



NCHP130 Complaints Procedure

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Index

Section Number	Description	Page
1.	Customer Complaints Procedure	3
2.	Recording of formal complaints	3
3.	Stage 1 – Investigation	4
4	Stage 2 – Review	5
5	End of Complaints Procedure	6
6	Vexatious, persistent or abusive complaints	7
7.	Sources of advice and information	7
8.	MP and Elected Members Casework	7
9.	Monitoring of Complaints	8
10.	Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Handling Survey	8
Appendix 1	Stage 1 and Stage 2 Process Maps	9

1. Customer Complaints Procedure

This Customer Complaints Procedure outlines the process we have in place to effectively handle customer complaints. It should be read in conjunction with the Customer Complaints Policy.

When a customer reports dissatisfaction with any service the procedures set out in this document must be followed. Appendix 1 shows a process maps for managing each stage of a formal complaint.

Every customer is important to us. At every point of contact with a customer our approach will always be to listen, advise and ensure we are finding solutions. Every employee is a representative of the organisation and will be an advocate in ensuring the best customer experience is provided. It is our goal to resolve queries at the first point of contact without the need for the customer to raise a complaint formally.

While we will always work to resolve issues in the most efficient manner, when dissatisfaction is expressed, we will use our formal two stage process to record and resolve outstanding issues. The formal process is also geared towards resolving any issue at the earliest opportunity, listening to the customer and taking ownership of the issue and working to resolve it and provide a clear outcome.

2. Recording of formal complaints

Formal complaints will be received into the CRT either through the NCC website, NCC Housing Services Feedback email, via the telephone, through letters received through the postal service or from other sections across the business. The process for resolving a formal complaint is set out in 3. And 4. Below.

On the working day we receive a formal complaint, the relevant information relating to the complaint will be passed to the Customer Relations Team. This will ensure all relevant details and correspondence relating to the complaint are kept centrally by the Customer Relations Team and any relevant documents are stored appropriately. An acknowledgement letter will be sent to the customer within 5 working days by the Customer Relations Team.

Once entered on the complaint system, details of the complaint are automatically shown on our live complaint reporting system. This report sets out timescales, deadlines and the Resolution Officer assigned to the complaint. The report details information on outstanding matters in real time and learnings and trends for quarterly and annual reporting purposes. The report is accessible to all service areas for the purpose of complaint management.

Each department will designate appropriate members of staff to act as a 'Resolution Officer' for the purpose of investigating and responding to complaints.

Complaints will be recorded and reported under the relevant service area including for the properties owned and managed by each subsidiary.

3. Stage 1 – Investigation – 10 working days

Stage1 Investigation will take place through the following process.

- a) The Customer Relations Team will record the complaint on the complaint system, at which point it will be allocated a unique complaint reference number and allocate the complaint to the appropriate Resolution Officer appointed for reporting purposes. The Resolution Officer will receive notification about the complaint investigation and if they are not the correct officer to handle the case, they will

confer with the correct service area and agree reallocation to ensure matters are allocated and responded to effectively. In cases where the correct team is unknown, they will respond to the CRT within 2 working days to advise them. The standard timeframe for response will be 10 working days

