



# Compliments and Complaints Procedure

<b>Approved by</b>	Senior Management Team
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<b>Policy developed by</b>	Head of Communities
<b>Associated procedure</b>	

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# Introduction

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 No matter how good we make our service, there will be times when we fall short of our customers' expectations or the level of service to which we aspire. This procedure outlines our approach to resolving such situations to offer swift and effective redress where appropriate.
- 1.2 No matter how good we make our service, there will be times when we fall short of our customers' expectations or the level of service to which we aspire. This procedure outlines our approach to resolving such situations to offer swift and effective redress where appropriate.
- 1.3 We encourage all feedback from customers (positive and negative) and will deal with complaints effectively and fairly using them as an opportunity to improve the service we deliver.
- 1.4 Scope: The policy applies to the whole of the Group. This means Connexus Homes Limited, (ultimate parent) and all of its subsidiaries.

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 **What is a Complaint?**
- 2.2 A complaint is when a customer states that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable due to something that we have done, or not done, for which we are responsible. In other words, where we have failed in a service to our customers.
- 2.3 **Who is a Customer?**
- 2.4 A customer is anyone who contacts us to request a service, or is in receipt of a service provided by Connexus or any of its subsidiaries.

## 3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 We are committed to resolving complaints effectively and without undue delay. We will provide a clear escalation route that is fair and impartial.
- 3.2 We will monitor the themes of the complaints we receive and use this to help understand how we can improve our services.
- 3.3 We will be open and honest and ensure that complainants are not disadvantaged in their future dealings with us as a result of their complaint.
- 3.4 We will respect complainants privacy and ensure that all complaints are treated confidentially.

## 4. Our Approach

### 4.1 General Information

- 4.2
- Complaints can be made in any format, these include: letter, e-mail, social media, via telephone or in person.
  - Customers will be asked to set out the reasons for their dissatisfaction clearly, provide copies of any background information they consider relevant and outline action/s they consider would resolve the matter/s.
  - Complaints should be made within 3 months of the incident giving rise to the concern however Connexus may, at its discretion, consider complaints raised after 3 months.
  - Complainants will be asked to provide their name and contact details; this information will be held in line with the groups GDPR policy.
  - Connexus may need to contact other parties (without disclosing the complainants identity) in order to properly investigate a complaint.

4.3 We hope that most issues can be settled quickly and as close to the source of the problem as possible. Should a customer be dissatisfied they should contact us to discuss and allow us to try and resolve the matter immediately through our feedback process.

- 4.4 Should the customer remain dissatisfied with the response, Connexus has a three stage process, these being:
- Complaint
  - Review
  - Appeal

### 4.5 Compliments

4.6 Where a customer wishes to compliment a service they have experienced we will record the details on our central database. Complaint champions will receive a notification for information purposes that a compliment has been received and where possible we will immediately thank the customer for providing the feedback.

### 4.7 Feedback

4.8 *Response time (where required) for the feedback stage is close of business the next working day.*

4.9 Where a customer wishes to express their dissatisfaction with something Connexus has or has not done, but specifically states that they do not want a response, then this will be recorded on the central database and reported as feedback to the service area concerned. Colleagues should e-mail the feedback to the complaints mailbox with as much information as possible. The Customer Services Team (CST) will update the central database (Pentana).

4.10 Where a customer requires a response, the colleague receiving the initial feedback should discuss the issue and, if possible, take action to resolve the matter immediately.

4.11 Should the initial colleague be unable to resolve the issue immediately they would e-mail the complaints mailbox with as much information as possible. The customer should be advised that initial contact to discuss the matter will be made by close of business

the next working day unless a mutually agreeable alternative date has been agreed. The CST will update the central database (Pentana) and assign the case (via Outlook) to the colleague who will be dealing with the feedback.

