

East Devon District Council

Complaints Policy

Issue details	
Title:	Complaints Policy
Version number	Version 2.1
Officer responsible:	Sophie Davies
Authorisation by:	Graham Baker
Authorisation date:	April 2021

1 Previous Policies/Strategies

Version 2.0

2 Why has the council introduced this policy?

When responding to complaints the Property and Asset team follow the East Devon District Council corporate complaints policy.

This policy advises how we handle complaints within the Property & Asset service, whilst adhering to the governing standards and timeframes set by the Housing Ombudsman.

Within Property & Asset, as a service we want to make sure that:

- We listen to people's views and experiences of our services and act accordingly.
- We learn from every complaint made and use them to improve our services and ways of working.
- We ensure that there are always simple and effective ways for people to make a complaint.
- We manage and discuss complaints fairly and consistently.
- All residents who report a complaint receive a full response within the agreed timescales from East Devon District Council and, if required, the contractor involved (unless there is a valid reason as to why this is not possible or the complaint requires further investigation).

3 What is the council's policy?

3.1 Definitions

Complaint Type

Informal complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction made by the resident, directly to our Business and Customer Improvement Manager, which may be resolved by offering a solution or explaining the reason behind the dissatisfaction. An example would be a resident who telephones to report that a contractor has failed to meet a dedicated appointment slot and we can liaise with the contractor to arrange an alternative appointment at a time convenient to the resident. The close monitoring of informal complaints help Property & Asset, as well as our contractors, understand issues that could escalate if not dealt with appropriately at an early stage.

Formal complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved informally. Formal complaints require investigation and a full response to be issued, managed by our Housing and Customer Improvement Manager

Stage 1 and 2 Formal Complaint: Complaint managed as above and a coordinated response and action plan provided to our corporate complaint team to provide the response.

Compliment: An expression of gratitude for the service, repair or operative provided on instruction from Property & Asset.

Response Times

In line with the Housing White Paper, we aim to acknowledge, respond and action all complaints, questions, comments and queries within the appropriate timescale/s.

We aim to:

- Acknowledge complaints within 5 working days

Advise residents that we have received their complaint and this will require further investigation

- Acknowledge Councillor queries in 5 working days

Advise Councillor that we have received the query and this is being investigated

- Investigate, comment and action complaints and queries with a full response inclusive of closure within 10-15 working days

Whilst we highlight the above timeframes, this is not always possible. We aim to keep the resident fully updated throughout the process.

Most complaints require further work plans and programmes, we aim to provide these within the context of our action plans.

If further works are required and to ensure works are completed to a high standard, our Business and Customer Improvement Manager will post inspect all of the works carried out, subject to the complaint, to ensure this matches our resident's requirements and all parties are satisfied.

What is not a complaint?

We encourage all our staff to work with customers and to try to find a resolution to any expressions of dissatisfaction without the need to use the formal complaints process. In many cases we can resolve an issue very quickly – by putting the problem right straight away. We consider these types of cases as informal service issues.

An example might be where a team member has not yet contacted a resident, but once the team is made aware of this the tenant is contacted on the same day.

However, when a customer is unhappy about the way that a service issue or request was handled, this should be dealt with under the EDDC Complaints Procedure.

Unreasonable complaints

A very small number of complaints may be unreasonable because of the way or frequency that complaints are raised with staff, or how complainants respond when they receive feedback about the complaint. These may include tenants who make frequent complaints which are not valid; who persistently make the same complaint; who request a complaint to be escalated when we have fully responded to all points; or are seeking an unreasonable or unrealistic outcome. In these circumstances we reserve the right to refuse to deal with the complaint.

Learning from our complaints

Every resident's opinion is really important to us and vital for us to learn and grow as a service. We learn from complaints and use them to improve our services across the team, both within East Devon District Council and our Contractors. Our Business and Customer Improvement Manager records all compliments, complaints and comments made.

With this information, we discuss each complaint and compliment in detail with the relevant teams in Property & Asset on a monthly basis. Not only do we discuss this with our teams, we ensure that we report and action lessons learnt in the following contractual meetings:

- Weekly discussions between both Management teams in the council and contractors
- Operational Group with Ian Williams (Monthly)
- Core Group, senior members meeting (Monthly)

We provide information about complaints to senior managers across the council. We also track the learning and changes made as a result of complaints in our reviews.

An annual report is created at the end of each calendar year summarising compliments and complaints received throughout the year.

The report identifies trends of complaints that we receive and highlight's any action taken as a result of feedback given. The annual report also covers 'Lessons Learnt' at the end of each report, actions are highlighted to help improve the service, working closely with our contractors to achieve this.

KPI (Key Performance Indicators) within the IMAC Contract

Within our monthly Operational Group with Ian Williams, we discuss the KPI report. Within the KPI report is a section on complaints and satisfaction; this is measured against a target score that we closely monitor MLAP (Minimum Level of Acceptable Performance).

'In House' complaints

Complaints made by residents about the direct service of the Property & Asset team are managed and discussed monthly via team meetings.

We discuss:

- Nature of Complaints
- Service within Property & Asset
- Complaint Resolution
- Lessons learnt

How do we receive complaints, compliments or feedback?

- Email: repairs@eastdevon.gov.uk sdavies@eastdevon.gov.uk
- Via telephone – 01395 517458
- Letter to our postal services within Blackdown House
- Feedback form handed out by our contractors post repair
- PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) via contractor

How often reports are created and distributed

Operational Complaint Reports – Monthly

Contractors Complaint and Compliment Report – Quarterly

Property & Asset Annual Report – Annual (Calendar Year)

4 Appendices and other relevant information

[Click here to enter appendices and other information](#)

5 Who authorised the policy/strategy and date of authorisation.

Housing Business and Customer Improvement Manager April 2021

7 Related Policies/Strategies, Procedures and Legislation

- Recharging Procedures
- Responsive Repairs Policy

8 Policy date for review and responsible officer

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years with the next date due in April 2023.