



**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
RETIRED MINISTERS' HOUSING SOCIETY**

Complaints Policy

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Operational Responsibility	Complaints Officer
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1.	Introduction
1.1	The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society (the RMHS) recognises that feedback from its residents is integral to providing a high-quality service. When we do not meet the expected standards, or our residents believe we have not met them, we strive to understand, learn, and identify how we can maintain continuous improvement.
1.2	As members of the Housing Ombudsman Service the RMHS have a statutory duty to comply with all provisions in the Code as this represents best practice in complaints handling. Compliance with the Code, will mean that the RMHS' staff are empowered to resolve complaints fairly, within a positive complaints culture to achieve the earliest resolution of complaints.
2.	Policy Aims and Objectives
2.1	The RMHS strives to always provide a high standard of service to its residents. This policy sets out the RMHS' approach to dealing with and learning from feedback whether positive or negative. The Society believes that to effectively maintain continuous improvement it must actively listen to and understand what our residents are telling us.
2.2	The aim of this policy is to ensure that all residents who wish to complain are treated fairly and respectfully. The RMHS recognise that complaint handling should be a resident-friendly process that enables residents to be heard and understood.
2.3	The objective of this policy is to resolve matters as quickly as possible by being open, accountable and customer focused. The policy gives the RMHS the opportunity to resolve complaints, listen to our residents and learn from what they tell us so we can introduce positive changes in service delivery.
2.4	A copy of the Complaints Policy will be given to tenants at the commencement of their tenancy. The policy will be available on the RMHS website. https://rmhs.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-feedback
3.	Statutory/Regulatory Requirements
3.1	<p>The operations of the RMHS are based on legislation and regulation. The following regulatory standards and statutory Acts have been acknowledged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code 2024 • Equality Act 2010 • Housing Act 1996 • General Data Protection Regulation 2018

4.	Equality and Diversity
4.1	<p>The RMHS value equality and diversity and is committed to ensuring that all residents are treated fairly.</p> <p>As part of the RMHS' commitment to the Equality Act 2010 we will facilitate reason adjustments for our residents wherever possible, to ensure that every individual has access to have their complaint handled in line with this Policy.</p>
5.	Definitions
5.1	Service request
	<p>A service request is a request from a resident to RMHS requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints. However, if this does not happen or, a resident is dissatisfied with the remedy offered to resolve their service request, a complaint can be raised.</p>
5.2	Comment
	<p>This may comprise an observation or commentary, positive or negative about the RMHS' service. A comment does not require a response. Written comments will be recorded as feedback.</p>
5.3	Compliment
	<p>This is an unsolicited expression of gratitude, acknowledgement or praise of staff or the Society. Anyone who has a relationship with the RMHS can send a compliment. Compliments can be made verbally to any member of staff or in writing. Written compliments will be recorded as feedback.</p>
5.4	Complaint
	<p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the RMHS' standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the RMHS, its staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.</p> <p>An expression of dissatisfaction with services communicated to the RMHS through a survey is not defined as a complaint. However, if a resident expresses dissatisfaction when responding to a survey they will be given the option for this to be handled as a complaint under this Policy.</p>

6.	Who can/cannot make a complaint?
6.1	<p>This policy applies to all RMHS tenants and residents.</p> <p>A complaint can be made through a third party or representative of a resident, but only when the resident has given the RMHS their permission for the named person to act on their behalf regarding the complaint. The resident will have the opportunity to be represented or accompanied at any meeting regarding the complaint.</p> <p>The complaint will be handled in line with this Policy.</p> <p>A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint.</p>
7.	Managing unacceptable behaviour
7.1	<p>Some complaints can become vexatious or frivolous when it is not possible to reach a reasonable solution. This also includes situations where the resident or their advocate has been abusive to staff and/or intentionally cause the RMHS to divert resources or disrupt work. The law recognises this type of complaint as serving only to annoy or harass. Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.</p>
8.	Exclusions
8.1	<p>The RMHS must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If the RMHS decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be given setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaint's process. The individual circumstances of each complaint must be considered on its own merits.</p> <p>Residents have the right to challenge RMHS' rejection of their complaint by referring the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that an exclusion has been fairly applied it may overturn this decision.</p> <p>There are acceptable circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint. Such exclusions, which must be fair and reasonable include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first request for service, information or an explanation of policies and procedures. • Services for which the RMHS is not responsible. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints

