

Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Finchley Charities is committed to delivering a high quality housing and support service that is resident focused and meets the needs and aspirations of our residents, and also promotes best practice in all areas of performance, value-for-money and satisfaction.
- 1.2. It is, therefore, important that we take the learning opportunities offered by complaints and all forms of related feedback to continually seek service improvements and increase overall resident satisfaction.
- 1.3. This procedure sets out the process by which residents, customers, contractors and other stakeholders may complain if dissatisfied with the service they receive. It also lays out the responsibilities of The Finchley Charities in responding to complaints.
- 1.4. Complainants will be provided with the support they need in order to make their views known. We will ensure that no residents are disadvantaged or treated less favourably as a result of making a complaint.
- 1.5. Complaints will be investigated and responded to impartially, objectively and professionally, taking all known circumstances and available information into consideration.
- 1.6. The Finchley Charities' objective is to resolve any concerns or complaints at the first point of contact, wherever possible. However, there may be instances where residents wish to take their complaint further to a formal stage. The complaints policy outlines a consistent and systematic approach to dealing with complaints.
- 1.7. The Finchley Charities does not consider a request for a service, anti-social behaviour and nuisance and employee issues as a complaint and will deal with such requests through the appropriate policies and procedures.

2. Assistance in making a complaint

- 2.1. The Finchley Charities will ensure that barriers are not put up to prevent residents being able to use the complaints procedure. Complaints will therefore be accepted in a range of formats, including in writing, over the telephone, by email or in person.
- 2.2. Residents can request help from staff in order to make a complaint. Assistance and advice making a complaint or understanding the complaints procedure independently can be obtained from:
 - Relatives or friends
 - London Borough of Barnet
 - Specialised charities such as Age UK or MIND
 - Their local MP or councillor
 - Solicitors
 - Citizens' Advice Bureau or a similar advice centre
 - Local advocacy services.



3. Monitoring and learning from complaints

- 3.1. Feedback from our residents on their experience of our services is important. We use this feedback to improve the service we provide. All complaints received are reported to the Central Services team who monitor the progress and outcomes of the complaints and report to the management team and the relevant sub-committees' meetings, where lessons learned can be disseminated through the relevant staff teams.

4. FORMAL COMPLAINT

4.1. STAGE ONE

- 4.1.1. The Finchley Charities will accept complaints up to 3 months from the date of the incident that is the subject of the complaint.
- 4.1.2. The Central Services team will contact the complainant within two working days of the complaint being made, outlining the process and timescales of how it will be dealt with, along with providing a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure. The complaint will then be passed to the relevant manager to deal with who will also ascertain if the complainant needs any support with the issue. A complaint should not be investigated by a person who is the subject of that complaint.
- 4.1.3. Our aim is to investigate and respond to formal complaints within 10 working days. However, in the event that further time is required to investigate a complaint in more detail, or in the event of unforeseen circumstances (e.g. staff absence) the manager concerned will agree a new deadline for the response with the complainant. The extended timescale for the response will then be confirmed to the complainant in writing.
- 4.1.4. Should the complainant fail to be satisfied with the final response at Stage One, they may request an appeal to be considered by the chief executive as per Stage Two.

4.2. STAGE TWO

- 4.2.1. In the case where the complainant is unsatisfied by the result of Stage One, or in the case where the complaint is against a manager, the complaint should be made to the chief executive.
- 4.2.2. On receipt of an appeal, the chief executive will review and/or investigate the complaint.

The chief executive will contact the complainant and either:

- Review the original decision and, if the chief executive believes the complaint has been dealt with fairly, and in accordance with relevant policies and procedures, advise that no further action will be taken, or
 - Review the original decision and decide to re-investigate the matter, or
 - Where the complaint is against a manager, investigate the matter.
- 4.2.3. Following any further investigation, the chief executive will respond to the complainant within 20 working days with the outcome of their investigation containing a summary of the complaint, the response including any action we are

taking and an apology, if appropriate. If the complaint is not upheld the reason why will be explained.

4.2.4. Should the complainant fail to be satisfied with the final response at Stage Two, they may request an appeal to be considered by the Trustees as per Stage Three.

4.3. STAGE THREE

4.3.1. In the case where the complainant is unsatisfied by the result of Stage Two, or in the case where the complaint is against the chief executive, the complaint should be made to the trustees of The Finchley Charities.

4.3.2. On receipt of an appeal, two trustees will review and/or investigate the complaint.

A trustee will contact the complainant and either:

- Review the original decision and, if the trustees believe that the complaint has been dealt with fairly, and in accordance with relevant policies and procedures, advise that no further action will be taken, or
- Review the original decision and decide to re-investigate the matter, or
- Where the complaint is against the chief executive, investigate the matter.

4.3.3. Following any further investigation or further investigation, the trustees will respond to the complainant within 30 working days and confirm the outcome.

4.3.4. Should the complainant fail to be satisfied with the final response at Stage Three, they may request an appeal to be considered by the Housing Ombudsman (see section 7 below).

5. Outcomes

5.1. The possible outcomes of any complaints is:

- Upheld
- Partly-upheld
- Not upheld

5.2. The Finchley charities will provide a full written response in easy to understand English. It will contain a summary of the complaint, the response including any action we are taking and an apology, if appropriate. If the complaint is not upheld the reason why will be explained and details given of how to appeal against the decision. The outcome letter should also include a time limit of 20 working days, for the complainant to respond to the decision or the complaint will be closed. The Investigating Officer will sign off the complaint once the outcome has been accepted by the complainant or there has been no further response after 20 working days.