- 4.12 Upon receipt of the feedback the assigned colleague should review the case. Where the issue impacts multiple teams, to save the customer being contacted by different departments, the assigned colleague should liaise directly with other teams. Colleagues are also encouraged to discuss the feedback with their line manager, especially in cases where there are multiple issues or they are more complex.
- 4.13 Contact should be made with the customer by close of business the next working day following receipt of the feedback. The discussion with the customer provides an opportunity to ensure we have fully understood the issue, establish what resolution the customer is seeking (if not already known) and whether we are able to put the matter right there and then.
- 4.14 If the issue cannot be resolved immediately, the assigned colleague should explain to the customer what actions they are going to take and agree when they will next make contact and by what method. The assigned colleague should update their actions in their core system (e.g. Orchard, UH, CRM).
- 4.15 If it is possible to resolve immediately, the assigned colleague should clearly explain what they have done, or are going to do and what, if anything, the customer should expect and by when. The customer should be asked to confirm they are happy with the response and if they are, the assigned colleague should update their actions in their core system (e.g. Orchard, UH, CRM).
- 4.16 If the customer is not happy with the suggested resolution, colleagues should ascertain why and should there be nothing further the assigned colleague can do, the customer should be advised that they may escalate their issue to our 'complaint' stage.
- 4.17 Should the customer want to escalate the issue, the assigned colleague should note all details (including the reason why the customer wishes to escalate) and request their complaint champion to escalate to the 'complaint' stage through the central database. The investigating colleague will receive an automatic notification from the database. If the customer contacts the CST to escalate their feedback to the 'complaint' stage, the CST will action this request.
- 4.18 The customer should be advised who will be dealing with their complaint and that they will receive a response within 10 working days. Should the customer want the escalation of their complaint confirmed in writing the colleague escalating the feedback to the complaint stage would print and send directly to the customer or e-mail to the customer dependant on their preference.
- 4.19 **Complaint**
- 4.20 *Response time for the complaint stage is within 10 working days*
- 4.21 Upon receipt of a complaint notification the investigating colleague should review and understand all of the information relating to the complaint. The investigating colleague should also take the opportunity to discuss with the colleague who initially dealt with the issue (if applicable) and any other colleagues who have been involved to this point.

- 4.22 Investigating colleagues are encouraged to discuss the complaint with their Line Manager, especially in cases where there are multiple issues or where they are more complex. In some cases it may be more appropriate for the Head of Service to deal with the complaint. Should this be the case, the central database should be updated and the complaint re-assigned.
- 4.23 The investigating colleague is encouraged to make contact as soon as possible with the customer to discuss their concerns. If practical and appropriate, colleagues are encouraged to meet with the customer face to face, however, as a minimum, a telephone conversation should be undertaken. The customer should be allowed to explain clearly their issue/s, clarify the reasons why they were not happy with the initial responses and clarify their expectations.
- 4.24 Following the investigation, the investigating colleague should contact the customer to clearly explain what they have done, or are going to do and what, if anything, the customer should expect and by when. The investigating colleague should ask if the customer is happy with their response and upon confirmation of this, close the complaint down and complete the relevant sections in central database.
- 4.25 The investigating colleague should ask if the customer would like to receive their response in writing, and if so, this should be issued within the original 10 working day time frame. For clarity, this can be via letter or e-mail so long as the attachment is in a secure format, such as a PDF.
- 4.26 Should it not be possible to resolve at this stage, the investigating colleague should record all details (including the reason why the customer wishes to escalate the issue) upload all files and escalate to the 'review' stage through the central database. The customer should be advised who will be reviewing their complaint and be advised they will receive a response within 10 working days. Should the customer want this confirmed in writing the investigating colleague would print and send directly to the customer.
- 4.27 **Review**
- 4.28 *Response time for the review stage is within 10 working days.*
- 4.29 Upon receipt of a review notification the Head of Service or Director should review and understand all of the information held in the central database. The Head of Service or Director should also take the opportunity to discuss with the investigating colleague and any other colleagues who have been involved to this point.
- 4.30 The Head of Service or Director is encouraged to discuss the complaint with their Line Manager, especially in cases where there are multiple issues or where they are more complex. In some cases it may be more appropriate for a Director to complete the review. Should this be the case, the central database should be updated and the review re-assigned.
- 4.31 The colleague reviewing the complaint is encouraged to make contact as soon as possible with the customer to discuss their complaint. If practical and appropriate, colleagues are encouraged to meet with the customer face to face, however, as a minimum, a telephone conversation should be undertaken. The customer should be allowed to explain clearly the initial issue/s, clarify the reasons why they were not happy with the responses to date and clarify their expectations.

