POLICY:	APPROVAL DATE:	July 2025
Complaints Policy	REVIEW DATE:	July 2027
	REVIEW CYCLE:	2 years

Complaints Policy

1. Purpose of the policy

1.1. To show that we care and are committed to working with our customers in a fair, consistent, open and impartial way.
1.2. We will make it easy for customers to complain by providing different channels to communicate and by being visible and accessible to all customers.
1.3. Sometimes things go wrong, and customers may be dissatisfied and wish to let us know. We will:
- Listen
- Be fair
- Put things right
- Learn from outcomes

1.4. We'll consider our customers' dissatisfaction and will investigate and put it right.
1.5. A customer does not have to use the word "complaint" for it to be treated as such.
1.6. We see complaints as valuable feedback to improve our services.

2. Policy objectives and scope

2.1. Customers who are or have been in a landlord and tenant relationship with Teachers Housing Association (THA) may bring a complaint, including leaseholders.
2.2. We accept a complaint in any way a customer chooses to make it.
2.3. This policy also applies to contractors and third parties providing services on behalf of THA.
2.4. Some matters are not considered to be a complaint or an escalation and will be excluded from our complaints policy. These circumstances are:
- A complaint where there is an alternative appropriate process in place (e.g. ASB), unless there was a service failure.
- Issues over 12 months old.
- Services outside of THA's control or where there is another appeal route available.
- A matter already exhausted through the complaint process, the court, or another legal process.
- A complaint where legal proceedings have started, which is defined as details of the claim, such as the claim form and particulars of claim, having been filed at the court.
- Where a complainant makes repeated complaints about the same or similar issues where these issues are being or have already been investigated.

2.5. Decisions not to proceed with a complaint will be taken on a case-by-case basis.
2.6. In any case where a decision is taken not to proceed with a complaint the complainant will be notified in writing with a full explanation provided.

3. Legal / Regulatory Framework

3.1. This policy incorporates the key requirements of the following:

- Localism Act 2011
- Housing Act 1996 (schedule 2)
- Housing Ombudsman Scheme and its Complaints Handling Code
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018

4. Responsibility

4.1. Compliance with this policy is the responsibility of the Director of Operations. They will be regarded as the "complaints officer" as set out in the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code.

5. What is a complaint

5.1. We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action with any service delivered by any member of THA or those acting on its behalf, affecting a customer or a group of customers.

5.2. A service request is a request from a customer requiring action to be taken to put something right.

5.3. We do not consider a service request a complaint, but will record, monitor and review them regularly.

5.4. A service request will become a complaint if the customer expresses a dissatisfaction with the response to the service request.

5.5. If a customer expresses a dissatisfaction with services made through a survey we won't define it as a complaint, though we will make the customer aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to.

6. How to make a complaint

6.1. Customers may have a third party or a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf and be represented or accompanied at any meeting with THA.

6.2. Customers or their representatives may make a complaint and how they would like it resolved in any of the following ways:

- Email to complaintsandcompliments@teachershousing.org.uk
- By phone on 0207 440 9440
- Writing to us at: Teachers Housing Association, Headland House, 3rd Floor, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB
- At any of our schemes, by reporting it to a local staff member

6.3. We reserve the right to use discretion when applying this policy and may deal with a complaint differently where individual circumstances merit it. Any discretion will be applied fairly, appropriately and fast if needed (e.g. discrimination, serious incidents).

7. Handling of a complaint

7.1. Our customers will be allocated a dedicated staff member to investigate and resolve their complaint. We will agree with customer on how regularly we will communicate and/or update them depending on the complexity of the complaint.

7.2. Stage 1 formal complaint: We will acknowledge a stage 1 complaint within 5 working days of receipt and be clear on what parts of the complaint we are or are not responsible for. We will respond in writing within 10 working days from acknowledgement of the complaint. Where we are able to provide a quicker resolution or response we will always attempt to

7.3. do so, though for some complex cases we may need more time to investigate the complaint. If we do, we will explain clearly the reason why and give the customer an expected timescale for the response. Extensions will be no more than 10 working days.

7.4. Stage 2 escalation: If a complaint is not resolved to the customer's satisfaction at stage 1, they can request for their complaint to be escalated to stage 2. This has to be done within 15 working days of the date of the Stage 1 response. We'll acknowledge the stage 2 complaint within 5 working days and will be clear on what parts of the complaint we are or are not responsible for. Stage 2 complaints will be reviewed by a SMT member who will provide a final outcome in writing no later than 20 days from the date of acknowledgement of the escalation. A different staff member will always be assigned to the stage 1 and the stage 2 complaint. For some complex cases we may need more time to investigate the complaint. If we do, we will explain clearly the reason why and give the customer an expected timescale for the response. Extensions will be no more than 20 working days.

7.5. Where a customer raises additional complaints during the investigation, these will be added to the stage 1 response if they are related, and the stage 1 response has not been issued.

7.6. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, and the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would be unreasonably delaying the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.

7.7. We will provide customers with the details of the Housing Ombudsman if we need to extend the time of the stage 1 or stage 2 response.

7.8. We will issue compensation fairly and promptly in line with our Compensation policy.

8. Persistent, unreasonable and abuse behaviour by customers

8.1. To protect THA employees, we expect customers not to breach our Unacceptable Behaviour policy.

9. Alternative dispute resolution

9.1. We will work with customers to resolve concerns over matters which may involve mediation or discussion with a third-party company representing or assisting the customer such as a solicitor, Shelter, Leasehold Advisory Service, their local councillor or MP.

9.2. A customer has the right to request that the Housing Ombudsman Service review their complaint at any time. We will always inform the customer of this after every stage of their complaint, any extension requests, or should we decide not to proceed with a complaint.

9.3. The Housing Ombudsman Service is a fair and impartial service that is free to all social housing customers. Their contact details are:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Preston PR2 0ET
Tel: 0300 111 3000
Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Online complaint form | Resident complaints | Housing Ombudsman

9.4. Enquiries from councillors and MPs will be responded to within 10 working days.

10. Key controls and reporting

10.1. We will monitor performance against this policy and report to the Senior Management Team and Board on a quarterly basis.

10.2. We will compile an annual complaint handling report that will be presented to the Board and published on the THA website.

11. Learning from complaints

11.1. We want to learn from complaints as this helps us improve our services. We will report and implement learning from complaints and report this as part of our annual complaint handling report to the Board.

11.2. We will make our customers aware of this Policy at sign up, through our website, and newsletters throughout the year.

12. Associated documents

12.1. This policy is supported by the following policies and supporting procedures:

- Compensation policy
- Unacceptable Behaviour policy
- Equality and Diversity policy
- Reasonable adjustments policy

13. Equality and Diversity

13.1. We believe that everyone should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness regardless of their characteristics. We will not treat customers who make a complaint different from any other customers. THA is committed to valuing and promoting equality and diversity, working to create a culture that celebrates and welcomes individuality, disability, gender reassignment, race, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy or maternity status, irrespective of age.

13.2. We will respond to reasonable adjustment requests for customers as defined by the Equalities Act 2010 and will account for their individual needs. We will not make assumptions about whether a customer requires a reasonable adjustment or about what those adjustments might be. We will discuss the requirements of a reasonable adjustment with the individual customer and seek to reach agreement on what will be reasonable in the circumstances to best suit their needs.

14. Review

14.1. This policy will be reviewed every 2 years and approved by the Board.