

# Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy



Owned by:	Chief Executive
Approved by:	Operations Executive
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Other Policies to be cross referenced: Compensation Policy

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 We welcome compliments, comments and complaints to help us learn what we are, or are not, getting right. We want to know when we make mistakes or when we have provided an excellent service to help us review our performance and continually improve.
- 1.2 This policy applies to feedback made by a resident, applicant or anyone who comes into contact with the services provided by any part of the AmicusHorizon Group.

## 2 Definitions

### 2.1 Compliment

A compliment is where we have positive feedback from someone in relation to our services. This could be praise or a thank you from someone who feels they have had a good experience when dealing with the Association.

### 2.2 Comment

A comment is general feedback on the service: this includes ideas, suggestions about how we can improve our services or an issue which can be resolved quickly.

### 2.3 Complaint

#### 2.3.1 A complaint is:

*An expression of dissatisfaction with the action, or lack of action, or about the standard of a service*

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2.3.2 A complaint may arise from:

- Not advising service users of their rights correctly;
- Poor attitude or behaviour ;
- Not delivering services to agreed standards, quality or timescales.

2.3.3 A complaint may be made in relation to the services directly provided by the AmicusHorizon Group Ltd, a contractor, or an agency working for us.

2.3.4 The following will usually be handled outside of the complaints policy and procedure:

- Where legal action has been started;
- Matters which are being handled as an insurance claim;
- Complaints against another resident of the Association – for example because of alleged anti-social behaviour;
- Where the Association has no duty for delivering the service – for example decisions made by local authorities to nominate to a vacancy, or decisions about housing benefit claims.

### 3.0 Complaints

3.1 A complaint may be made using any form of communication, but should be made within six months of the event which has led to the complaint. Complaints made after six months will be considered if there are unusual circumstances which previously prevented the complaint being made.

3.2 A letter will be sent within three working days, saying who is looking into the matter and when a full reply will be sent.

3.3 We will support anyone who wishes to make a complaint by:

- Making sure that people understand their right to have an advocate acting for them, and offer help in finding possible advocates where necessary;
- Offering guidance and assistance, for example in completing a form;
- Offering mediation at any stage of the complaint;
- Providing details of where extra information and specialist advice can be sought, for example the Citizens Advice Bureau.

3.4 In dealing with the complaint we will:

- Aim to make face-to-face contact to confirm the details of the complaint and the action they feel should be taken to remedy the situation;
- Aim to carry out a full impartial investigation;
- State the date when a response will be given. Where responses cannot be given within the timescale, we will write explaining our

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progress to date; with an explanation of any further investigation that is needed to provide a full response and a date for a full response;

- Advise of the facts that have been taken into account when reaching a decision;
- Offer a sincere apology when things have gone wrong and say what will be done to stop it happening again.

3.5 In most cases the complaint will be dealt with through each stage of the procedure until it is resolved. However, where complaints are of a serious nature or relate to an ongoing situation, the Service Director may decide to escalate the investigation on to a higher stage. All complaints must be heard by a panel or the equivalent before being referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

### 4.0 Investigating complaints

In the first instance staff will always try to put things right as soon as possible, rather than moving straight to stage one of the complaints process.

#### 4.1 Stage one

4.1.1 Investigations at stage one will usually be carried out by a staff member who is involved in the issue in order to give them the opportunity of putting matters right. A response should be sent within 10 working days of the complaint being made.

4.1.2 Complaints made about the conduct or quality of work of a contractor will be investigated and responded to by the Contractor. The Association has the responsibility for co-ordinating and recording the response.

#### 4.2 Stage two:

4.2.1 Investigations will be carried out by a senior manager from across the AmicusHorizon Group.

4.2.2 The aim is to respond within 10 working days of the receipt of notification to escalate the complaint to stage two.

#### 4.3 Stage three – Appeals Panel

4.3.1 If the complaint remains unresolved, there will be a right to ask for an appeals panel hearing. The panel will usually consist of three Board members, which should include a Board member who is resident. The Chair of the Board will be kept informed of the panel hearing and the decisions made.

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- 4.3.2 The date of the panel hearing will be within 25 working days of the request for a panel hearing, with paperwork being circulated 10 working days before the hearing.
- 4.3.3 The panel hearing should include a Director or Chief Executive (who has not previously been involved in the issue) to advise on policy matters and the appeals panel process, and may include an independent advisor to provide additional technical advice.
- 4.3.4 Travel and child or carer costs associated with the panel hearings will be refunded. Any other needs, such as sign language, translators will be paid for by the Association.
- 4.3.5 The final decision of the panel, any agreed actions, target dates and minutes of the meeting will be sent within 10 working days of the hearing and will advise of the right to take the issue to the appropriate external organisation.

### **5.0 Closing cases**

- 5.1 A case will be closed when there is no further complaint, an agreement has been reached and actions completed or the complaint has been overturned by the Appeal Panel. The intention to pursue the complaint to a further stage must be made to the Association within 20 working days from the date of the response letter.

### **6.0 Independent review of the complaint**

- 6.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service will only accept referrals relating to housing issues once all the stages in this policy have been completed. They will usually not accept complaints about care or support services and will not accept complaints from members of the general public.
- 6.2 Complaints about a service in receipt of Supporting People funding can be made to the relevant local authority. Where the issue remains unresolved the Local Government Ombudsman can investigate.

### **7.0 Monitoring**

- 7.1 We will use the outcome of compliments, comments and complaints and any remedial action as a positive method of monitoring performance, improving our services and to identify any adverse impact of policies.
- 7.2 Each senior management team and Board will receive quarterly reports outlining at a minimum:
- Summary of compliments and comments

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- Number and type of complaints; by age, ethnicity, gender and disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief in comparison with the resident profile.
- Percentage escalated to a higher stage;
- Number of complaints outstanding;
- Performance in relation to response times;
- Detailed analysis of stage three or Housing Ombudsman investigations and decisions made;
- Lessons learnt and actions taken as a result of the feedback;
- Satisfaction with complaint handling.

7.3 Annual reports will include details of the Housing Ombudsman's decisions.

### 8.0 Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every five years and in consultation with residents. The review may be instigated earlier in order to incorporate legislative, regulatory, best practice developments, or to address operational issues.

### 9.0 Diversity Impact Assessment

9.1 An initial screening impact assessment was carried out as part of the review of this policy. This highlighted the need for improved consistency in monitoring and reporting which will be addressed as part of the implementation of this policy. A further impact assessment will be undertaken within six months of the implementation of this policy.