



## Customer Feedback Policy

### **POLICY STATEMENT:**

*We aim to provide effective and accountable systems which: correct service failures; highlight and act upon suggestions; and demonstrate our customer focus and responsiveness. By embracing a 'positive complaints culture' in which complaints, compliments and improvement suggestions are valued, encouraged and viewed as a positive force for change, Chelmer Housing Partnership (hereafter, CHP) aims to provide best value services which meet the needs and aspirations of its current and future customers.*

*Should things go wrong, we acknowledge the need to put things right, offer an apology and prevent recurrence; the need to offer compensation should a mistake, action or failure have an adverse affect on a customer and the need to thank those who compliment the service or make an improvement suggestion. Customers are encouraged to comment on the services they receive through an accessible, easy to use, accountable and well-publicised customer feedback scheme.*

*For the purposes of this policy: a customer is someone in receipt of our services such as a CHP tenant, leaseholder, contractor or job applicant; and feedback is a compliment, complaint or suggestion.*

### **1. POLICY AIMS**

- 1.1 To provide a summary of the organisation's customer feedback and complaints management system.
- 1.2 To provide staff, customers and stakeholders with a clear understanding of CHP's commitment to customer service and continuous service improvement.

### **2. STATUTORY, REGULATORY & CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 2.1 CHP is bound by the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code/Guidance which requires:
  - 2.5b - "Residents, housing applicants and others have ready access to an effective complaints and compensation policy, administered effectively"
  - 2.5c - "The association considers a range of methods and opportunities to consult and obtain feedback from residents"
- 2.2 Section 51 of the Housing Act 1996 requires us to be a member of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme.

Responsible Officer:	Head of Customer Service
Approved by:	July 31 <sup>st</sup> 2007 Operations Committee
Review Date:	July 2010

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2.3 Our Corporate Plan identifies the importance of the following Values to the organisation:

- *An open and ethical approach that encourages customer, employee and partnering involvement*
- *Putting right our mistakes as quickly as possible and learning from them*

### 3. POLICY DETAILS

**3.1 Scheme Scope:** This scheme is open to all CHP customers and stakeholders including: tenants, leaseholders, service providers, local residents and members of the public, staff, public bodies and agencies and partnering organisations. CHP staff are directed towards the Staff Suggestion Scheme or Grievance Policy.

3.1.1 Whilst feedback can take many forms, CHP adopts the following policy guidelines:

- *A. Complaints* – A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction regarding the organisation, its services or its staff (and contractors)

Examples of a complaint include:

- ◆ *Access to, quality of, or speed of a service*
- ◆ *Dissatisfaction with a decision, action, policy or behaviour/attitude of staff or contractor*

A complaint would not normally be:

- ◆ *A routine request for a service such as an initial repair request*
- ◆ *Dissatisfaction re: third parties ie. an incident of anti-social behaviour (ASB) is recorded separately under our ASB Policy (unless specifically made about CHP's handling of such a case)*

- *B. Suggestions* – A suggestion is where a customer gives their view on how a service could be improved

Suggestions resulting from consultation – through vehicles such as satisfaction surveys or statutory leaseholder consultation - are referred to, and dealt with, by the appropriate service area manager

- *C. Compliments* – A compliment is any expression of thanks/appreciation where we, or our contractors, have provided a good service, exceeding customer expectations

**3.2 The customer feedback process:** Customers can register complaints, suggestions and compliments – to any member of CHP staff - in a variety of ways including:

- The Customer Feedback Form
- By phone
- By letter or fax
- By electronic mail (email) and the organisation's website

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- In person
  - Via recognised resident forums, panels and representatives
- 3.2.1 Customers are expected to raise the feedback as soon as possible and definitely within 3 months of the cause of the complaint/suggestion/compliment. CHP reserves the right to discontinue investigating a complaint if it is being pursued in an unreasonable fashion by the customer or his/her representative.
- 3.2.2 Customer feedback will be recorded and acknowledged within 3 working days. Those complimenting the service or offering improvement suggestions will be thanked and improvement suggestions will be given due consideration and contributors kept informed should their suggestions lead to service improvements.
- 3.2.3 CHP aims to resolve all complaints as promptly as possible and empowers, encourages and expects officers receiving complaints to resolve matters at the point of contact whenever possible ie. a missed appointment will be recorded as an informal complaint and compensation given to the customer in line with our Compensation Policy. A three stage handling process is in place for all formal complaints received and irrespective of how and to whom they are reported they will be directed through this corporate process:

