Archie Homes

Complaints Policy

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Policy checklist	
Policy owner	Archie Homes
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Archie Homes will provide this policy, on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, in audio or other non-written format, and in a variety of languages.

1.0 Introduction

- This policy sets out Archie Homes' approach as a landlord to dealing with complaints from our tenants in our homes (houses and flats).
- We understand that good housing is an important element for stability and living well.
- Our aim is to provide good quality services to all our customers, but we recognise that on occasions things can go wrong.
- When customers are dissatisfied, we will receive complaints in a positive way.
- We will make the process accessible to everyone and easy to follow.
- We will respond to complaints in a timely manner and be fair and consistent in our decision making.
- We are committed to using customer feedback to make service improvements.

2.0 Definition of a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction however made about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

2.2 When a customer expresses dissatisfaction we must provide them the choice to make a complaint.

2.3 We define customer as anyone who lives in one of our homes (houses or flats); the list below clarifies what we will treat as a complaint and what we will treat as a request for service or feedback:

2.4 Examples of what we will treat as a complaint, (these will be recorded and require a response)

- Failure to provide a service or achieve the standards of service we have promised.
- Failure to fulfil our legal or contractual obligations.
- Unfair treatment by staff or those acting on behalf of Archie Homes.
- Unacceptable delay or failure to respond to an enquiry or request.
- Dissatisfaction with a decision or the way that it was made.
- Dissatisfaction with the attitude of staff, contractors or agents.
- Archie Homes or its Managing Agents not applying policies and operating procedures fairly.

2.5 Examples of what we will treat as feedback, (these will be recorded and used in a service review)

- Disagreement with a policy or procedure
- Disagreement with a service standard
- An expression of dissatisfaction made thorough a survey. In this case we will make the customer completing the survey aware of how they can raise a complaint should they wish to.

2.6 Examples of what we will treat as a service request, (these will be recorded and actioned)

- An initial report of a repair
- A report of anti-social behaviour
- A request for information

3.0 Limitations and Exceptions of the complaint procedure

3.1 We will only consider complaints which are presented within 12 months of the matter arising unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where a complaint has already been considered, complaints may be re-opened within a 6-month period on presentation of new evidence or information. Outside of this timescale we will apply discretion to accept complaints where there is good reason to do so.

3.2 Archie Homes may use their discretion to limit access through the complaint procedure where the behaviour of a complainant is unacceptable and will apply the Policy on 'Dealing with Abusive, Persistent or Vexatious Complainants'.

3.3 Complaints which have entered the legal process and court action has commenced, are excluded from the complaint procedure.

3.4 If Archie Homes decide not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be provided to the customer setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and their right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. Contact details of the Ombudsman will be provided to the customer to pursue this should they wish to.

4.0 Aims and Objectives

Archie Homes in its position as a housing landlord is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and we follow their dispute resolution principles of:

4.1 Being Fair: We aim to ensure that all complaints will be handled fairly being consistent in our approach, considering the facts of each case, the individuals' circumstances and listening openly without bias or prejudice regardless of background, appearance, age, beliefs or lifestyle.

4.2 We aim to provide customers, including the most vulnerable, with the support they need to access the complaints service and ensure that they have the confidence to report their concerns if our services fall below standards.

4.3 Activities involved in providing services to customers involve the collection and storage of personal data, including sensitive personal data. Archie Homes is committed to ensuring that it stores and processes such data in accordance with data protection legislation.

4.4 Putting things right: Our focus will be to understand if something has gone wrong, be open and honest about responsibility, consider the outcome we can deliver to restore the complainant's position. Where this cannot be done, Archie Homes may use the Compensation Policy to offer redress; offering redress will also include offering an apology and rebuilding of the landlord tenant relationship.

4.5 Learning from outcomes: We are committed to making sure we let customers know we have been listening to their feedback and we will let customers know what changes have been made to services or procedures as a result of their complaint. We will share learning from all complaints with our wider customer base. Where we have been unable to make suggested changes, we will give an explanation why.

