

Complaints Policy

December 2020



FCA registered no: 29475R RSH registration: 4745

Introduction

Reside Housing Association ('Reside') aims to provide a high quality service to all its tenants and stakeholders. We will always aim to resolve every complaint straight away and before it reaches the formal stage. However, if you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your complaint informally, we will follow the following policy. This policy is also available in an easy read format.

Reside treats all complaints seriously. Where we find that our service has fallen short of our high standards, we aim to learn from this and constantly improve the quality of the service.

Definition of a complaint

Reside will consider complaints from anyone, be they a tenant, possible tenant, other stakeholder or a member of the public. Reside staff will use their discretion and record a complaint even if the word itself is not used. Reside defines a complaint 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.

Some areas of dissatisfaction fall outside the scope of our complaints policy and we will not investigate them as a complaint. These include:

- A first request for service, such as a repair.
- Neighbour disputes or antisocial behaviour, unless the complaint is in relation to how we have managed the issue.
- Complaints relating to services where the policy for the area of service has been applied correctly.
- In situations where legal action has been commenced either by Reside or against Reside.
- Situations where a claim is being dealt with by our insurers.
- Complaints about data breaches.

This policy deals mainly with complaints made about the service provided by Reside, or Reside as an organisation. If you wish to make a complaint about another person, whether they are tenants, neighbours or members of the public, please do let us know, and we will deal with this using our anti-social behaviour policy.

Complaints may be made by support-staff or advocates who support the tenant concerned or directly by tenants themselves. In instances where the tenant is supported to make a complaint. We reserve the right to satisfy itself that the complaint accurately represents the views of the tenant.

Reside's approach to complaints

Our view is that:

- everyone has a right to complain about the service they receive or inappropriate actions by Reside
- people should not feel put off from making a complaint
- people should be helped to complain if necessary
- complaints are a positive opportunity to improve our services
- Complaints should be resolved politely, promptly and fairly

The aim of the Complaints Policy is to deal with all complaints quickly and fairly. There are two formal stages, starting with a complaint to the individual responsible for the service and concluding with a complaint to a Director. Clear timescales are built into the process and provision made for the tenant to be kept informed of the progress of their complaint. At each stage, if we have failed every effort must be made to remedy the problem.

We aim to provide a high standard of service to satisfy tenants and welcome complaints as this enables improvement to services. Therefore, our staff will not discourage tenants from making a complaint.

Most complainants want recognition that things have gone wrong and a resolution. If we have failed to provide an acceptable service, we will admit so and apologise.

Reside's aim is that this policy should:

- be easily available
- be simple to understand and to use
- ensure a full and fair investigation
- respect people's need for privacy and confidentiality
- allow for the complaint to be dealt with as well as possible
- provide a good response
- provide information to managers so that services can be made better

In certain circumstances we may refuse to accept a complaint that has already been through Reside's complaints policy. Where this is the case, we will provide a full explanation to the complainant about why the matter may not be considered again.

Helping people to make a complaint

Reside tenants will be informed of the complaints policy when they sign their tenancy agreement and that further details can be found within the Tenant Handbook.

In all cases, tenants have the right to be supported and helped to make a complaint, and to have someone go to any meetings about the complaint. This could be a support worker, an advocate, a family member or a friend.

Complaints can be made by:

- telephone
- letter
- email
- in person
- via the Reside website
- social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter

Where complaints are made via social media channels, Reside will communicate with the complainant privately to ensure that confidentiality and privacy is maintained.

Responding to complaints

Reside has a Complaints Officer who will be the person responsible for ensuring that complaints are responded to in a timely manner. Reside's Complaints Officer is the Head of Tenant Support.

The Complaints Officer will:

- be able to act sensitively and fairly
- be trained to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents
- have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints
- have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly, and has direct access to the CEO, and if necessary the Chair, to enable this

Reside's complaints procedure

The aim of the complaints procedure is to deal with all complaints quickly and simply.

When a complaint is made we will make every effort to resolve it informally, if we are unable to reach a resolution, we will then move on to the formal procedure.

Reside has a two stage formal procedure that has clear timescale so that the complainant knows when they can expect a response to their complaint. Reside will try to ensure that all complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible and the Complaints Officer will keep the person informed of any delays or if further time is required as part of the investigation.

Stage One: Stage one will general be dealt with by the Head of Department responsible for that service area. For example, repairs and maintenance complaints will be responded to by the Head of Maintenance, tenancy complaints will be responded to by the Head of Tenant Support.

If the complaint is in relation to a member of staff, the complaint will generally be responded to by that staff members direct line manager.

Details of the complaint can be taken by any member of staff and passed to the Head of Department for the relevant service area and notified to the complaints officer who will ensure someone is clearly tasked with responding as the investigating manager. If either is off work for more than two days, the complaint will be given to their line manager.

All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within five working days and a copy of this policy will also be provided. The investigating manager will contact the complainant to better understand their complaint and the outcomes they are looking for before providing a response. A full reply will be sent within ten working days with a decision and will include:

- an apology or expression of regret that a complaint was needed to raise an issue, regardless of whether the complaint is justified and upheld
- the complaint stage
- the outcome of the complaint
- details of remedy being offered to put things right
- a summary of the complaint and of Reside's investigations
- a statement of whether Reside has been at fault in any way
- details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied.

If it is not possible to provide a full response within 10 days, the investigating manager will contact the complainant explaining that further time is required and the reasons for the extension. This will be no longer than a further 10 working days.

Stage Two: If the person complaining isn't satisfied with the Stage One investigation and decision, they can escalate the complaint to Stage Two. A Stage Two complaint will be investigated and responded to by a named Director. As part of the investigation, and if helpful, a meeting may be held with the person complaining.

A full response will be provided within 15 working days from the request to escalate the complaint. If it is not possible to provide a full response within this timescale, the investigating manager will contact the complainant explaining that further time is required and the reasons for the extension. This will be no longer than a further 10 working days.

The person responding to the complaint will:

- deal with complaints on their merit

- act independently and have an open mind
- take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
- consider all information and evidence carefully

The responses will include the following:

- an apology or expression of regret that a complaint was needed to raise an issue, regardless of whether the complaint is justified and upheld
- the complaint stage
- the outcome of the complaint
- details of remedy being offered to put things right
- a summary of the complaint and of Reside's investigations
- a statement of whether Reside has been at fault in any way
- details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied

Complaints not resolved by Reside's process

If someone has gone through Reside's whole complaints process and are still not happy with the decision and response, they should contact the Housing Ombudsman Service, an independent body who governs our complaints procedures. The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at any time during the complaints process for advice and can be contacted on the details provided below.

The Housing Ombudsman Service (independent organisation)

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Fax: 020 7831 1942

Mincom: 020 7404 7092

E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Monitoring, reporting and training

All complaints will be recorded on the Complaints Tracker to monitor the effectiveness and compliance with the Complaints Policy. All tenants are invited to give feedback on the way Reside handle complaints through the yearly Tenant Satisfaction Survey and Reside will monitor complaints on an ongoing basis.

Complaints statistics are reviewed by the management team monthly, and Chief Executive on a quarterly basis, for oversight, and to identify any common features and ensure policy is being adhered to. Reports are presented to the Board on this and on the steps proposed to address any problems.

Information about complaints and learning from complaints will be included with Reside's annual report to tenants.

Staff will receive regular training on how to identify complaints and apply Reside's policy. Managers who investigate complaints will have additional training on how to respond to complaints.