<b>STAGE 1</b>	➤	<u>Acknowledge, investigate &amp; respond</u> A. Complaint recorded B. Complaint acknowledged within 3 working days C. Complaint investigated & responded to (if unable to resolve on receipt) within 10 working days
<b>STAGE 2</b>	➤	<u>Review and resolution</u> 1. Review & respond within 10 working days
<b>STAGE 3</b>	➤	<u>Board Appeal Panel</u> 1. Set-up appeals panel & hear appeal within 20 working days from date requested by the complainant

- 3.2.4 Stage 1: Complaints that cannot be immediately resolved at first point of contact will be investigated by a first-tier manager of the relevant service area and a formal response made outlining:
- *The results of the investigation*
  - *Details of any action taken*
  - *An apology where appropriate*
  - *Details of the complainant's right to review if they are not satisfied with the initial investigation*
- 3.2.5 Stage 2: Complainants dissatisfied with the results of the initial review stage are given the right of review. In such cases review requests will be carried out by a more senior member of staff and a formal response made.

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- 3.2.6 **Stage 3:** Complainants still dissatisfied after the review stage will be given the right of appeal to a panel of 3 Board Directors. Additionally the complainant will be advised about their right to pursue the matter with the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHO) should the matter remain unresolved after the appeal stage.
- 3.2.7 For those who have exhausted our own complaints procedures, CHP is a member of the IHO scheme and both promotes the scheme and offers advice on how to initiate it.
- 3.2.8 A fast track procedure is in place to ensure the Executive Management Team and appropriate committee are made aware of any complaints which constitute a serious risk to health and safety or business activities or which allege fraudulent or unacceptable behaviour from officers or contractors of the organisation.
- 3.3 Compensation:** In line with our Compensation Policy, compensation will be offered in cases where CHP believes the customer has suffered actual monetary loss or unreasonable delay or inconvenience as a result of an action or lack of action by the organisation or its contractors.
- 3.4 Accessibility:** We provide a wide range of ways to access the scheme (see paragraph 3.2.1) and by ensuring information is made available in community languages and other formats where requested.
- 3.4.1 Support and guidance will also be offered to anyone wishing to use the scheme.
- 3.4.2 We will capture information relating to the ethnicity, gender and disability, and where possible age, of complainants to ensure access to the scheme and satisfaction with the operation of the scheme is not discriminatory.
- 3.5 Feedback concerning third parties, contractors and partners:** Where customer feedback relates to issues beyond the direct control of the organisation such as Government policy or the administration of Housing Benefit, customers will be signposted to where their complaints and comments should be directed.
- 3.5.1 Where services are provided on behalf of CHP by external agencies, we will retain ultimate responsibility for addressing service issues and concerns raised; customers can utilise CHP customer feedback procedures or the complaints systems operated by the external agency. Such external contractors, consultants and partners acting on behalf of CHP will be expected to forward summary data relating to complaints received as requested by the organisation. Should the situation arise whereby particular third party service delivery issues/problems/other concerns become frequent or common place CHP will consider an appropriate corporate course of action in line with its community and social landlord responsibilities.
- 3.6 Consultation Feedback:** This scheme aims to compliment and form an integral part of CHP's wider consultation, improvement and involvement exercises including: programmed Satisfaction Surveys i.e. STATUS, responsive repairs & modernisation programme surveys; ad-hoc satisfaction surveys; statutory consultation exercises; and Resident Forums and Focus Groups.

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#### 4. POLICY CONSULTATION, PROMOTION & EVALUATION

- 4.1 **Consultation:** we will regularly consult our residents, staff and stakeholders on the effectiveness of the customer feedback scheme and assess levels of user satisfaction.
- 4.2 **Promotion:** A comprehensive procedural guide is available to all staff. A programme of training is adopted to equip staff with the required skills to effectively manage the scheme.
- 4.2.1 CHP will use a range of measures to help publicise the Customer Feedback Policy to the organisation's stakeholders. These will include active promotion of the customer feedback scheme leaflet, use of the tenant newsletter and regular performance updates to all stakeholders relating to the operation of the scheme. An annual report is made to residents and stakeholders.
- 4.3 **Evaluation:** Performance targets are set for each of the stages of the process and CHP aims to achieve the following standards:

Stage	Stage	Target*
1B	Acknowledge initial complaint, suggestion or compliment	3 w/days
1C	Investigate and respond to initial complaint	10 w/days
2	Undertake and respond to review requests	10 w/days
3	Set-up and hear appeal request	20 w/days

\*Targets reflect number of working days from date of receipt at each stage

- 4.3.1 Performance against the 10 working day target is reported to the Operations Committee.
- 4.3.2 Overall responsibility for the scheme's implementation is with the Head of Customer Service.

#### 5. LINKS

- 5.1 CHP Compensation Policy
- 5.2 Housing Corporation Regulatory Code & Guidance
- 5.3 The Independent Housing Ombudsman Scheme