	<p>policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim have been filed at court. • A complaint by a lawyer on behalf of a client. • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago. • Anonymous complaints. • A complaint against policy decisions for example rents and rent levels. • Complaints relating to insurance that have been passed to the RMHS insurers and the decision is unknown. • Neighbour disputes which fall outside of the RMHS' remit.
9.	Use of discretion
9.1	RMHS reserve the right to use discretion when applying this policy where individual circumstances merit it, as long as discretion is applied fairly and appropriately. In some circumstances where appropriate, this may involve compensation and redress.
10.	How to make a complaint
10.1	<p>All members of RMHS staff will take complaints from residents or, their representative (with consent), in writing, in person, over the telephone or by email.</p> <p>Complaints can be made:</p> <p>In writing to: URC Retired Ministers' Housing Society 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT</p> <p>By email to: rmh@urc.org.uk</p> <p>By telephone to: 020 7916 8636</p> <p>In person to: Any member of RMHS' staff</p>
11.	How will the complaint be handled? Timescales and stages
11.1	Stage One
	<p>The Complaints Officer will log and acknowledge the stage one complaint within five working days of receipt.</p> <p>A full written response to a stage one complaint will be issued within ten</p>

	<p>working days of the complaint being acknowledged. In the case of complex complaints or extenuating circumstances, the Complaints Officer can extend this by a further ten working days after informing the resident and providing a good reason.</p> <p>A complaint response will be sent when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed.</p>
11.2	<p>Stage Two</p> <p>If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage one, it must be progressed to stage two. The Complaints Officer will log the escalation request and acknowledge the stage two complaint within five working days of receipt.</p> <p>The Chief Executive will issue a full response to a stage two complaint within twenty working days of the stage two complaint being acknowledged. In the case of complex complaints or extenuating circumstances, the Chief Executive can extend this by a further twenty working days after informing the resident and providing a good reason. Stage two is the RMHS' final response.</p>
11.3	<p>RMHS have discretion to close complaints at any stage of the process when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The investigation is complete and a response has been sent. • When a resolution is agreed and a commitment has been made by RMHS to deliver any outstanding actions. • After sending a response there is no further contact from the complainant after seven working days.
11.4	<p>Once the complaint's procedure has been completed, should the resident remain dissatisfied with the final response at Stage Two of the complaint's procedure, it is their right to engage with the Housing Ombudsman Service (please see S.14 for details).</p>
12.	<p>How we manage complaints</p>
12.1	<p>The RMHS will deal with complaints objectively, professionally and impartially. Complaints will be viewed positively as they provide an opportunity to put things right fairly, to learn from outcomes to drive service improvements.</p>

12.2	A full record of each complaint will be securely stored on RMHS' database. Such data will be treated confidentially. RMHS' Privacy Notice is available to read on the RMHS website https://rmhs.org.uk/privacy-notice
12.3	The complaint will be investigated properly before a full response is issued. In the absence of evidence from the resident (or complainant), the RMHS will rely on internal information, such as file notes, photographs, and contractor comments.
12.4	When appropriate or necessary information will be requested from contractors or other Agencies to coordinate a satisfactory outcome to complaints.
13.	Monitoring and Reporting
13.1	All complaints handled by the RMHS are reported to the Board as part of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) report. These reports are anonymised to comply with GDPR regulations.
13.2	The RMHS Board have a named Director who is the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). The MRC has lead responsibility for complaints and supports a positive complaint handling culture.
13.3	The RMHS is required to complete an annual complaint handling self-assessment for submission to the HOS. This is accompanied by the annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, and the Complaints Policy.
13.4	The annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and the RMHS Board's response to the report will be published on the RMHS website, alongside the Complaints Policy. https://rmhs.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-feedback
14.	The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)
14.1	<p>At all stages of this complaints procedure residents have the right to access The Housing Ombudsman Service and engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman Service PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET</p> <p>Telephone: 0300 111 3000 Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk</p>

15.	Review
15.1	This policy will be reviewed in January 2027 or sooner if legislation/ regulation concerning housing complaints change or, the monitoring of lessons learned reveal a requirement for evaluation.