

Title: Complaints Policy

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Complaints Policy

At Christchurch Housing Society we aim to deliver excellent services to our customers, but we recognise that sometimes things go wrong. When this happens, we want to put things right and prevent it from happening again. We value your feedback and will use it to improve our services.

We want to make sure that it's easy for you to make a complaint, and our aim is to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. We will thoroughly investigate and review all complaints.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Christchurch Housing Society, our staff, or those acting on our behalf.

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.
- Challenges to service charges or rent setting, although we will investigate complaints about the services these charges pay for such as cleaning or grass cutting.
- Neighbour disputes or antisocial behaviour unless the complaint is in relation to how Christchurch Housing Society has 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 Christchurch Housing Society or against Christchurch Housing Society.
- Situations where a claim is being dealt with by Christchurch Housing Society's insurers.
- Complaints about data breaches.
- Matters that have already been investigated as part of a formal complaint.

We manage issues regarding the above areas in a different way. Please contact us if you wish to discuss any of these issues.

Where a complaint is made about an issue that occurred more than 6 months before the complaint being made, we will not ordinarily investigate these as a complaint, but we will consider the information as part of the background of a current complaint.

Making a complaint

You can make a complaint in a number of ways:

- Contacting us phone, text message, email, or letter
- By completing an on-line complaints form
- Face to face
- Through a third party such as an MP, councillor, advocate, friend, or family member. The complainant will need to give permission in most circumstances.

How we deal with complaints

Our complaints process has three stages: Stage 1 & Stage 2 and a referral to our complaints panel.

Stage 1

All complaints will be investigated at Stage 1, where dealing with the issue normally has not resolved the problem or where you have requested to make a complaint. The complaint will be investigated by a manager responsible for the service being complained about, who hasn't been involved in dealing with the issue previously.

Your complaint will be acknowledged in two working days, advising who the investigating manager will be, details of Christchurch Housing Society's complaints policy and timescales for response.

You will be contacted by the investigating manager, normally by telephone, to discuss your complaint in more detail. You will be asked to provide specific details of your complaint and how you would like us to resolve the issue. We need this information so that we are clear on all areas of your complaint, especially if it's in relation to more than one issue or the complaint is complex. We also need to understand what you would like as an outcome of your complaint so that we can advise you about what we are able to do to resolve the issue.

You will receive a full written response within 10 working days of the complaint being made, or you will be contacted to advise a longer timescale is needed if the complaint is particularly complex. Where a longer timescale is necessary, this should not exceed a further 10 working days unless there is a good reason. The investigating manager will keep in regular contact with you to provide updates in how they are progressing the issue.

Stage 2

If you remain unhappy with the response you received at Stage 1 you must let us know within 21 days of our response and we will review your complaint. You will need to advise us what it is you remain unhappy with and what you would like as an outcome to your complaint.

We will acknowledge the review of your complaint within 2 working days. We will arrange for a manager more senior to the investigating manager at Christchurch Housing Society to review the way in which your complaint was handled at Stage 1.

You will be contacted by this manager usually by telephone or by an in person meeting to discuss the complaint and to understand why you're still unhappy and what you would like as an outcome.

The manager will conduct the review and provide you with a written response of the outcome within 20 working days. If the review is likely to take longer you will be advised on a reasonable timescale for review. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

Complaints Panel

If, following the outcome of Stage 2, you remain dissatisfied you can ask for your complaint to be referred to our Complaints Panel if:

- You feel that the decision is based on inaccurate facts that could change our decision.
- You have new and relevant information that was not previously available that could change our decision.
- We overlooked or misunderstood parts of the complaint or did not take account of relevant information, which could impact the decision.
- You believe that there is evidence that you have not been treated fairly, or in line with a policy or procedure.

If you feel that you would qualify for a Stage 3 Complaints Panel, you must set out your concerns to the Chief Executive within 28 days of the Stage 2 response date.

Christchurch Housing Society reserves the right to turn down a request for a Stage 3 Complaints Panel in circumstances where:

- You have not provided any new evidence to support your request.
- The points you raise have already been considered at Stage 2.
- The points you raise would not lead to a change in the outcome of the findings at Stage 2.

The Panel will consist of two Committee members and when, in our opinion, possible and reasonable, an independent assessor. We will invite you, and/or your chosen representative to attend the Panel meeting at a mutually convenient date and time, though you do not have to attend if you would prefer not to.

We will ask you to let us know why you remain dissatisfied and what you feel we should do to put things right. The Panel will review the actions taken by our staff in dealing with your complaint at Stages 1 and 2 and will carefully consider your representations. The Panel will send you a detailed response, within ten working days of the meeting, which will contain sufficient information to show that your complaint has been fully investigated. This will be our final response to you under our complaint's procedure.

If your complaint is upheld (i.e. the outcome of the review finds in your favour), you will receive an apology and, where appropriate, be given details of any action that we will take to remedy the situation or at least put things right for the future.

If your complaint is partially upheld (i.e. the outcome of the review finds in your favour, in part), you will receive an apology and explanation and, where appropriate, be given details of any action that we will take to remedy the situation, or at least put things right for the future.

If your complaint is not upheld (i.e. the outcome of the review does not find in your favour) you will be given an explanation.

At any stage of the process, independent mediation may be offered, where appropriate. The role of the mediator is to help both parties reach a solution to their problem and to arrive at an outcome that both are happy to accept.

Following the resolution of any complaint, we will ask you for your comments on how your complaint was handled.

We will inform residents on a regular basis, in our newsletter (without identifying you), of the nature of the complaints we have received and what we have done as a result.

Complaints about the Executive Team

If your complaint is about members of the Executive Team, a committee member will investigate and respond if the complaint is escalated to Stage 2.

If your complaint is about the Chief Executive, the Chair of Committee will investigate and respond to the complaint at Stage 1. If you remain unhappy with the outcome of the complaint at Stage 1, then you have the right to have your case escalated to the Complaints Panel.

If you are still unhappy at the end of Christchurch Housing Society's complaints process, you can have your case reviewed by a member of Christchurch Housing Societies Committee.

Reasonable adjustments

Throughout the complaints process, we will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your needs in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. This may include changes to the complaints policy, procedure, or process.

Learning from complaints

We will publish our complaints performance, and any improvements made as a result of the complaints we receive annually in our newsletter.

We invite residents who have had recent experience of our complaints process to scrutinise our complaints performance. This enables us to learn from their experiences and to improve our services.