



Women's Pioneer Housing COMPLAINTS POLICY

Title	Complaints Policy
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Related Corporate Policy	Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Women's Pioneer Housing (WPH) aims to provide a high quality of service in all areas of work. Residents' opinions are very important to us. Dealing with complaints quickly, openly and fairly is important not only for residents but also for Women's Pioneer as a business so that mistakes are rectified quickly and lessons learned.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to enable WPH to resolve complaints raised by residents quickly and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements.
- Definition of a complaint
 - Accessibility and awareness
 - Complaint team, procedure, timeliness and responsiveness
 - Fairness in complaint handling
 - Putting things right
 - Continuous learning and improvement

3. Definition of a complaint

- 3.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, 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.
- 3.2 We recognise the difference between a service request (pre-complaint), survey feedback and a formal complaint.

3.3 We will not accept complaints about:

- matters which have already been considered through the complaints process
- matters which are or will be the subject of legal proceedings
- matters which happened more than six months before the complaint was raised
- WPH policy or procedure, provided the policy or procedure complies with the law and has been properly approved.

4. Accessibility and awareness

4.1 Residents can contact us through email, by telephone or in person. We have a dedicated feedback email address feedback@womenspioneer.co.uk

4.2 WPH complaints policy and procedure will be easily accessible through our website. Complaints forms can be accessed and submitted directly through our website www.womenspioneer.co.uk. Complaint forms can also be obtained from our head office at 227 Wood Lane London W12 0EX.

4.3 Our website will also publicise the Housing Ombudsman website, enabling residents to seek advice from the Housing Ombudsman at any stage.

4.4 The complaints policy and process will also be publicised as required through other means e.g. Pioneer Press. A copy of the policy and procedure will be provided when requested.

4.5 Staff will help complainants and make reasonable adjustments, in line with the Equality Act 2010, as necessary to enable residents to access the complaints process.

5. Complaints procedure

5.1 Our aim throughout this procedure is to try to work with residents to resolve complaints as quickly and effectively as possible. Any resident who is unhappy with our service will be encouraged to let us know as soon as the issue arises. Residents should contact 020 8749 7112 or email via feedback@womenspioneer.co.uk .

5.2 The governance and performance team will lead on complaint handling for WPH. They will work with teams to ensure that complaints are logged appropriately and ensure that complaints are properly managed and considered at each stage of the process.

5.3 We will try to resolve any issues informally as quickly as possible. However, if any resident is not happy with our attempts to resolve the issue then they may pursue a formal complaint. We have a two stage formal complaints procedure. Complainants are asked to complete a complaint form to establish the issues in the complaint. Staff will offer assistance to anyone who needs help completing the complaint form.

- 5.6 **Stage 1:** Complaints will be considered by a Director. They will seek to respond within ten working days of receiving your complaint form. If further investigations are required this may be extended, usually by no more than a further ten working days. We will let the complainant know if this is the case and will seek to agree a new timescale..
- 5.7 If any issues are not resolved, residents may escalate to Stage 3 within one month of receiving the Stage 2 response. A Stage 3 complaint form is used to establish which issues at Stage 2 have not been resolved. Staff will offer assistance to anyone who needs help completing the complaint form.
- 5.8 **Stage 2:** Complaints will be considered by a Complaints Panel held at WPH Head office. The Panel will usually involve a Board member, a resident of WPH and the Chief Executive. The panel may be held in person, by telephone, or by video call.
- 5.9 The panel will aim to meet within five weeks of receiving the Stage 2 complaint form. Except in exceptional circumstances, we will give the complainant ten days' notice of the meeting. We will send the complainant an agenda and copies of their Stage 1 and 2 complaint forms and our response to stage 1 one week in advance of the meeting. Complainants may also submit any further comments or evidence in respect of the complaint in writing to the Panel. If a resident wish to do this they are asked to send this information at least three working days before the panel meeting.
- 5.10 After the meeting we will aim to send a response within twenty working days of the meeting. If, further investigations are required this timescale may be extended, usually by no more than a further ten working days. We will let you know if this is the case and will seek to agree a timescale with you.
- 5.11 The Complaints Panel will usually consist of the Chief Executive, a member of the Resident Engagement and Scrutiny Panel (RESP) and a Board member. If no members of the RESP are available, their place may be taken by another Board member. The Complaints Panel will be chaired by, either a board member or a member of the scrutiny panel.
- 5.12 At any stage of a complaint, we may suggest a telephone discussion or a meeting with you if this seems to be the best way to reach a good solution. We may also decide to escalate any complaint to a later stage if this seems appropriate.

6. Fairness in complaint handling

- 6.1 At all stages complaints will be considered fairly and impartially. Any reasonable adjustments required will be implemented at each stage of the process.
- 6.2 Decisions will supported by reasons. All decisions will include reference to the right to refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Our website includes a link to the HOS website so residents can consult HOS at any time.

- 6.3 Residents may seek assistance from independent advocates at any point. However, decision makers will always wish to hear from and seek to resolve any issues directly with the complainant.
- 6.4 Neither WPH or the resident may have legal representation at a complaint panel. The panel is not a court and any complainant wishing to be represented by a lawyer should seek a legal remedy through the courts. However any written material from a professional advisor will be considered by the panel if it is provided in advance.

7. Putting things right

- 7.1 The decision maker will consider carefully how best to put things right. All complainants will be asked for their views on how the complaint could be resolved.
- 7.2 The decision maker will ensure that the outcome reflects the extent of any service failure and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. Examples of actions which may be recommended are :
- acknowledging where things have gone wrong
 - providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
 - apologising
 - taking action if there has been a delay
 - reconsidering or changing a decision
 - amending a record
 - providing a financial remedy
 - changing policies, procedures or practices

8. Unacceptable behaviour

- 8.1 A very few residents act or behave in a way we consider unacceptable.
- 8.2 We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is assertive or determined. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to an issue and people may act out of character.
- 8.3 However, the actions of some people who are vexatious, angry or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on, or behaviour towards our staff and we will take appropriate action to manage such behaviour in accordance with our Unacceptable Behaviour policy.

9. Learning from complaints

- 9.1 We monitor all complaints made and the outcomes will be used to drive improvements to our services to residents. Improvements may be identified even where a complaint is not upheld.

- 9.2 The Chief Executive will report to WPH Board quarterly on the volume, category and outcome of complaints. This report will set out complaint handling performance, including progress on any actions required by a WPH or HOS decision.
- 9.3 An annual review of complaints will be presented to the Board once a year. This will set out issues and trends arising from complaint handling including discussion of the Ombudsman's yearly landlord performance report. Any organisational learning from complaints will be included in WPH's Annual Report