

Comments, Compliment and Complaints Policy and Procedures

Document configuration control

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Author/Job Title	Jonathan Sutton / CEO
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5 January 2016	Re-write and complete revision	JE Sutton CEO	DRAFT
27 June 2016	Approved version	JE Sutton CEO	Version 1.0
6 July 2016	Editorial revision and addition of template complaint form.	JE Sutton CEO	Version 1.1

COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. A key element in improving services is through an effective complaints policy; one that is easily accessible, open, flexible and outcome based.
2. Complaints, together with comments and compliments provide a useful and challenging insight into what we do well and what we do less well. Receiving feedback, be it complaints, comments or compliments allow us to learn about what service users think about the services they receive and help us to identify areas for change.

POLICY STATEMENT

3. St Paul's is committed to providing good quality services and continuous improvement throughout the organisation. St Paul's is committed to ensuring service user Comments, Complaints and Compliments are dealt with promptly.
4. St Paul's will deal with all complaints in confidence as it is recognised that people can be fearful of making complaints and people need to be reassured that making a complaint will have no adverse consequences.
5. The Comments, Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedures are an essential part of putting this commitment into practice, and St Paul's staff will promote these feedback mechanisms to service users.
6. At St Paul's our approach to dealing with complaints will be one based on empathy. Our staff will take time to listen and understand the complaint and how it has affected the person. Our staff will always acknowledge the complaint might be distressing for the person so will deal with it carefully.
7. This policy will be displayed within our services to service users know how to complain and how we deal with complaints.

OUR POLICY AIMS

8. The aims of this policy are to;
 - a. Provide a consistent procedure. We want to give our Service Users a , consistent and accessible way of making comments, complaints and compliments.

- b. Be a positive procedure. We want to achieve a positive resolution to the satisfaction of the complainant and to use the outcome of any comment, complaint and compliment as a way of improving our services.
- c. Be a fair procedure. We want to enable all of our service users to have a say in how our services are delivered and to seek remedy if they are dissatisfied with our services
- d. A procedure that improves the quality of our services. We want these procedures to improve the quality of the services we provide and improve our relationships with our customers, and promote best practice with staff.
- e. A procedure that is efficient. We want complaints to be dealt with promptly and efficiently and apply any learning across the organisation so that all of our customers may benefit from any changes made.

THE LAW AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

9. Fortis Living (our landlord) is a Registered Provider (RP). The Housing Act 1996 stipulates all RPs must be members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme in respect of their housing activities. In addition the Localism Act requires tenants of RP to be able to request their complaints be considered by 'Designated Person' once the internal procedure of the landlord is completed. The policy also conforms to Charity Commission guidance.

WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT UNDER THIS POLICY

10. Complaints from St Paul's Service Users only will be dealt with through this Policy. For the purposes of the policy Service Users will be defined as hostel tenants, resettlement and Bromyard Road residents and service users in support services.

11. Any member of the public, for example a neighbour or customer of Second Chance Furnishing can use this policy to make a complaint, comment or compliment.

12. Service Users may decide to ask someone to help them make their complaint. This person is known as their 'advocate'. The advocate must have the complainants' written permission to make the complaint and we must receive a copy of this before we can discuss the complaint with the advocate. The advocate may be a friend, partner, relative, or a member of St Paul's¹ (e.g. Housing or Support Worker).

¹ If there may be a conflict of interest between the advocate's role and their job role, the staff member should discuss this with their line manager before agreeing to act as an advocate. The line manager should be confident that the staff advocate can manage any conflict of interest before agreeing. The decision rests with the line manager, who must in all cases - ensure that the staff advocate is being supported throughout the process.

LIMITATIONS

13. This complaint procedure may *not* be used in the following circumstances;
- a. Complaints that relate to issues that are over 6 months old will not be accepted and dealt with as part of the complaints process.
 - b. Employees, students, trainees and volunteers of St Paul's or Second Chance Furnishings cannot use these procedures to complain. They should use the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
 - c. Where the complaint relates directly or indirectly to legal proceedings being taken by the complainant against St Paul's, in which case the complaint will be referred to St Paul's Finance and Company Secretary and solicitors and addressed as part of the legal proceedings.
 - d. In all instances where actual or inferred personal injury is an issue, St Paul's staff will not comment or discuss the case with the claimant. All personal injury claims and allegations of physical damage to a claimant's property or possessions will in all cases be referred directly to the Finance and Company Secretary and St Paul's Insurers.

COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS

14. St Paul's will welcome compliments and comments. All compliments and comments will be recorded by the Executive Finance and Company Secretary and an acknowledgement letter will be sent. Compliments and Comments will be recorded along with complaints and used to identify trends in service delivery.

15. When we receive a comment we will consider how we can use it to improve our services. Comments should be shared and discussed with the relevant team members. This may for example, include sharing the 'comment' at the next available team meeting for discussion, at a Managers meeting or making a recommendation to the Trustees

16. A Compliments and comments box is situated in the foyer of the hostel.

COMPLAINTS

17. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action or lack of action resulting in service failure or a routine follow up request for service. Complaints will be investigated and could result in service improvement if required.

18. A complaint is not a request for a service (e.g. reporting a repair) or about a third party (e.g. a noisy resident), though a complaint could be made if we fail to deal with these effectively. A complaint is not a request for information.

19. Service Users can also complain if they feel their landlord is not complying with regulatory standards or there is a failure in regulation. Customers cannot use the formal complaints procedure to complain about rent increases or rent levels.

ANONYMOUS, OFFENSIVE AND DISCRIMINATORY COMPLAINTS

20. If we receive an anonymous complaint we will still record and investigate it as far as possible. A complaint may be considered offensive if it includes inappropriate language or views which discriminate against anyone. If an offensive complaint is received, it should be logged and then immediately forwarded to the Finance Officer and Company Secretary to deal with.

21. The Finance Officer and Company Secretary will decide if the complaint should be investigated or closed. In such case, a complaint which may be 'closed' for purposes of offensiveness/ discrimination – should be done so by signing off by Trustees of St Paul's.

COMPLAINTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

22. Because social media influences others, it is important to treat a complaint as seriously as you would a face-to-face complaint. Follow this guide to deal with complaints on social media.

a. Get the complainant away from the public eye. We want to get to the bottom of the complaint but away from the public eye. When there is an initial complaint, acknowledge it and then reply ***“Thank you for your feedback. Please send us a private message with details so we can investigate the details of this experience so we can get to the bottom of it and prevent it from happening again.”*** This gets the person to message you in private and share the details. When other people read the complaint, it shows we care about complaints and take action. Taking no action erodes trust. Doing something over nothing retains trust.

b. Respond to positive feedback. Social media allows St Paul's to build trust with an audience before a complaint is even made. By interacting – re-tweet, mentioning and asking questions there will be a positive image communicated. Also by building this relationship, if something *does* go wrong, audience will be more trusting and let us you know in a nicer way.

c. Respond quickly. Senior managers have access to Social Media platforms. Check these regularly and so complaints do not go unacknowledged. **The target time to respond to a social media complaint is 60 minutes.**

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

23. Complaints, comments and compliments can be made in a variety of ways including by letter, by telephone, in person, email, text, Complaint, comment, compliment leaflet, fax, at meetings, petitions, through Board members, other agencies etc.

24. We will welcome complaints that are made on behalf of a customer by external agencies in an advocacy role. We will need consent from our customer to deal with the advocate. Once customers have given consent for us to deal with the advocate all correspondence regarding the complaint will be dealt with through the advocate. The Executive Finance and Company Secretary will oversee the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

SKIPPING STAGES

25. No complaint can 'skip' a stage – including the informal resolution - regardless of the nature of the complaint. Therefore, complaint stages do not reflect the severity of the nature of the complaint. In the event that a complaint (at any stage) is regarding any form of abuse (as defined by St Paul's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, or regarding a risk to a person's health and safety, the person receiving the complaint must immediately notify St Paul's CEO or in unavailable any of the Trustees.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

26. No member of St Paul's staff should investigate a complaint which has been made against them. This would constitute a 'conflict of interest'. Failure to do this will be considered Gross Misconduct. Investigation is defined as holding meetings or discussions regarding the matter with anyone involved in the complaint, questioning the customer who made the complaint, or making enquiries after the customer who made the complaint.

THE PROCEDURE

STAGES

27. The stages of resolution are;
- a. Informal resolution
 - b. Formal Complaint Stage 1 – Complaint investigation by an Investigating Officer

- c. Formal Complaint Stage 2 - First review by Chief Executive (or in absence a Senior Manager)
- d. Formal Complaint Stage 3 - Second review by Chair of Trustees (Comment: Trustees may opt for a panel)
- e. External Stage 4 – Complaint is passed to external body to which the complaint is about.