5.0 Complaint Handling

5.1 Archie Homes empowers colleagues and contractors working on our behalf to be open to receiving complaints by:

5.2 Ensuring all colleagues are trained and equipped to receive and record complaints.

5.3 Ensuring complaints from a group are handled appropriately.

5.4 Not placing a restriction on the methods that can be used to make a complaint. We will accept complaints by telephone, email, in person, in writing, or via an online form on our website.

5.5 Accepting complaints from people acting on behalf of complainants with their permission/authorisation including advice workers, councillors, MP's, friends, relatives and recognised tenant panels.

6.0 Complaint Timescales

6.1 Complaints will be acknowledged within 2 working days with information provided about who is dealing with the complaint, their job title and the timescale for response.

6.2 We will aim to respond within 10 working days with the decision and outcome. We will keep customers informed if there are any anticipated delays meaning we are unable to meet this timescale.

6.3 If we are contacting a customer about an extension to a complaint response they will be provided with the Ombudsman contact details, regardless of whether the extension has been agreed with the customer.

6.4 We will let the complainant know the timescale for how long any offer of redress will remain open; usually a maximum of 6 months.

6.5 Where we have been unable to contact the complainant, we will send a letter setting out the timescale for contact before closing the complaint.

7.0 Complaint Stages

7.1 Archie Homes operates a 2 stage housing complaints procedure. We will let customers know at what stage their complaint is being considered and who is dealing with the matter. All complaints will be investigated by an officer with the best knowledge and skills to deal with the issues raised.

7.2 Stage 1 – New complaint not previously reported.

1. We will acknowledge within 2 working days
2. If we need further information, we will contact the customer
3. We will send a response within 10 working days, where this is not possible we will agree timescales with you.

7.3 Stage 2 – Dissatisfied with stage 1 response

1. We will acknowledge within 2 working days
2. If we need further information, we will contact the customer
3. We will aim to offer a resolution within 20 working days where this is not possible we will agree timescales with you.

7.4 If the customer is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response they will be advised of the Housing Ombudsman contact details as follows:

- Post: PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ
- Telephone: 0300 111 3000
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/

7.5 Stage 1

7.5.1 Stage 1 is a new complaint that has not been raised previously by the customer. We will ensure we understand the customers position at the earliest opportunity and the customers desired outcome. Our aim is to resolve complaints at first point of contact wherever possible.

7.5.2 Where the customer makes additional complaints during the investigation, this will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response. If issues are unrelated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the issues will be logged as a new complaint.

7.5.3 A full or interim response will be relayed to the customer by their preferred method of contact. Follow up written communication confirming the outcome will be sent to the customer in all circumstances unless the complaint has been resolved at first contact and the customer has confirmed their agreement.

7.5.4 Written communication may include digital communication such as an email or text.

7.5.5 We will let customers know what they can do if they remain dissatisfied with the decision or outcome.

7.6 Stage 2

7.6.1 If the customer remains dissatisfied, they are entitled to request an escalation of their complaint to stage 2. Archie Homes will make all reasonable efforts to understand why a customer remains unhappy and what their desired outcome is as part of the Stage 2 investigation.

7.6.2 We will appoint an officer with no previous involvement to consider where any issues remain outstanding for the customer and to review the decisions made at stage 1.

7.6.3 A letter will be sent out setting out Archie Homes' final decision and what are the next steps for the customer.

8.0 Housing Ombudsman

8.1 A complaint can be made to the Housing Ombudsman Service who may work with us to resolve the dispute under their early resolution procedure or carry out an investigation if they decide an investigation is proportionate to the circumstances of the complaint.

9.0 Performance Reporting

9.1 We will monitor the progress of individual complaints, lessons learned and any service improvements required at management team meetings.

9.2 Our complaints performance and lessons learned forms part of our regular reporting into the Archie Homes Board.

9.3 Archie Homes will provide complaints reporting and an annual self-assessment to customers and stakeholders via the Archie Homes website and on request.

10 Best Practice and Review

10.1 This policy has been developed with regard to examples of best practice and guidance. There will be an automatic review of this policy whenever there is a change of statutory or regulatory provisions or when other Best Practice information becomes available that will impact on the policy. In any event there will be a substantive review of this policy every three years.