



CHISEL Complaints Policy

OUR PRINCIPLES

This policy sets out to resolve complaints efficiently whilst learning from them to improve our services and prevent complaints arising in the future. Our principles are to provide a quality service by:

- Putting things right within reasonable timescales.
- Keeping tenants/customers informed.
- Managing expectations.
- Following our policy and procedures.
- Fully and accurately, record details, actions and investigations of the complaint at all stages.
- Use lessons learned from the complaints to improve our service and prevent complaints.

OUR PROMISE

- We will listen and ensure we understand your complaint.
- We will ensure you are treated with respect
- We will tell you what will happen next.
- We will take ownership of issues that you raise to us.
- We will aim to resolve your complaint quickly and manage your expectations.
- We will keep you informed.
- We will make it easy for you to contact us during the duration of your complaint.

CHISEL welcome feedback on our services from tenants and residents, including issues raised as formal complaints.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

CHISEL adopts the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint as follows;

A complaint shall be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents

A complaint can be made using the following channels:

- Online using the feedback form on our website <https://www.chisel.org.uk/policies-and-communications/tenants-feedback/>
- Email - info@chisel.org.uk
- In person
- Letter
- Through MP or Councillor
- Using an agreed third party
- By Advocate, Solicitor, Citizens Advice Bureau and any other reasonable request.

Please note we advise all tenants/customers to email complaints to complaints@chisel.org.uk as this helps us to understand volumes, monitor and identify any trends.

WHAT IS NOT A COMPLAINT?

- Matters already being dealt with by the Ombudsman Service.
- A first time tenant/customer enquiry. It is important CHISEL has an opportunity to provide a response or resolve tenant/customer's issues.
- Liability or personal injury claims.
- Where we are advised that legal action has begun, we will continue to manage through the complaints process until confirmation of legal action has been received.
- Complaints from one resident about another. The tenants should contact the housing team for advice on neighbour disputes.
- Issues regarding antisocial behaviour (ASB). However, complaints can be made about CHISEL's handling of an ASB process.
- Feedback about our policies and procedures from tenants/customers or other parties will be recorded and inform future reviews.
- Disagreement with a decision we have made where there is another procedure to appeal the decision, for example a dispute about service charges, succession or tenancy.
- Issues CHISEL received in an unreasonable manner.
- Any complaint closed over six months ago unless:
 - There are issues ongoing related to the complaint – e.g. ASB, unresolved damp.
 - An MP or Ombudsman have asked us to review the complaint
 - There is good reason for the delay.

If an issue is not accepted as a complaint for one of the above reasons, CHISEL will respond and give the reason.

CORRESPONDENCE TO CHISEL'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE OR BOARD MEMBERS

Correspondence sent to CHISEL's Chief Executive or Board Members will be directed to the appropriate team for action. Where the contact relates to dissatisfaction, the issue will either be investigated as a new complaint or will be included as further information in a complaint that is already being investigated.

A complaint made in the form of a petition on behalf of multiple tenants/customers will be treated as one complaint; interactions and correspondence will be directed to the nominated signatory.

COMPLAINTS TEAM AND PROCESS

The Operations Manager oversees complaints, Councillors enquiries and Housing Ombudsman cases. The Operations Manager is able to resolve complaints in consultation with the complainant and the relevant staff. This may include regular liaison with department managers and performance monitoring.

Where a complaint is related to the actions of the Operations Manager, it will be overseen by the Chief Executive. Where a complaint is related to the Chief Executive, it will be overseen by the Chair of the Board.

Informal resolution

Initial queries will be resolved by one of our teams where possible before a formal complaint is recorded.

If we decide not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be given to the tenant/customer, setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process

Formal complaints: we have a two-stage process, with Stage 2 invoked where resolution is not reached at Stage 1.

1. **Stage 1:** If an initial attempt to resolve the issue is not achieved, a formal complaint will be recorded and will be investigated. We will do all we can to resolve tenants/customers' issues and put things right.

We aim to resolve complaints at Stage 1 within 10 working days. If we're unable to resolve your complaint within this time we will:

- Aim to keep you informed.
- Explain the reasons why we are unable resolve your complaint within timescale.
- Provide a timescale for how long your complaint will take to resolve and what's involved to resolve your complaint.

2. **Stage 2:** At the conclusion of stage 1 of the complaint process, a tenant/customer may request a review or an escalation of their case. They will need to be clear on what they wish to be considered as their desired outcome and what specifically they are not accepting.

A review panel will be formed, normally including a staff member, a Board member and where possible a resident.

We aim to resolve complaints at this stage within 15 working days. If we're unable to resolve your complaint within this time we will:

- Aim to keep you informed.
- Explain the reasons why we are unable resolve your complaint within timescale.
- Provide a timescale for how long your complaint will take to resolve and what's involved to resolve your complaint.

Independent Review

If at the end of our process you remain unhappy with your outcome, you can refer your complaint to a 'designated person': your MP or Councillor or a Tenant Panel created by the local authority.

You have the right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), as long as you have been through all stages of CHISEL's complaints process. If you have decided not to contact a 'designated person' you can come directly to the Ombudsman eight weeks after CHISEL has given you its final response to your complaint.

The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted by emailing info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk, by using their online complaint form at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk, or by telephone on 0300 111 3000.

UNACCEPTABLE OR UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR

CHISEL uses Ombudsman guidance on unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour to manage complaints where the behaviour or complaint is unreasonable.

This could include behaviour which is likely to impact on the investigation and resolution of the complaint, or complaints which may result in an unreasonable use of CHISEL resources. These may be characterised by:

- Repeated complaints on an issue where the complaint procedure has already been fully implemented and exhausted.
- Continual changes to the substance of the complaint.
- Where CHISEL deems that the complaints procedure is being used to result in favourable outcomes for tenants/customers outside of its published procedures and legal responsibilities.
- Unwillingness to accept documented evidence.
- Threatened or actual physical violence or verbal abuse towards staff or families or associates
- Persistent approaches to several people within the organisation at the same time relating to the same issues. In these instances when the contact from the tenant/customer is unreasonably persistent or vexatious, CHISEL may choose to close the complaint, with a final letter outlining its actions and response to the issues originally raised by the complainant.

EQUALITY

We will ensure our practices don't disadvantage disabled people or minority groups and don't discriminate against any resident on grounds of their race, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, marital status, disability, age, religion or class

We welcome complaints in all formats and will provide help for tenants/customers with for example, hearing difficulties, sight or language challenges.