- b) Where a Resolution Officer is assigned a complaint but not present to undertake the review the CRT will contact the Head of Service and ask who the case should be assigned to.
- c) Those cases which fall within Awaab's Law/Damp and Mould risks, Health and Safety, Fire Safety and Building Safety categories and/or present an immediate risk to the safety of our customers, staff or the general public, will be flagged and given priority. The appropriate section should be completed on the complaint system and steps taken to ensure the manager of the service area is made aware. This also ensures data is collated for compliance reporting purposes.
- d) An acknowledgement letter will be sent to the customer by the Customer Relations Team to confirm that the matter has progressed to a Stage 1 Investigation. The acknowledgement letter will provide a case reference number, details of the complaints process, details for Ombudsman Services and a summary of the issues being investigated.
- e) The Resolution Officer will make contact with the customer as soon as practicable and preferably within 2 working days of receipt of the complaint details and advise the customer that they are handling their complaint and what they will be looking into. This is also an opportunity for the Resolution Officer and customer to discuss the complaint to ensure both parties fully understand the scope of the issues being investigated.
- f) The Resolution Officer will always look at resolving the issue as a priority and fully investigate the matters raised. This will involve appropriate levels of communication with the customer and consideration of all aspects of the complaint.
- g) In exceptional cases, there may be circumstances which require a longer timeframe for a Stage 1 Investigation to be completed. If this occurs, the Resolution Officer must agree the extension with customer and complete the relevant option on the complaint system to provide a 'Holding Response'. The Customer Relations Team will review all Holding Response requests and, if approved, will provide the response to the customer in writing and reallocate the matter back to the Resolution Officer to resolve the complaint within the new extended timeframe. Outside of exceptional circumstances, a maximum of 10 additional working days will be permitted as an extension to a Stage 1 Investigation.
- h) The Resolution Officer will use the complaint system to record any relevant notes prior to completing the Stage 1 response. They will then produce the Stage 1 response through the complaint system ensuring we provide details of communication, resolutions, explanations of any faults found, appropriate apology required and learnings that can be taken from the issues raised. The relevant outcome and learning information will also be completed on the complaint system before the matter is submitted to the CRT.
- i) CRT will check the Stage 1 response to ensure it meets quality and compliance standards and, if approved, send the response to the customer and store a copy of

the response. If there are matters which are not addressed or any other issues are found, the documents will be returned and discussed with the Resolution Officer for further consideration.

k) The formal response will include details of all further options available in case the customer remains dissatisfied. This will include escalation to the Stage 2 Review below. The response will be sent by the Customer Relations Team. The Customer Relations Team will update the system and close the complaint including all learning outcomes and whether the case was justified.

l) After completion of a complaint, a survey may be sent to gather customer satisfaction data around the handling of the complaint.

4. Stage 2 Review – 20 working days

If the customer is unhappy with the response received under Stage 1, they can request escalation to a Stage 2 Review. Any request for escalation must be made within 12 months of receipt of the Stage 1 response. While the customer should ideally provide details of their reason for requesting escalation and specify the outcome they are seeking, a Stage 2 Review will still be recorded if not provided. The process below will be followed on these occasions.

- a) The Customer Relations Team will receive all escalation requests and will review the response given and the status of the complaint, alongside the customer's reasons for escalation and outcome they are seeking. If the Customer Relations Team determine that there are no sufficient grounds for an escalation to proceed, they will write to the customer with their reasons and provide the opportunity to respond with any further points which will then be considered.
- b) Within 5 working days, the Customer Relations Team will write to the customer to acknowledge the Stage 2 Review. The acknowledgement letter will provide a case reference number, details of the complaints process, details for Ombudsman Services and a summary of the issues being investigated.
- c) Stage 2 Reviews will be carried out by a manager senior to the Resolution Officer who carried out the Stage 1 Investigation. Full details of the complaint, supporting documents, the customer's reason for escalation and the outcome they are seeking will be sent to the manager to review.
- d) Notes and recommendations will be recorded and a final written response will be produced setting out any decisions made, remedies or actions to be taken and any further information relevant to the decision. The timeframe for providing a Stage 2 Review response is 20 working days. This will conclude our internal complaints process and the response letter will include details for further escalation to the relevant Ombudsman service.
- e) In some cases, there may be circumstances which require a longer timeframe for a Stage 2 Review to be completed. If this occurs, we must agree the extension with customer and complete the relevant option on the complaint system to provide a 'Holding Response'. The Customer Relations Team will review all Holding Response requests and, if approved, will provide the response to the customer in writing and reallocate the matter back to the Resolution Officer to resolve the complaint within the new extended timeframe. Outside of exceptional circumstances, a maximum of 10 additional working days will be permitted as an extension to a Stage 1 Investigation.