- 4.32 Once in possession of all the facts and evidence, the colleague reviewing the complaint is encouraged to contact the customer to advise the outcome. In addition the customer should be issued with a full written response within the original 10 working days deadline. In some more complex cases it may not be possible to meet the deadline. Should this be the case the reviewing colleague should advise the customer at the earliest opportunity and agree a date when they will send the full response.
- 4.33 The central database should be fully updated with all relevant information and associated documents.
- 4.34 The response letter will include information on how to escalate the complaint to the 'appeal' stage if they are not satisfied with the response. Once the customer confirms they are satisfied, or after a period of 10 working days if no response is received, the complaint will be closed down and the central database updated with the relevant information. If however the customer remains dissatisfied they have the opportunity to escalate their complaint to the final stage of our process, the 'appeal' stage.
- 4.35 Should the complainant wish to escalate to the 'appeal' stage, the central database should be updated with the reason why. All documentation and notes should be uploaded. The Head of Governance will receive an automatic notification from the database.
- 4.36 The customer should be advised that their complaint has been escalated and they will receive contact from the Head of Governance within the next 10 working days.
- 4.37 **Appeal**
- 4.38 *Response time for the appeal stage is within 10 working days and outcome notified within 5 working days.*
- 4.39 The 'appeal' stage is the final stage of our complaints procedure and enables the customer to have their complaint heard by an independent panel.
- 4.40 The panel will be made up of three individuals, at least two of which must be independent board members and the other an independent director although we will endeavour to always convene a panel of board members only.
- 4.41 The Head of Governance will convene this meeting and advise all parties of a suitable date, time and venue.
- 4.42 Customers are encouraged to attend the appeal hearing, however, if they are unable to, or do not want to, the panel may hear the appeal without the customer present. Should this be the case the customer may provide a further written statement.
- 4.43 The Head of Governance will provide copies of all correspondence, information and evidence held in the central database to the appeal panel and the customer in advance of the meeting.
- 4.44 The Head of Governance will ensure that accurate notes of the meeting are taken.
- 4.45 The customer will be advised of the outcome of the appeal within 5 working days of the hearing by the Head of Governance.

## 5. Ombudsman/Designated Persons

- 5.1 Customers retain the right to escalate their complaint following completion of our process and can seek advice and support from the Housing Ombudsman at any time.
- 5.2 Customers can also self-refer to a designated person. “Designated persons” are defined as an MP, a local councillor for the district in which a customer's home is located.
- 5.3 Customers can escalate their issue should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome following an appeal or in the event where we advise they have exhausted our complaints procedure.
- 5.4 The Head of Governance will be the principle liaison for the Ombudsman.
- 5.5 Someone in receipt of CQC regulated care e.g. home care or re-ablement has the right to complain to the Local Authority if they remain dissatisfied after the stages have been exhausted.
- 5.6 Customers of services such as Independence Trust also have the right to complain direct to the commissioner of the service (i.e. the Local authority). In such cases, customers have the right to appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman.

## 6. Recording of compliments and complaints

- 6.1 We will use a central database to record all compliments, complaints and feedback.
- 6.2 It is critical that all colleagues keep accurate records in line with the Connexus Data Protection policy. Records include case notes, records of any conversation, correspondence and letters including any evidence that has been used as part of the investigation. Information entered into the database will be held for a maximum of 6 years.
- 6.3 Complaint records will include details of the complainant, information relating to the issue and any evidence gathered as part of an investigation.
- 6.4 The data collected will be used to produce regular reports and analysis of:
  - Number and nature of complaints received.
  - Complaints that have not been responded to in time.
  - Themes and outcomes at each stage.
  - Learning and examples of what has changed as a result.