

## **Policy: Complaints**

**Updated December 2020**

### **Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Definition of a complaint
3. Ready4Home's approach to complaints
4. Empowering people to make a complaint
5. Legislation
6. Ready4Home's complaints process
7. Complaints not resolved by Ready4Home's complaints process
8. Concluding complaints
9. Monitoring and reporting
10. Client consultation

Appendix A. Summary of complaints process – Housing Related Support

Appendix B. Panel hearing process

# 1. Introduction

Ready4Home Housing & Support aims to provide a high-quality service to all its clients and stakeholders. Should a client or member of the public be dissatisfied with the quality of service provided to the extent that a complaint is registered, then the procedures stated in this policy should be followed.

Ready4Home treats all complaints seriously. Where we find that our service or practice has fallen short of our high standards, we aim to learn from this and constantly improve the quality of the service we provide.

# 2. Definition of a complaint

- 2.1 Ready4Home defines a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction with the standard of service we have provided, or our practice, where an initial response to the problem has not proved satisfactory to the complainant'. Ready4Home will consider complaints from anyone be they a client, applicant, other stakeholder or member of the public.
- 2.2 This policy deals specifically with complaints made about the service provided by Ready4Home, or Ready4Home as an organisation. It does not deal with complaints made about others, be they clients, neighbours or members of the public. For complaints about others, please refer to the following policies:
  -  For complaints about noise or nuisance, please refer to the **Anti-social Behaviour Policy**.
  -  For complaints about abuse, please refer to the **Safeguarding and Adults at Risk Policy**.
- 2.3 It should be noted that if, in the process of implementing one of the policies mentioned in Section 2.2, the complainant is dissatisfied with the service provided by Ready4Home, then this may become a complaint about Ready4Home. If so, then the process as defined in Section 6 of this policy should be followed.

# 3. Ready4Home's approach to complaints

- 3.1 Ready4Home's view is that:
  -  everyone has a right to complain about the service that they receive or inappropriate actions by Ready4Home
  -  people should not be put off from making a complaint due to a negative response made by a member of staff
  -  people should be helped to complain if necessary
  -  no client or any other complainant should suffer a penalty for making a complaint
  -  complaints are a positive opportunity to improve our services
  -  there should not be a blame culture in which staff are criticised for being the subject of complaints although they will be held accountable for their actions.

3.2 Ready4Home's aim is that this procedure should:

- ✎ be easily accessible and well publicised
- ✎ be simple to understand and to use
- ✎ ensure a full and fair investigation
- ✎ respect people's desire for confidentiality
- ✎ allow for an efficient resolution of the complaint
- ✎ provide an effective response and appropriate redress
- ✎ provide information to managers so that services can be improved

## 4. Empowering people to make a complaint

- 4.1 Ready4Home's clients are to be made aware of the existence of the complaints procedure when they sign their licence or tenancy agreement or when their service starts. Their attention should be drawn to the section in the handbook on dealing with complaints and each property should have a feedback and complaints poster on the noticeboard. A complaints leaflet and complaints form will be placed in the induction pack and be explained fully in the handbook.
- 4.2 In all cases clients have the right to be supported in making their complaint, and to be accompanied by the person providing support in any meetings about the complaint. This could be a Probation Officer, Responsible Officer, an advocate or a friend.
- 4.3 It should be clear that if a client wishes to make a complaint about a particular member of staff, then they may make their complaint to and seek assistance from another member of the relevant team.
- 4.4 If other stakeholders would like to make a complaint, then the way to do so will be clearly publicised on Ready4Home's website.
- 4.5 Ready4Home does not require complaints to be put in writing by the complainant as this can act as a deterrent. In particular it has equal opportunities implications. Clients or others with limited literacy skills, visual impairment or whose first language is not English may be unable to express their complaint in writing, or may lack the confidence to try. Complaints can therefore be made by any of the following means:
- ✎ in person
  - ✎ by telephone
  - ✎ by letter
  - ✎ by email
  - ✎ by completion of a 'feedback and complaints' form.