As part of our response to customers at all stages, consideration will be given as to whether an offer of compensation, discretionary payment or insurance claim is appropriate, as part of any remedy. This will be determined in line with the terms of the Discretionary Compensation Policy.

5. End of Complaints Procedure

The customer will be provided with information about Ombudsman Service and how they can also support and provide the customer with information at any stage of the complaint.

Information and contact details will be included in all literature and correspondence sent regarding the complaint. At the end of the formal Complaint Process if the customer is still dissatisfied they will be able to contact the relevant Ombudsman Service who will advise of the next steps to take. The complainant will be given the following address to contact the Ombudsman:

Housing Ombudsman Service

Post: PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Online: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/>

How to complain to the LGSCO

- Online complaint form: www.lgo.org.uk/contact-us
- Telephone: 0300 061 0614

The Ombudsman will seek to resolve complaints once the Group's own procedures have been exhausted. This service is free for the complainant.

6. Vexatious, persistent or abusive complaints

We recognise that on occasion complaints made can be vexatious or that some customers will not accept the response received and continue to challenge. NCC Housing Services will not tolerate continuous vexatious complaints and will take appropriate action through the enforcement of the tenancy or advise the customer the way in which their tenancy and communication with us will be managed in future.

The procedure in handling the above classification of complaints is that they are forwarded to the CRT who will review the type of case and situation and send a formal response to the customer with the reasons why the case will not be investigated or responded to. This will be reviewed and a response issued within 10 working days of being notified of the situation.

7. Sources of advice and information

In handling Multi-agency complaints involving the police or social services the customer will receive a letter advising them of the process, which agencies are providing information and where the customer can receive further advice and guidance from to help them resolve their issues. This will be sent within 10 working days of receiving the initial enquiry by the department handling the case or has contact with the customer.

8. MP and Elected Members Casework

In the majority of cases, MP and member enquiries constitute either service requests or requests for information on behalf of the constituent, rather than complaints. In these cases, they will be dealt with through the normal member enquiry system or parliamentary office. The service areas handling Members Casework enquiries will acknowledge and provide a response using the Members Casework system to that enquiry within the prescribed timescale.

Complaints

Upon receipt of an enquiry from an MP or elected member that falls within the criteria of the Complaints process, we will:

- a) Check against any current or previous complaints recorded
- b) If the query relates to a previous complaint, we will provide a copy of the response to the complaint accompanied by information regarding options for escalations and remedy.
- c) If the query relates to a live complaint currently in progress, the Customer Relations Team will pass on any new information provided to the Resolution Officer and update the Member or MP with the current status of the complaint, reference number and expected timeframe for response.
- d) If the query is raising a new complaint, the Customer Relations Team will follow the standard Complaints Process and advise the Member or MP of the new complaint reference and an expected timeframe for response.

9. Monitoring of Complaints

All logged complaints are uploaded onto our complaint system and a live performance report is available to all Heads of Service and Resolution Officers. The CRT use this report to monitor complaints and provide additional reminders to Resolution Officers for timescales to provide responses by. When closed, complaints are removed from the live performance report but data is retained for reporting and learning purposes.

Performance data produced by the complaint system is used on a quarterly and annual basis to provide the information to produce the monitoring reports which include narrative and information provided by the CRT. These full written reports are produced by the CRT.

10. Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Handling Survey

Customers will receive a short survey at the end of Stage 1. This survey will ask customers about the satisfaction around how the complaint was handled, what we did well and suggestions on how the service can be improved.