28. Informal resolution. At St Paul's we recognise that some Service Users may want to raise a matter with a member of staff without having to make a formal complaint. All of our customers can request to speak to any member of staff to raise a matter and have this resolved - prior to making a formal complaint. At any time, if the Service User is still not satisfied with the response or outcome, they reserve the right to make the matter formal – by letting us know they wish to make a formal complaint. At this point, the matter would be recognised as a Stage 1 formal complaint.

29. Formal Complaint Stage 1 – Complaint investigation by an Investigating Officer. All complaints will be acknowledged by the Executive Finance and Company Secretary within 3 working days and information will be provided on who is dealing with the complaint and the process to be followed including timescales. Complaints that relate to members of staff will usually be investigated by their Line Manager.

30. An independent person who has not previously been involved in the complaint will carry out the initial complaint investigation and aim to respond to the complainant in writing within **7** working days.

31. All complaint investigations will involve personal contact with the complainant. Any extension to this timescale will be agreed with the complainant and will normally be influenced by the complexity of the complaint and availability of the complainant.

32. Formal Complaint Stage 2 - First review by Chief Executive. The complainant will be requested to identify why they are not satisfied with the response. This must relate to the substantive nature of the complaint. Where other matters are introduced, these will be dealt with separately and the current complaint will be deemed as resolved.

33. Escalations to Stage 2 First Review will be received by the Executive Finance and Company Secretary who will send an acknowledgement within 3 working days providing details on who is reviewing the complaint and the process to be followed including timescales.

34. The CEO will review the complaint and will usually make personal contact with the complainant. The CEO will aim to respond in writing within **10** days.

35. **Formal Complaint Stage 3 - Second review by Chair of Trustees (or a panel?)** The complainant will be requested to identify why they are not satisfied with the response. This must relate to the substantive nature of the complaint. Where other matters are introduced, these will be dealt with separately and the current complaint will be deemed as resolved.

36. Escalations to Stage 3 Second Review will be received by the Executive Finance and Company Secretary who will send an acknowledgement providing details of who is reviewing the complaint and the approximate date of a decision.

37. The CEO or the Senior Manager who undertook the Stage 2 First Review will write a Briefing Paper to include all relevant information about the complaint to the Chair of Trustee. The Chair of Trustee will aim to respond in writing within **10** days

38. The Stage 3 Second Review exhausts the internal complaints procedure.

SATISFACTION AND FOLLOW-UP

39. At St Paul's we do not want to make assumptions regarding Service User satisfaction. For this reason we periodically spot check whether Service Users are satisfied with how we have handled their complaint. We do this by writing to customers to ask them if they were satisfied with the way in which we have dealt with their complaint and the complaint outcome – at all stages.

40. St Paul's Finance and Company Secretary will send the complainant a satisfaction follow-up card to ask for their views and feedback. Complainants who do not respond within **14 working days** will be considered as a 'closed complaint'.

41. **External Stage 4 - Complaint is passed to external body to which the complaint is about.** If the Service User is not satisfied with the outcomes of our internal complaints procedure they may wish to take their complaint further. St Paul's staff should be open, transparent and supportive in advising customers of their right to escalate the matter further should they wish.

42. Complaints about the building are to be directed to Fortis Living. The complaint will enter the Fortis Living complaints procedure at their 1st Review stage. Where a complainant is not satisfied then the Chair of Trustees will send the complaint and all accompanying paperwork to Communities and Co-regulation manager at Fortis Living. An acknowledgement will be requested. A copy of the Fortis Living complaints policy will be given to the complainant by the Chair of Trustees.

WHEN COMPLAINTS ARE CLOSED

43. Complaints will be closed when the complainant;

- a. Says or indicates that they are satisfied with the outcome
- b. Says or indicates that they do not wish to take the matter any further. This should be made in writing or a record kept by the member of staff receiving the complaint.
- c. Has exhausted our internal 3 stage complaints procedure and the Chair of Trustees 3 has notified the complainant in writing of the outcome and how the complainant may wish to pursue their complaint externally but the complaint is closed from St Paul's perspective
- d. Complainants who do not respond within 14 days of being sent a 'Satisfaction Follow-Up' card
- e. Has received a legal judgment from a legal hearing
- f. Has not responded within the time frames at any stage of the process

ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

44. As part of our continuous improvement plan, the Executive Finance and Company Secretary will review the effectiveness of this Policy on an annual basis. The review will usually take place in December and the results passed to Trustees in the early New Year. This will include a desk top review of the following;

- a. Number of complaints made / complaint stages and the nature of complaints
- b. Staff training needs in relation to complaint handling
- c. Raising awareness of our complaints Policy and Procedures
- d. An impact assessment of how complaints have influenced service changes

POLICY REVIEW

45. This Policy and Procedures shall be reviewed in 3 years from its effective date and will normally take place alongside the annual effectiveness review. This Policy and Procedures may be assessed before that time as necessary to reflect substantial organisational changes, following inspection, as recommended by Auditors, or changes required by Law or our Regulators.

COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

INFORMATION LEAFLET

POLICY STATEMENT

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St Paul's will deal with all complaints in confidence as it is recognised that people can be fearful of making complaints and people need to be reassured that making a complaint will have no adverse consequences.

The Comments, Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedures are an essential part of putting this commitment into practice, and St Paul's staff will promote these feedback mechanisms to service users.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action or lack of action resulting in service failure or a routine follow up request for service. Complaints will be investigated and could result in service improvement if required.

A complaint is not a request for a service (e.g. reporting a repair) or about a third party (e.g. a noisy resident), though a complaint could be made if we fail to deal with these effectively. A complaint is not a request for information.

Service Users can also complain if they feel their landlord is not complying with regulatory standards or there is a failure in regulation. Customers cannot use the formal complaints procedure to complain about rent increases or rent levels.

HOW TO COMPLAIN

St Paul's seeks to resolve complaints quickly and whenever possible informally. If you have a complaint please speak to a member of staff who will do their best to resolve your complaint.

Sometimes it is not possible to resolve your complaint informally. It is necessary for a Service User to use a formal complaint. A copy of our Comments, Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedures is available from the main office.

The policy contains a Comments, Complaints and Compliments form that can be used to submit a complaint.

**COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS FORM
(USE BLOCK CAPITALS)**

YOUR NAME		
DATE OF INCIDENT		LOG TRACKING NUMBER (INSERTED BY FINANCE OFFICER)
CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER		
CONTACT EMAIL		
CONTACT ADDRESS		
PLEASE CIRCLE		
<i>COMMENT</i>	<i>COMPLAINT</i>	<i>COMPLIMENT</i>
DESCRIBE WHAT YOU WANT TO TELL US ABOUT?		
IF THIS IS A COMPLAINT WHAT OUTCOME DO YOU WANT TO SEE?		INVESTIGATING OFFICER NOMINATED
OFFICIAL USE ONLY		
<i>OUTCOME</i>	<i>DATE STAGE 1</i>	
	<i>DATE STAGE 2</i>	
	<i>DATE STAGE 3</i>	
	<i>DATE STAGE 4</i>	

Log Tracking Reference

Number _____

COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION OFFICER REPORT

THIS REPORT IS CONFIDENTIAL

Upon completion of the investigation this report and all documentation (originals) must be put in a sealed envelope marked 'confidential' and immediately sent to the Executive Finance and Company Secretary

IF THE COMPLAINT IS REGARDING A SAFEGUARDING OR ABUSE MATTER, YOU MUST IMMEDIATELY BRING THIS TO THE ATTENTION OF ST PAUL'S CEO OR IF NOT AVAILABLE ANY TRUSTEE

Complaint Investigating Officer Full Name:

Job Title:

Project/Department: _____

Date Complaint Received: ____/____/____

Complaint Stage? (please circle to indicate)

Stage 1 Stage 2 Stage 3

What is the complainants' desired outcome?

Key people contacted/ their response(s):

Name: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Method: In person/ telephone/ email (circle)

Key Questions/ Responses:

Name: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Method: In person/ telephone/ email (circle)

Key Questions/ Responses:

Other materials/documents considered as part of this investigation:

Other Policies/ Legislation relevant:

Your key findings:

Your recommendations²:

² Your overall recommendations from your investigation findings, i.e. what action will now be taken and by whom? Also state your specific recommendations in relation to the complainant's desired outcome. If your recommendations are regarding a member of St Paul's staff, and/ or a St Paul's service – you must discuss these with the relevant Service Manager prior to issuing the complainant with your outcome letter.

The outcome: Are you upholding the complaint? (please circle to indicate)

Yes

No

Partly

Signed: _____

Date: ____/____/____