## 5. Legislation and regulation

- 5.1 The legislation concerning housing related complaints is the Localism Act 2011 which introduced new procedures from 1 April 2013 for social tenants against their landlord. This legislation states that, once the internal complaints process of an organisation has been completed, the complainant can refer their complaint to a 'designated person'. A 'designated person' is defined by the Act as an MP, local councillor of the district in which the complainants' home is located. The purpose of the designated person is to assist in resolving the complaint locally and, if this is not possible, they can refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

## 6. Ready4Home's complaints process

The process differs slightly depending on whether the complainant (or their advocate) is a housing, care and supported client, or another stakeholder. The different processes are set out in appendices as follows:

-  Appendix A – Housing related support

If required, a Board Panel will be convened and perform its duties as set out in Appendix B.

## 7. Concluding complaints

- 7.1 In all cases, complainants should be given feedback about their complaint, taking into account issues of confidentiality.
- 7.2 If changes are made to policies because of a complaint, the complainant should be informed of this.
- 7.3 Where it is clear that Ready4Home has fallen short of its normal high standards, an unequivocal apology should be given.
- 7.4 All documents relating to the complaint must be stored safely and retained for at least six years. This includes copies of all emails.

## 8. Complaints not resolved by Ready4Home's complaints process

- 8.1 If someone has gone through Ready4Home's whole complaints process and remains dissatisfied with the response, they can take one of the following steps:

### Housing Related Support

-  Refer their complaint to a 'designated person' as defined in Section 5 of this policy.
-  Write to the Housing Ombudsman Service and request that they consider their complaint. This can only be done eight weeks after Ready4Home's internal complaints process has been completed.
-  If the complainant is a supported client, they can write to the local Commissioning team.

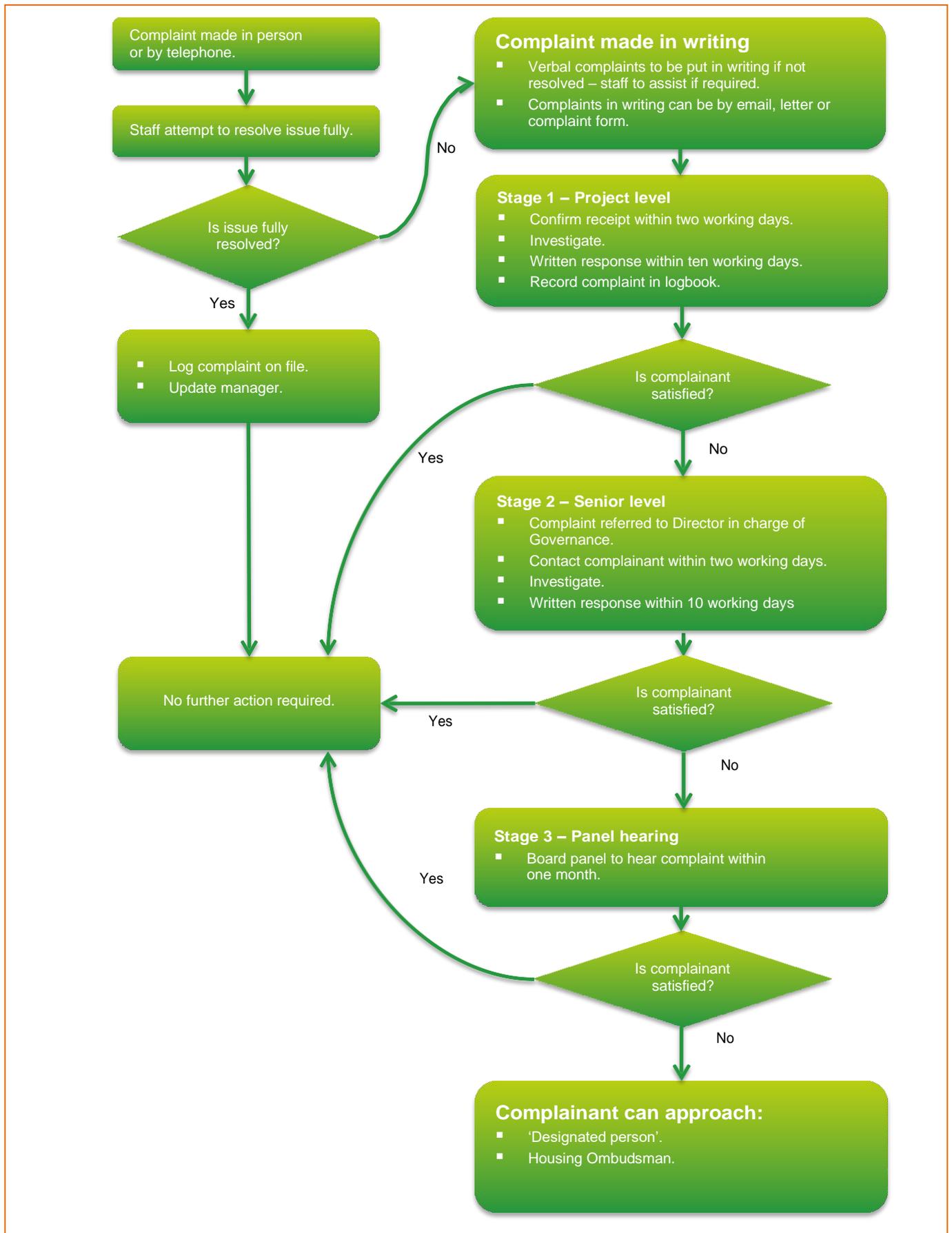
Ready4Home will formally set out the appropriate advice within the Chairman of the Board's written response to the complaint.

