

policy



Complaint Handling

Responsible Officer:	Adrienne Reid
Approved:	June 2017
Review Date:	June 2020
Regulatory Standard:	Tenant Involvement & Empowerment
Version	1
Scope:	Group Wide

Complaint Handling Policy

Statement of Intent:

'Incommunities Group' refers to Incommunities Housing Association and Sadeh Lok Housing Association

1.0 Policy Statement:

- 1.1 Incommunities Group is committed to improving lives in communities by providing great homes and effective services in neighbourhoods where people want to live and work. However, we recognise that from time to time people may have cause for dissatisfaction with our services.
- 1.2 Incommunities Group will investigate, learn from and where possible resolve all legitimate complaints made against the organisation, its staff or its contractors.
- 1.3 Incommunities Group recognises the diversity of the communities in which it operates in terms of differing lifestyles and cultures. We acknowledge these differences and aim to create, with customers, a complaints process that supports such diversity in line with our Equality & Diversity Policy.
- 1.4 We will provide customers, including the most vulnerable, with the support they need to access the complaints service and promote it regularly to ensure that they have the confidence to report their concerns if they do not receive a first class service.

2.0 Definition:

- 2.1 The definition of a complaint as defined by customers through consultation is:

A complaint is a failure of service and not an initial request for service, it is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Incommunities Group' staff or contractors acting on our behalf, which affects a customer, group of customers or other stakeholders.

This may include:

- Failure to provide a service or achieve the standards of service we have promised
- Failure to fulfill our legal or contractual obligations
- Unfair treatment by staff
- 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
- Incommunities Group not applying policies and operating procedures fairly.

2.2 For the purpose of the policy we define customers as anyone who lives in one of our homes; this includes tenants, leaseholders and shared equity owners, and anyone who uses our services, even if they do not go on to become a tenant. If the complainant is not eligible to approach the Housing Ombudsman Service Incommunities Group may limit access through the complaint procedure, however the complaint will be investigated and responded to by appropriate level of officer.

3.0 Policy:

3.1 Principles:

The policy and supporting Complaints Procedures allows Incommunities Group to ensure that:

3.1.1 **Reporting:** the service promotes Incommunities Group as an open, accessible and listening organisation by:

- Ensuring that the complaints service is accessed by a fair representative of our customer base and take positive action when this is not happening.
- Not placing a restriction on the methods that can be used to make a complaint; a complaints leaflet is available for customers on the website, in offices and from front line operatives or officers.
- Accepting complaints when they are made by a third party or advocate on behalf of a complainant, (e.g. councillors; elected members; advice workers; solicitor; a friend or relative and recognised tenant panels).
- Ensuring all staff are trained and equipped to receive and record complaints officially.
- Staff are enabled to deal effectively with unacceptable actions or behaviour. See Appendix 1.4
- Monitoring failure and acting upon these to continually improve the services we deliver to customers

3.1.2 **Resolution:** will investigate complaints as quickly as possible and seek to resolve the issue in line with customer expectation wherever reasonable possible. Where we have failed, our aim is to restore the position of the customer. Where the tenant's position cannot be restored Incommunities Group will use the Compensation Policy to offer suitable redress; redress is not necessarily financial and can include rebuilding of landlord and tenant relationship.

The service area where the complaint has arisen will have the authority to identify the action necessary to resolve the complaint. Incommunities Group will:

- Appointing Complaint Management Officers and Case Workers to each complaint to ensure it is effectively managed and responded to.

- Keeping the complainant fully informed of the process for their complaint and being respectful of individual customers' needs and circumstance.

3.1.3 **Satisfaction:** Satisfaction will be the key indicator for how we are managing complaints; so we know what we are doing well and what we need to do to be better.

- To increase the amount of satisfaction data we receive, the Complaint Management Officer will ask the customer how well we have managed their complaint and how satisfied they were with the outcome.
- We will address the causes of dissatisfaction by asking the customer, why and how we could have done it better.

3.1.4 **Learning:** Incommunities Group will learn from complaints and service failures to improve the services we provide to customers to support our culture of continuous improvement.

