jan-18	Kate Mc Ardell-Broome, Operations Manager-Hub	Name and title changes Clarification of the review stage Additional information added for leaseholder complaints Removed recording of Stage 0 complaints
3	Apr-20	Kate Mc Ardell-Broome, Head of Customer Operations	Change of Policy Name to 'Talk to Us' Removed 'suggestion' recording Added recording of Stage 0 complaints as our method of proactive reaction to customer feedback Removed Stage 2 Panel; based on research/feedback and none convened at JJH Added clarification for Leaseholders Changed timescale for Stage 1 and Stage 2
4	Jul-22	Rachel Ojuederie, Customer Performance Manager	Updated complaint definition Added consideration of individual circumstances Updated wording on when a complaint won't be accepted Added clarification on use of word 'complaint' Added clarification for Stage 0 definition Added clarification for Stage 1 escalation Added specification of complaint stage to be included in all responses Added specification of escalation information to be included in all closing responses

#### Policy Review Schedule

<b>Revision Date</b>	Jul-22
<b>Date approved by Accountable Executive</b>	Jul-22, Chief Operating Officer
<b>Date approved by Executive</b>	Jul-22
<b>Date approved by Editorial Panel</b>	Aug-22
<b>Date approved by Scrutiny Panel</b>	Aug-22
<b>Date approved by Board</b>	N/A

<b>Next Review Date</b>	Aug-24
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Johnnie Johnson Housing (JJH) aims to deliver outstanding customer service and learn from customer feedback. JJH aims to resolve all complaints effectively, within set targets and to the customers' satisfaction wherever possible. JJH also welcomes compliments from customers about its services.
- 1.2. This Policy sets out JJH's approach to offering a simple and accessible customer feedback process that ensures complaints are dealt with fairly, impartially, consistently and in a timely manner when things go wrong; and that compliments are shared and celebrated.

## **2. Definitions and Scope**

- 2.1 JJH defines a 'compliment' as feedback that a service has been provided well or that an employee has been helpful.
- 2.2 JJH defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents. JJH encourages customers to give such feedback.
- 2.3 Examples of lack of satisfaction include:
  - delays in responding to enquiries and requests;
  - failure to provide a service that would usually be JJH's responsibility to provide;
  - failure to meet the service standards JJH has promised to deliver; and/or
  - failure to follow JJH procedures.
- 2.4 JJH understands that in some circumstances complaints raised can be sensitive to the resident, when investigating a complaint JJH will consider the individual circumstances of each complaint and ensure appropriate use of discretion where applicable. When dealing with a complaint, the complaint handler will:
  - Deal with complaints on their merits
  - Act independently and have an open mind
  - Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
  - Consider all information and evidence carefully
  - Keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.
- 2.5 Through this Policy, JJH cannot deal with the following:
  - Requests for specific services - for example first reports of a repair or of neighbour nuisance;
  - Appeals or disputes for decisions made under other JJH policies, procedures or processes;
  - Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal, or where legal action has been taken;
  - Complaints about employees that would usually be handled via HR policies; and/or
  - Insurance claims that would normally be covered by home contents insurance - insurance claims, including personal injury claims, will be referred to JJH's insurers and will not be handled as a complaint
- 2.6 Generally, dealing with complaints is a straightforward process, but in a minority of cases where this is not the case, JJH reserves the right to refuse to deal with the complaint or escalation of a complaint; or may seek to deal with it differently if in our view it is being pursued unreasonably or merits being handled in a different manner. Examples of these situations include:
  - Matters that have previously been considered and responded to under the complaints policy.
  - When customers are liaising with JJH in an abusive or aggressive manner.

- When customers refuse to work with JJH to resolve the issue or their expectations are either unreasonable or outside what JJH can agree.
- Service failures that occurred over 12 months ago as we will not be able to investigate them.

If the decision is made to not accept a complaint, an explanation will be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.

### **3. Implementation**

3.1 Customers can make a complaint by the following methods:

- Over the telephone to our Customer Hub on telephone 0345 305 5335
- In person to any member of staff
- By visiting our website [www.jjhousing.co.uk](http://www.jjhousing.co.uk)
- By letter
- By email at [TalkToUs@jjhousing.co.uk](mailto:TalkToUs@jjhousing.co.uk)
- Or by asking a relative, friend, MP, Councillor or any other representative to contact us.

3.2 A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such, an expression of dissatisfaction which meets the definition of a complaint as detailed in section 2.2, will be handled in line with this policy.

