

Complaints Policy



Scope

This policy explains Town & Country Housing's (TCH) approach to managing complaints.

The policy applies to all customers of Town & Country Housing and any individual or group affected by the services we provide.

Aims and Objectives

TCH aims to provide the best possible service to our residents and customers but recognises that sometimes we will get things wrong. We use complaints as an opportunity to improve our services. The focus of our approach to complaints management is a prompt and courteous resolution to the satisfaction of the complainant.

It is important to note that a complaint may be made to any member of staff via communication methods including, but not limited to: in person, by telephone, e-mail or electronic form. All staff members have the responsibility to recognise and record a complaint, however it is made. All staff members should support customers to access the complaints process and make the process clear and simple for all complainants.

A resident or customer does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such. Colleagues should recognise the difference between a service request (pre-complaint), survey feedback and a formal complaint and take appropriate steps to resolve the issue for residents as early as possible

Key terms and definitions

A complaint shall be defined 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. For example:

- Action or a lack of action in response to a request for service
- Poor quality service
- The behaviour of TCH staff or contractors working on behalf of TCH
- Failure to follow an approved TCH policy or procedure

The following scenarios are not considered to be complaints:

- An initial request for service, such as the first request for a repair
- An initial request for information or an explanation
- A report of anti-social behaviour (ASB) as they are dealt under our separate ASB policy and procedure

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- An appeal against action resulting in court proceedings or matters relating to ongoing court proceedings
- Insurance claims and appeals, including damage to personal possessions and personal injury accidents which will require referral to the relevant insurers
- Matters that have been determined under another TCH policy
- The amount of service charge or rent increase set in line with TCH policy

Policy

TCH positively welcomes feedback in the form of complaints from anyone who is affected by a service we provide, or a decision made by us, including:

- Tenants
- Leaseholders
- Shared Owners
- Any third party adversely affected by our actions or decisions
- Any person acting on behalf of any of the above groups where we have consent for them to do so, e.g.: a family member, neighbour, advice agency, MP, local councillor, Housing Ombudsman.

A complaint may be made by post, telephone, e-mail, via an electronic form on our website or verbally to any member of staff. Our contact details are:

Telephone: 01892 501480

E-mail: info@tch.org.uk

Web: www.tch.org.uk

Our complaints process is comprised of two stages. Stage 1 is an investigation carried out by an appropriate member of staff from the relevant service area. If the complaint is escalated to Stage 2, an independent review will be carried out by a senior manager from our Leadership Team not connected to the service area complained about. Please refer to the Complaints Procedure for further details on how this process works.

In order that complaints can be investigated effectively, all complaints should be submitted within 6 months of when the event occurred, or it became known to the complainant. Only in exceptional circumstances will a complaint be accepted outside this timescale and this is at the discretion of the Regional Operations Manager (West).

Confidentiality and data protection apply to the complaints process. TCH will not share personal data or property information gathered as part of the complaint investigation with any third party who is not entitled to receive it, in line with current legislation. Complaints can however be made through an authorised representative of the complainant.

Any dissatisfaction raised concerning the content of TCH policies, procedures or responsibilities will not be raised as a complaint but will be used as feedback to

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consider when the relevant policy, procedure or responsibility are next due for review.

Monitoring and continuous improvement

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise to ensure that it continues to meet the stated objectives and takes account of best practice developments.

Training

TCH will ensure that complaints handling will form part of the induction process and that refresher training is built into the organisational Learning & Development programme.

Equalities Statement

This policy will be implemented in accordance with TCH's equality and diversity policy. An equalities impact assessment has been completed to ensure that the policy is inclusive and does not impact negatively on any resident or group of residents. The policy aims to make our complaints process fair and accessible to all.

Resident Influence

Residents have been consulted during the review of this policy through TCH's Policy & Strategy Review Group. Feedback confirmed that the policy was easy to understand and comprehensive. Residents wanted to ensure that it was clear that the policy covers TCH contractors as well as directly employed staff; this is covered in the key terms and definitions section. As a result of resident feedback a flow chart has also been developed to illustrate the policy stages, this accompanies the complaints process and is published on our website.