- 8.2 For more information please refer to:
  -  [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

## 9. Monitoring and reporting

- 9.1 All complaints are recorded through the complaint log books.
- 9.2 All clients are invited to give feedback on the implementation of our complaints procedure through the annual Client Satisfaction Survey. Results from this feedback will provide the Senior Management Team with information to enhance client welfare.
- 9.3 Ready4Home will monitor complaints on an ongoing basis. Reports will be produced every four months summarising complaints made and an annual report of all complaints will be produced along with a statistical report to monitor number of complaints and action taken.

## Appendix A: Summary of complaints process – Housing related support



## Appendix B: Panel hearing

When a complainant is dissatisfied with the response of the Director of Governance, a Complaints Panel will be convened comprising of the Chief Executive Officer and two other members of the Board.

A date will be mutually agreed with the complainant and the person (people) who are supporting them through the process. The intention is that it will be a fairly formal meeting but not in any way intimidating and that the complainant will have every opportunity to explain their complaint, why they feel it has not been dealt with satisfactorily and what remedy they are seeking. A written record will be made of the meeting.

An outline agenda will be set out as follows:

1. Introductions
2. Explain the Panel's role, the plan for the meeting and what will happen afterwards
3. The Panel will give the complainant the opportunity to elaborate on their complaint. It will be a listening exercise. No conclusions will be drawn until the Panel has completed its review
4. The complainant will be encouraged to explain why they feel the response to date has been unsatisfactory and what action they think is necessary to put things right.
5. Explanation of next steps which will include:
  - a. The Panel will speak to key members of staff and make other follow-up enquiries, as they deem necessary.
  - b. The Panel will respond to the complainant within one week giving the outcome of the complaint and detailing the next steps if they are not satisfied.

After the meeting, the Panel will speak to the staff involved, including those who investigated the complaint at an earlier stage and then reach their conclusions accordingly, which will be fair and objective in the light of the information they have received.

The Chief Executive Officer will write to the complainant explaining the outcome of the Panel's review and any remedies that have been agreed. The letter will explain that if the complainant is still not satisfied, there are other steps they can take (referral to a 'designated person' and then the Housing Ombudsman in the case of accommodation-based services or the local Housing Related Support Team, in the case of floating support services).