3.3 JJH provides equal access to our complaints service by:

- Offering a Complaints Advocacy Service
- Accepting oral complaints
- Supporting vulnerable customers
- Translating and interpreting
- Providing information in large print or audio
- Holding meetings in places with disabled access and hearing loops
- Paying reasonable travel and where appropriate, carer costs
- Inviting a support worker/carer for customers who have physical or mental health issues (e.g. sight-impaired, autism)

3.4 If customers need help or advice in making a complaint to us or want someone to act on their behalf, there are independent sources of help such as:

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Freedom of Information Act
- Local Tenants and Resident Groups
- Local Councillor or Member of Parliament

### **4. Complaints resolved at first point of contact - Stage 0**

4.1 When a customer expresses dissatisfaction, our staff will try to resolve their concerns quickly, such as with a missed appointment, this can often be resolved 'there and then' with an apology and the provision of another appointment.

4.2 These Stage 0 complaints will be logged on the complaints database in order to monitor trends and ensure resolutions have been made at first point of contact.

4.2 On occasion, the matter may require an investigation rather than first point of contact resolution.

## **5. Investigation – Stage 1**

- 5.1 If JJH is unable to resolve the complaint at Stage 0 or if the resident requests it, a manager of that service area will investigate the complaint and the initial response.
- 5.2 JJH aims to complete investigations and provide a response within 10 working days. If this timescale cannot be met, the investigating manager will contact the complainant to agree a revised date.

## **6. Review – Stage 2**

- 6.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with JJH's response they can request their complaint to be escalated to a Stage 2 review. A Senior Manager who has not previously been involved will review the complainant's reasons for wishing to escalate the complaint as well as the actions taken.
- 6.2 JJH aims to complete investigations and provide a response within 15 working days. If this timescale cannot be met, the Senior Manager will contact the complainant to agree a revised date.
- 6.3 At all stages of the complaints process, JJH will:
- Confirm with the complainant the person who is responsible for responding to the complaint
  - Speak to the complainant within 2 working days to discuss the complaint
  - Confirm JJH's understanding of the complaint and the outcome the complainant desires
  - Advise the complainant when to expect a reply
  - Explain JJH's decision(s)
  - Confirm when any actions will be completed
  - Respect confidentiality and advise the complainant of any enquiries we may need to make which could involve others in helping resolve the complaint.
  - Ensure the complaint stage is provided in every complaint response/ communication.
- 6.4 Where there have been failings by JJH, an apology will be issued and matters will be put right at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.5 In certain circumstances compensation may be offered. Please refer to the Compensation Policy for further advice.
- 6.6 JJH will close the complaint once all the actions have been completed, ensuring that clear instructions on how to escalate a complaint is included at the end of every complaint response.
- 6.7 JJH will carry out a satisfaction survey within five working days of the complaint closure and this information will be used for service improvements.
- 6.8 The complainant can involve a Member of Parliament, Councillor or the Housing Ombudsman Service at any time during the complaint process.
- 6.9 Following completion of JJH's complaints procedure, the complainant has two options:
- 6.9.1 To ask for a 'designated person' to review their case. In law, a designated person may be:
- a Member of Parliament (MP)
  - a local Councillor
  - a tenant panel recognised by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)
- 6.9.2 Approach the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) to review the complaint.

- 6.10 As an alternative to the HOS, Leaseholders may approach the Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM) or the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 should they remain dissatisfied with their complaint resolution.
- 6.11 JJH will take prompt and thorough action to resolve any complaint that either JJH or the Leaseholder has not complied with a statutory obligation or an obligation under the terms of a lease
- 6.12 JJH will first seek to resolve any complaints from Leaseholders about the service provided by JJH at service level. If this cannot be done to the Leaseholder’s satisfaction, Leaseholders have a right to access JJH’s complaints procedure.
- 6.13 JJH recognises the importance of highlighting when things are done well as it is important to hear when a customer has something positive to say about the service provided so that the good practice can continue to develop and improve.
- 6.14 Compliments and comments are welcomed from all customers and JJH will contact customers on occasion for their views on the service received.
- 6.15 The policy will be implemented with immediate effect. Managers will ensure that all employees have read the contents of the policy.
- 6.16 Training will be provided for all staff to ensure that the Policy and procedure are understood and adhered to.

**7. Responsibilities**

- 7.1 The monitoring of the effectiveness of this policy will be undertaken by the Executive.
- 7.2 JJH will review this policy every two years. This process will include consultation with residents.

**8. Linked Documents**

<b>Document Title</b>
Compensation Policy
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy