

Complaints

Management Policy 8

Keniston Housing Association

1 Introduction

Keniston aims to provide an excellent service to tenants, leaseholders and other people who come into contact with the organisation. We recognise that when things go wrong we need to respond quickly and take action to put those things right. The Association aims to learn from its mistakes by reviewing complaints received, in order to improve services.

2 What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.

Keniston aims to follow our values of:

- **Respect** Valuing diversity and treating everyone fairly as individuals
- **Openness** Listening, being accessible, and communicating clearly
- **Inclusivity** Our culture is one in which everybody matters
- **Integrity** Building trust by doing what we said we would
- **Excellence** Taking pride in providing the best customer experience

3 What is not a formal complaint?

The following will not be treated as a complaint:

- Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court
- The first request for any service (e.g. a repair request or the initial raising of an anti-social behaviour case)
- Where the issue occurred more than 12 months previously, unless there are good reasons to do so, such as a safeguarding or health and safety issue.
- Where the same issue has previously been considered under the complaints policy
- Where it is being pursued in an unreasonable manner.

A service request is different to a complaint. It is a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.

However, a complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with Keniston's response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. We will continue to try to address the service request if the resident complains.

4 Complaints process

Customers may raise a complaint through a range of channels including email, phone, letter, face to face, website or social media. We will explain how the complaint will be dealt with and will keep the customer informed of the progress of the complaint, managing their reasonable expectations.

The customer, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must be given a fair chance to:

- Set out their position
- Comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.

We will make reasonable adjustments to our complaints process where necessary, ensuring that customers with a specific need are not at a disadvantage when accessing the service. Examples of the reasonable adjustments we may make include using a customer's communication preference for the duration of the complaint and providing information in alternative formats e.g. Braille or large print.

We will give the resident the opportunity to have a representative deal with their formal complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.

We will operate a simple two stage process as follows:

- Acknowledge complaints within five working days. The Complaints Officer will record as stage one of the process. The manager of the relevant service area will contact the customer to discuss the nature of the complaint and their desired outcome or remedy will be confirmed for clarity. Where the complaint cannot be resolved at this point the customer will be advised of their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, who can assist customers throughout the life of the complaint.
- All complaints will be referred to the next Complaints & Resolutions Panel meeting, which is a group made up of officers and managers from housing management and property services, plus the Office & Resources Manager acting in the role of Complaints Officer. It may also include members of the Management Team, but does not include the Chief Executive. Dealing with all complaints at this forum ensure that managers become aware of all complaints and that matters are dealt with consistently.
- Stage 1 response will be within 10 working days from the receipt of the complaint. Where this is not possible, we will notify the customer why there is a delay and a full reply will be no later than 20 working days from receipt.
- Where a complaint has not been resolved to the customer's satisfaction, the customer may request to progress to stage 2. We acknowledge this within five working days and the Complaints Officer will record as stage two of the process.
- The Stage 2 complaint will be considered by the Complaints Panel, which is lead by the Chief Executive, a member of the management team (whose area is not the subject of the complaint) and a member of the Association's Board. A member of the Resident Panel may be asked to give comments in advance or to attend the Stage 2 hearing.

- Stage 2 response will be within 20 working days from the complaint being acknowledged. The Panel will decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed, considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.

5 Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

Keniston will appoint one of its Board members to have lead responsibility for complaints, to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will ensure the Board receives regular information on complaints that provide insight to the Association's complaint handling performance.

6 Housing Ombudsman Service

The Association will maintain its membership of the Housing Ombudsman Service scheme. The Association will co-operate fully and promptly with any enquiries from the Housing Ombudsman Service.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied at the end of the complaints process, they may bring their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Keniston may be asked to review and update the Self-Assessment following an Ombudsman investigation or a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.

If Keniston is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, we must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on our website. Keniston must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.

7 First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber - residential)

If a leaseholder is not satisfied with the outcome of his or her complaint at stage 2, they may take that complaint to the First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber - residential). Generally the Housing Ombudsman Service will not deal with complaints from leaseholders, although they will deal with some types of service delivery issues.

8 Monitoring

Performance of complaint handling will be annually reviewed, enabling lessons to be learned to avoid similar complaints arising in the future. This information is provided to the Management Team and the Board. Information concerning our performance is also available to our customers via our Annual Report and on our website, including information about the Housing Ombudsman Service and the Complaint Handling Code. The Board's response to the report is published alongside this.

The minutes of Complaints Panel meetings are to be included at the next Board meeting, and where complaints are referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service, progress will be reported to the Board quarterly until the matter has been concluded.

We will report back on wider learning and improvements about complaints, to staff and to the Resident Panel.

9 **Other feedback**

When something goes wrong it will not always result in a complaint. Keniston will learn from situations which have or could have resulted in a complaint from all types of feedback we collect, so that wherever possible lessons can be learnt for service improvement. This may include service requests as set out in Section 3 above or through our survey feedback.

We follow up on survey feedback dissatisfaction where residents provide their name and address. Where anonymous, we follow up as far as is practicable. We will include how residents can make a complaint, in all our surveys.

10 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Everyone at Keniston, our external partners and customers are required to:

- Treat people fairly, give equal access to jobs, homes, services and contracts without discrimination, harassment, bullying and prejudice, and meet diverse needs through reasonable adjustments whenever possible and appropriate.
- Not discriminate against any individuals or groups, not tolerate attitudes and behaviours that amount to or could result in discrimination and swiftly handle any reports of victimisation, bullying or harassment.
- Acknowledge and value the differences by recognising people's individual circumstances, unique aspirations and needs and responding appropriately.
- Comply with relevant legislation, statutory codes and guidance designed to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination, such as the Equality Act 2010, Housing and other Regulatory Standards, and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

Agreed by Board on 22 May 2025.
Next review is due May 2026.