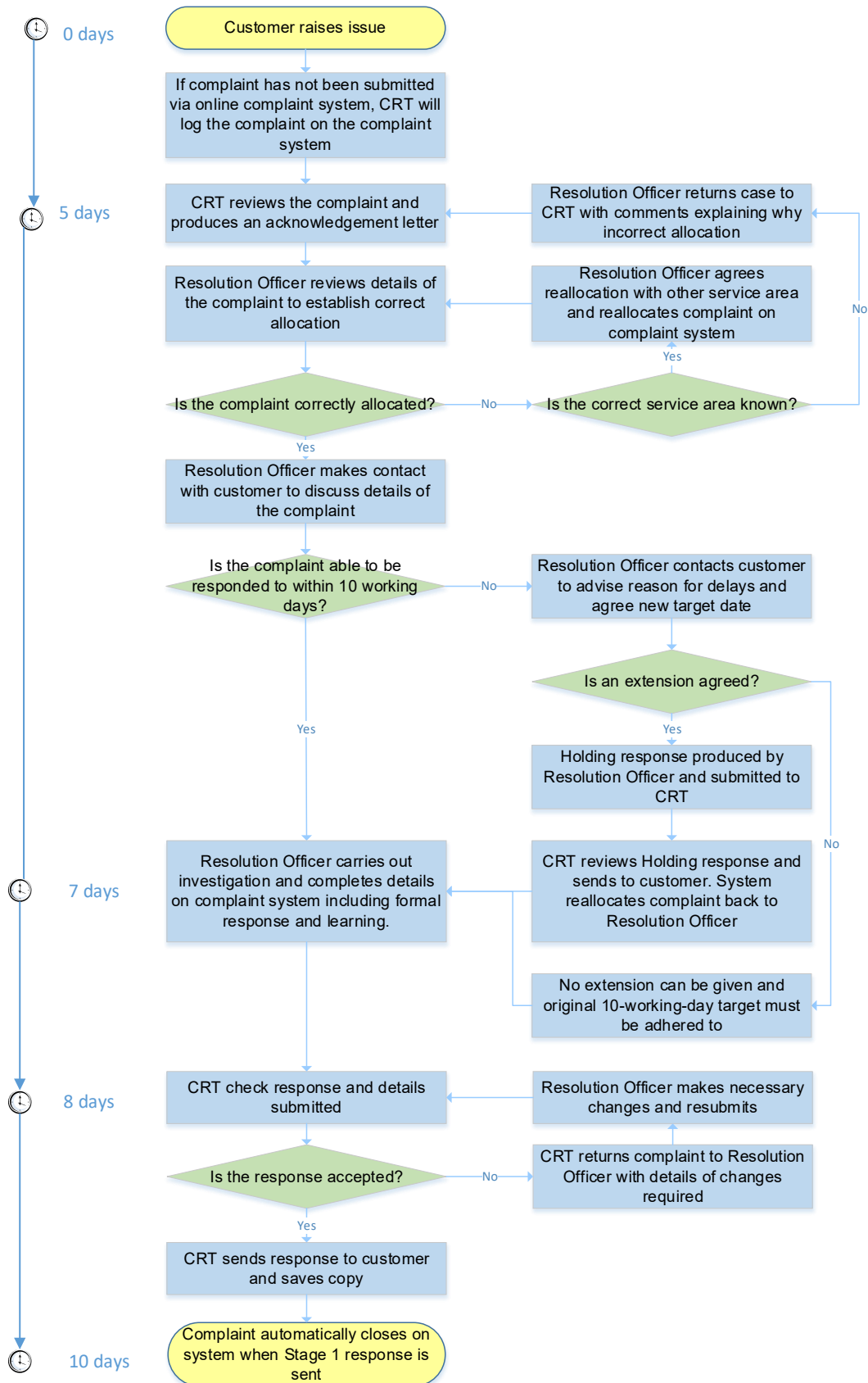
These satisfaction levels will be reported in the quarterly and annual reports and used for benchmarking purposes with other organisations

Appendix 1 – Stage 1 and 2 Process Maps

HS-CRT-01

Stage 1 Investigation

Process Owner – Customer
Experience & Insight Manager



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