6. Confidentiality

6.1. The Finchley Charities will ensure confidentiality is maintained wherever possible but should make staff, residents and partners aware that information may need to be shared with appropriate agencies in certain circumstances.

7. Appeal

7.1. Complaints to the Housing Ombudsman

Should the complainant fail to be satisfied with the final response, they could seek to refer it to the Housing Ombudsman. **You cannot bring your case directly to the Ombudsman, until eight weeks after the final response to your complaint.**

To contact the Housing Ombudsman:

Call: 0300 111 3000

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 5.15pm (except public holidays)

Calls to and from 0300 111 3000 and direct dial lines of the Dispute Resolution Team are recorded for training and monitoring purposes.

Email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Write: Complaint correspondence: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Or go online: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

7.2. Complaints to the Charity Commission

The Charity Commission's involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity's residents, assets, services or reputation. The commission deals with:

- complaints received from members of the public
- whistleblowing - disclosures made by charity staff under the Public Interest Disclosure Act

Charity Commission First Contact

PO Box 1227

Liverpool

L69 3UG

Or visit their website: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

<u>Policy:</u>	<u>Complaints Policy and Procedure</u>
<u>Date of last review:</u>	November 2018
<u>Date of next review:</u>	November 2020
<u>Approval by Trustees</u>	19 November 2018

Appendix 1 - Complaints Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

How would you like us to respond?

By letter

By email

By telephone

Personal visit

When is the best time to contact you?

Morning

Afternoon

Have you already discussed this matter with a member of staff?

No

Yes

If yes, please say with who and when.

Date/time of incident (when it happened): _____

Location (where it happened): _____

What happened (please use a separate sheet if necessary): _____

Is there anyone we should speak to about this matter? _____

What action or outcome would you like to see? _____

.....

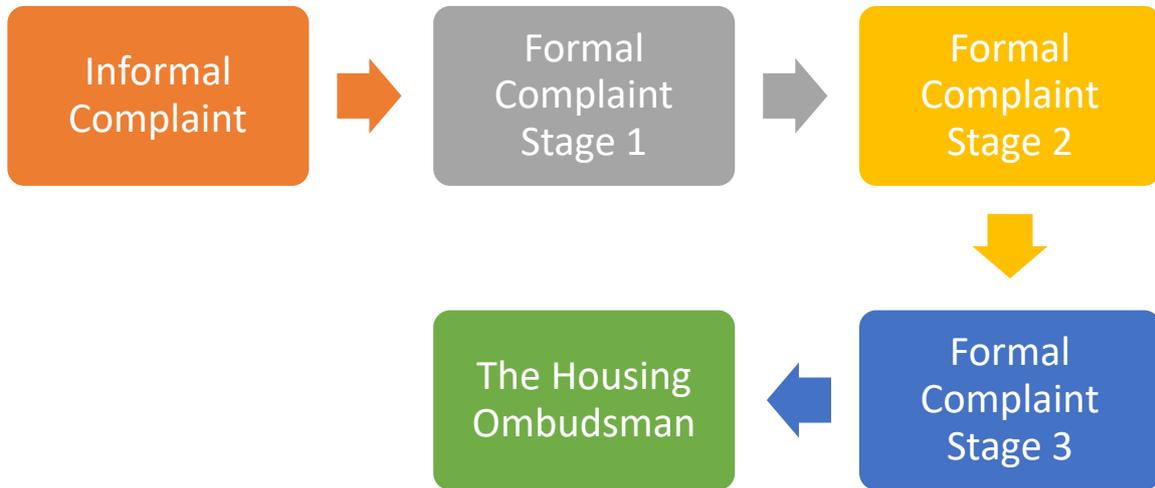
For Internal Use Only

Date received: _____

Type of Complaint: _____

Outcome of Investigation (please use another sheet if necessary): _____

Appendix 2 – Complaints Chart



Informal Complaint

Raised with the person the complaint relates to and aimed at resolving at first point of contact. No forms or investigation is completed.

Formal Complaint Stage 1

Raised with the relevant manager as a first step. Official log is kept and there is an investigation.

Formal Complaint Stage 2

Raised with the chief executive if the complaint is against a manager or if unsatisfied with result from Stage 1. Official log is kept and there may be further investigation.

Formal Complaint Stage 3

Raised with the trustees if the complaint is against the chief executive or if unsatisfied with result from Stage 2. Official log is kept and there may be further investigation.

The Housing Ombudsman

After 8 weeks a formal appeal can be made with the Housing Ombudsman.



Appendix 3 – Complaint Acknowledgement Letter

[Name of complainant]
[Address of complainant]

[Date]

Dear [name of complainant],

Your Complaint: [subject of complaint and reference number]

Thank you for contacting us with your complaint; we are sorry you felt it necessary to make a complaint and understand this is a serious matter for you.

We will investigate this matter according to our complaints policy and procedure and will write to you within ten working days informing you of our findings and any actions we have taken/intend to take. If it is not possible to resolve this matter within this timescale or we need to obtain further information from you or anyone else, we will write to you and advise you when you should expect a response.

If you would like any further assistance with this matter please do not hesitate to contact us on [contact details].

Yours sincerely,
[Name of person sending]
[Job Title]

enc – The Finchley Charities Complaints Policy & Procedure