- Incommunities Group will empower staff to view complaints in a positive way and ensure a successful resolution of complaints for all concerned, at first point of contact wherever possible.
- Where complaints have led to changes being implemented in our organisation, we will inform customers of these either personally or through the Customer Magazine (@Home). Where we cannot implement a change that a group of customers have suggested, we will give an explanation why.
- Complaints, comments, compliment and service failure feedback will be discussed as part of team meetings as part of individual staff member's personal development.
- Learning from complaints and service failure will form part of scrutiny reporting to our Community Trust Panel and other involved groups.

3.2 Incommunities Group Application for the Complaint Handling Process:

3.2.1 Incommunities Group will adopt a group wide approach to handling complaints that offers an opportunity for customers to challenge decisions made during the process. Incommunities Group reserves the right to not escalate a complaint to the next stage, see appendix 1.4 - dealing with unacceptable actions or behavior.

3.2.2 Complainants must present their complaint to Incommunities Group within a 6 month period of becoming aware of the situation. If already considered by Incommunities Group, complaints may be re-opened within a 6 month period on presentation of new evidence or information.

3.2.3 All complaints will be investigated by an officer with the best knowledge and skills to deal with the complaint. We will aim to resolve complaints at an early

stage by considering if applicable policies and procedures have been followed or check to see if there are reasonable grounds for making exceptions. We will consider the customer's individual circumstances and the setting which has contributed to the complaint.

A complaint might not be upheld where current working practices have been followed, but we may acknowledge that a policy or procedure requires a review.

3.2.4 Where a customer remains dissatisfied, an officer not previously involved in the case will consider any issues which remain outstanding. We will aim to be consistent and realistic when trying to achieve a customer focused resolution.

3.2.5 If a resolution cannot be achieved and the customer remains dissatisfied, the complaint will be dealt with as a review. See appendix 1.3.

4.0 Training

4.1 In order to provide an excellent service we will ensure that training is provided to all staff to ensure the complaint handling process is implemented throughout the organisation.

4.2 Staff will be trained so they are encouraged to view complaints as a positive way for the organisation to learn, continually improve and to provide good customer care.

4.3 More specific training will be provided for those staff who manage the complaints procedures.

4.4 Both positive and negative customer feedback is shared within the organisation through briefings and team meetings, anonymised case studies are used as a learning tool for staff.

4.5 Managers should use customer feedback as a useful tool in improving services and to consider policy and procedure reviews. They should ensure their teams are fully trained to ensure the process is managed within their service area and specific feedback from complaints is utilised to identify potential training requirements for staff members.

4.6 Training will be provided to panel members to support the Complaint Review process.

5.0 Implementation

5.1 The Assistant Chief Executive (Neighbourhoods) is responsible for developing the policy for complaint handling.

5.2 On a practical level, complaint management is the responsibility of each member of staff.

5.3 Guidance and advice can be obtained from the following specialists:

- Service Directors
- Performance Team Leader
- Performance Officers
- Complaint Management Officers

6.0 Performance Management:

- 6.1 Performance reports will be provided to the Community Trust Panel on a bi-monthly basis. These reports will include performance information and any other reports the Boards feel may improve service delivery.
- 6.2 Incommunities Group will share performance information about complaints with recognised Tenant Panels where they exist.
- 6.3 The performance measures to be reported are those agreed with CTP; to monitor the effectiveness of this policy and supporting procedural documents:-
- Number of new complaints received
 - Percentage of complaints responded to within 10 working
 - Percentage of customers satisfied with the handling of their complaint
 - Percentage of customers satisfied with the outcome of their complaint
 - The changes introduced to services following feedback from complaints
- 6.5 We will monitor how compensation is awarded as an outcome of complaints to ensure consistency in application.
- 6.6 We will monitor the progress of individual service complaints and service failures as an ongoing operational process at management team meetings.
- 6.7 A customer pledge has been agreed with customers. We will inform customers how we are achieving against the measures through the website and annually in the @ Home magazine.

7.0 Best Practice and Review

- 7.1 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 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.

Scope:	This policy applies to the Group
Effective Date:	July 2017
Review Date:	June 2020
Signed Off:	Group Board
Policy Owned by:	Assistant Chief Executive (Neighbourhoods)
QAF (Supported Housing):	Client Involvement & Empowerment Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion Informing Service Users

Appendices:-

- 1.1 Complaint Handling Process**
- 1.2 Complaint Checklist**
- 1.3 Procedure for conducting the review**
- 1.4 Unacceptable Actions or Behaviour by Complainants**
- 1.5 Compensation Policy**