



The Langstane Group

Complaints Policy

Approved by Senior Management Team	11 March 2021
Board of Management / Committee name	Board of Management
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Review date	April 2024
Version	V5

Policy Version	Date of Approval	Changes made to Policy
Version 1	26 October 2012	First issue
Version 2	24 March 2014	
Version 3	28 February 2019	New section on learning from complaints Some re-wording
Version 4	3 December 2020	As part of review of high level governance policies. Following consideration at SMT 19 Aug 2020.
Version 5	28 April 2021	Updated links to Business Plan (4) Updated reference to model procedure, and updated section on stage 2 complaints (5) Removed appendix and updated complaints review requirements (7) Added new KPI to include average working days (8)

1. Introduction

Langstane Housing Association is a Co-operative and Community Benefit Society, and a registered social landlord with charitable status.

The Langstane Group (Langstane / the Group) consists of Langstane Housing Association Limited and its wholly owned subsidiaries.

This policy applies to all members of the Langstane Group.

The Association aims to deliver excellent services to all customers, whether to tenants, people on the housing list, contractors, consultants, members of partner organisations or anyone else. However there will be times when things go wrong and a customer may wish to make a complaint.

The Association aims to resolve complaints as close as possible to the point of service delivery in order to provide as seamless a service as possible. In this way the Association will maximise levels of customer satisfaction whilst also achieving best value.

This policy aims to create a culture of welcoming complaints and seeing them as an opportunity to make service and performance improvements.

A complaint is defined as: 'any expression of dissatisfaction about Langstane's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by Langstane or on its behalf'.

Complaints can be about, but are not limited to:

- delays in responding to enquiries and requests;
- failure to provide a service;
- the standard of service;
- dissatisfaction with policy;
- treatment by, or attitude of a member of staff;
- failure to follow the Association's procedure.

A complaint is not:

- a routine first-time request for a service;
- a request for compensation only;
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal;
- an appeal against a decision where there is an established appeal route;
- attempts to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where a final decision has already been determined.

2. Policy Statement

The Association encourages an environment of openness to complaints, and sets out a framework to ensure that complaints are used as a learning tool and a way to drive forward improvements in service delivery.

3. Objectives

- To ensure that, as far as possible, the services provided meet the requirements of customers;
- To value the contributions of Langstane's customers; and
- To learn from compliments, comments and complaints.

4. Links to other policies and Business Plan

- Customer Care Policy
- Unacceptable Actions Policy
- Compensation and Redress Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Privacy Policy.

This policy also links in to the following values within the business plan:

'We aim high'

- We work hard to continually improve our services and deliver the services our customers want
- We have a 'can do' approach

'We are open and accountable'

- We provide relevant, accurate, user-friendly information about our performance that allows our tenants and others to hold us to account
- If we make mistakes we apologise and put things right as soon as **possible**

5. Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 gave the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman new responsibilities and powers in relation to complaints handling. Specifically, it gave the SPSO a role to oversee the development of a standard model complaints procedure for each sector and to promote and monitor best practice in complaints handling.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman introduced a model complaints handling procedure for adoption by all local authorities and registered social landlords in Scotland during 2012/13. Following consultation, the model procedure was updated in 2020, for implementation on 1 April 2021.

In operating this statutory procedure, Langstane will take a broad view of the definition of complaints. The definition of a complaint will be based on any expression of dissatisfaction with Langstane's services, business methods and culture – whether expressed verbally or in writing.

The Association is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide housing support to tenants. If a tenant is unhappy with the housing support service they are receiving they should first raise this with the manager of the service. The tenant can complain to the Care Inspectorate by completing a complaints form online, calling 03456009527 or e mailing concern@careinspectorate.gov.uk

The Association adheres to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman model complaints handling procedure. This includes any further revisions to the model that may take place. In brief, the procedure is structured as follows:

Stage 1 - Frontline resolution

The Association aims to resolve complaints quickly and as close as possible to where the service is provided.

Stage 1 complaints are resolved within five working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If there is no resolution at this stage, or if the customer remains dissatisfied with the service provided, the complaint is taken to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1; and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. At Stage 2 the Association is expected to:

- acknowledge receipt of complaint within three working days;
- discuss and confirm the complaint with the complainant to understand why they are unhappy and what outcome they are looking for;
- provide a written response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days. If the timescale takes more than 20 days then this is explained to the complainant.

6. Publicity and tenant involvement

Langstane's view is that it is important that customers have ready access to information about how to complain. This is made available via:

- information leaflets
- the website
- newsletters
- letters from the Association which will signpost the procedure if required
- any social media in use by the Association.

7. Learning from complaints

The Association is committed to using complaints as part of its aim to improve the quality of services. This is done in three distinct ways:

- **As an Individual** – staff are encouraged to use reflective learning practices. This involves taking time to consider their role in service delivery and how they can use complaints to improve their own practice and habits. Even where a complaint is not upheld, there is the potential to reflect on what led to the complaint being made and how it can be avoided in the future.
- **As a team** – service complaints are discussed within teams on a minimum of a quarterly basis. . The frequency of meetings to discuss complaints will depend on the number of complaints received within the operational service area. Langstane ensures that teams remain open-minded, and do not adopt a defensive approach to

discussing complaints. Team members are encouraged to contribute to decisions about improving working practice.

- **As a housing association** – where possible outcomes from complaints are used as a tool during training, and when reviewing or creating policies. This ensures that lessons learned are built in to service development and improvement. Where teams have amended practice as a result of reviewing complaints, this is highlighted by the Association so that it encourages openness and transparency.

It is a requirement of the model procedure that the Association demonstrates to customers that complaints are valued and that Langstane is actively learning and improving the services provided. Administrative structures are in place to capture this information, and feed it through to Association publications, the website and social media.

8. Monitoring and review

Assessing and reporting complaints performance is an important element of the procedure. This reporting is both internal and external, with monthly information provided at Senior Management Team level, and quarterly information being available for the Board of Management and the tenants. The following key performance indicators are monitored within the analysis of complaints:

- number of stage one and stage two complaints completed within the reporting period
- number of completed complaints upheld within the reporting period
- average working days taken to complete stage 1 and stage 2 complaints
- stage one complaints target of completion within 5 working days
- stage two completion target of completion within 20 working days
- learning points from the complaints action list are also included in reports.

9. Equality and Diversity

The Association is committed to promoting equality and diversity across all areas of its work, and discrimination or harassment of any kind is not tolerated.

Right to Complain

In the event you are not satisfied with the service you have received, please contact the Association for a copy of Langstane's Complaints Policy, which can also be viewed on the Association's website – www.langstane-ha.co.uk

If you would like this document sent to you in large print, please contact Support Services on 01224 423000