Legislation & Regulation

TCH should provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, not only at the point they have exhausted the landlord's complaints process. The Housing Ombudsman Service can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint. This affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors. A complainant who remains dissatisfied having exhausted our internal complaints procedure will be advised of external options that they may wish to pursue, as below:

- Residents of housing associations can ask for their complaint to be considered by a **'Designated Person'**. Designated Persons are defined in the Localism Act 2011 as an MP, a local councillor or a designated tenant panel. A Designated Person does not have any formal authority but can refer complaints to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

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- A referral can be made to the Housing Ombudsman Service once both stages of our complaints process have been completed, but they will not consider a case until 8 weeks have elapsed after the complaint process has ended. Their contact details are:

Address: Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London E14 9GE

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

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

Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

The Housing Ombudsman will only accept complaints where we have a contractual relationship with the complainant. They will not accept complaints from general members of the general public.

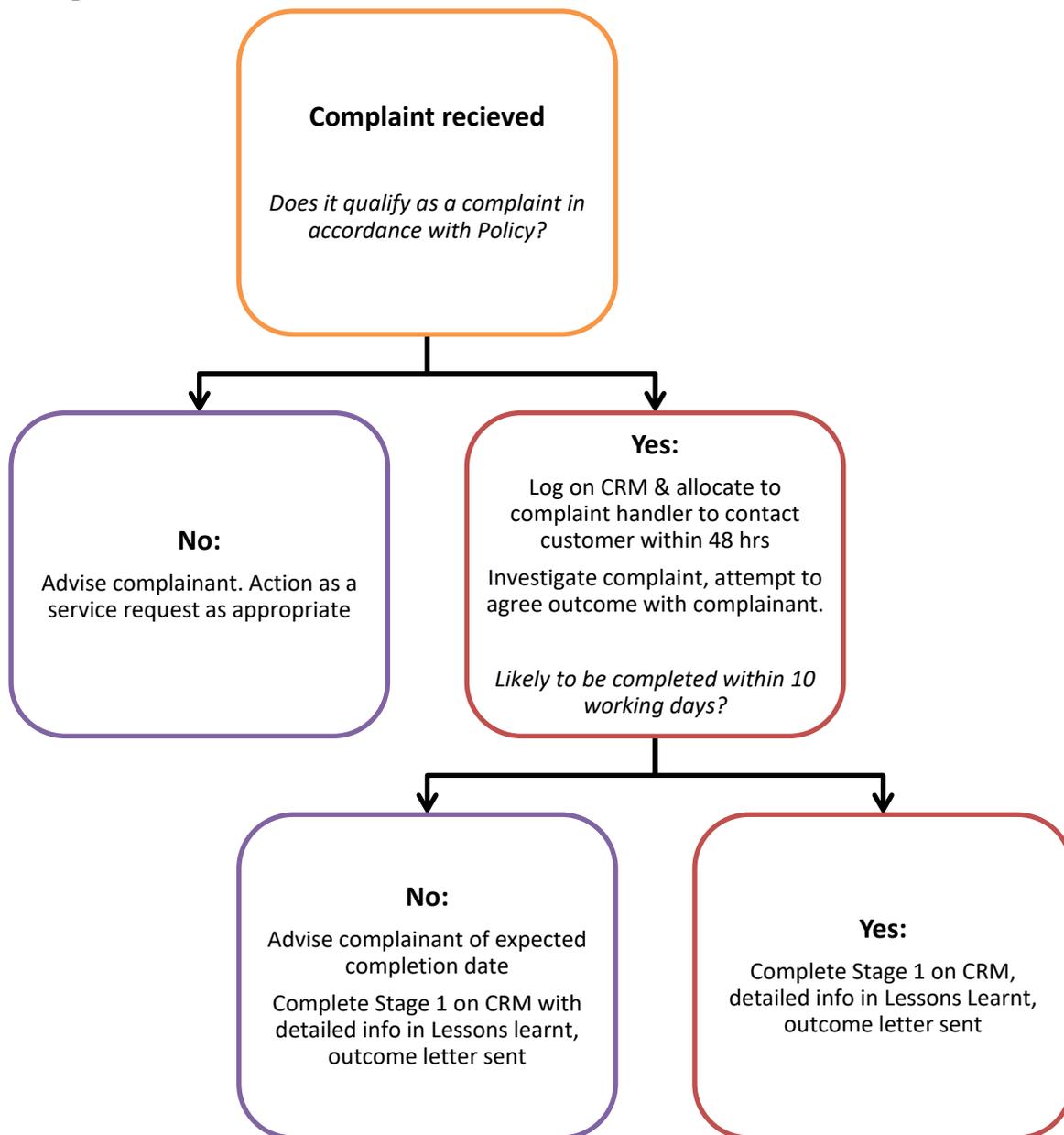
Related Documents

- Complaints Procedure
- Compensation Policy
- Persistent & Vexatious Complainant Policy
- All other TCH policies covering operational processes and procedures
- The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

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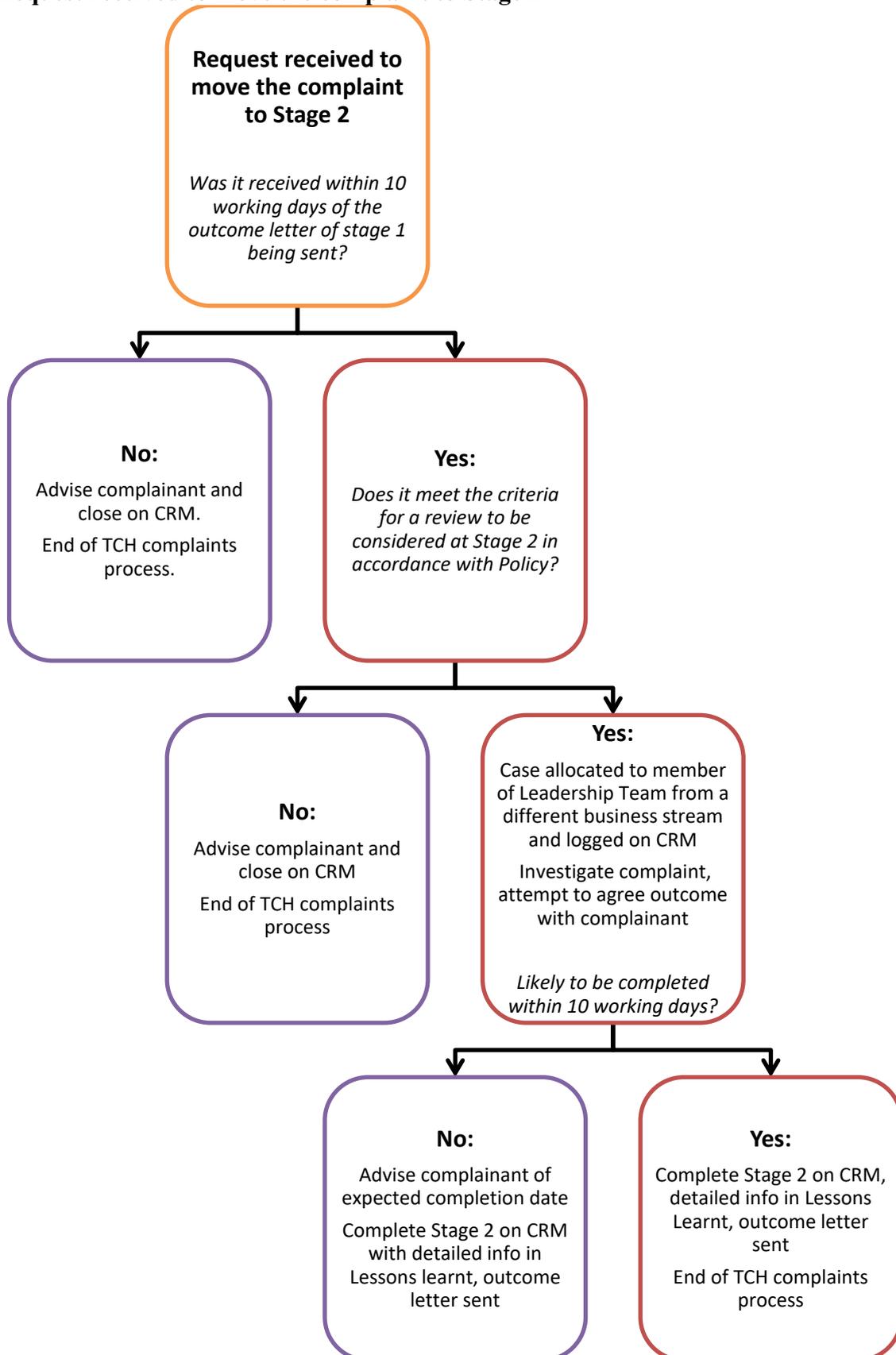
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Complaint Received



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Request received to move the complaint to Stage 2



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