

<b>Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy</b>		<b>Policy Reference:</b> G4
<b>Lead Department:</b>	Executive	<b>Approval Date:</b> April 2024
<b>Approved by:</b>	Board	<b>Review Date:</b> April 2027
<b>This document applies to the following areas of the Group's Business</b>		
<b>Group Policy – All areas of the Group</b>		
<b>Appendices/forms:</b>	Complaints Procedure Complaints, Compliments and Feedback – Easy Read	

## SCOPE

This is a group policy and covers all activities and areas of New Outlook and Vision Homes.

We are a responsive and learning organisation and we welcome complaints, compliments and feedback. We are committed to continuous improvement and recognise that feedback in the form of complaints, compliments and comments are a vital opportunity to learn and improve.

This policy is intended to ensure that all feedback about our services is taken seriously and that complaints are responded to fairly, effectively and in a way that is reflective of our organisational values.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the statutory guidance and legal and regulatory frameworks as outlined on page 8.

## POLICY STATEMENT

New Outlook and Vision Homes set high standards and seek to get it right first time.

We want to know if we fall short of achieving those standards and view comments and complaints as a vital part of learning and improving. We want to make it as easy as possible for people to let us know their views and comments about their experience of our services.

A complaint is 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. The dissatisfaction can be experienced by an individual or group of people. The person does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it be treated as such.

The people we support and, where appropriate, their families, representatives or advocates, will be provided with information about this policy, in a format that is appropriate to their individual needs. We will also advise people of local independent advocacy services available to them, and any external agencies, for example, regulatory bodies or the Ombudsman, where they can refer their complaint if they are not satisfied with the response they have received from New Outlook or Vision Homes.

We will use any complaints, compliments and feedback to:

- Tell us what is working, what is not working and what needs to change
- Identify potential problems or risks and take preventative action
- Identify areas of development for our staff and teams
- Review our services, policies, procedures and systems

New Outlook and Vision Homes will provide a range of ways for people to complain, give a compliment or feedback. This includes:

- In person directly to a member of staff
- In writing, by email or text message
- By telephone
- Using the New Outlook or Vision Homes website
- Within a resident's or tenant's meeting

To provide full access to the Compliments, Complaints and Feedback procedure, the Reasonable Adjustments Policy also applies to set out the support and resources available to enable people to have their say.

New Outlook and Vision Homes will ensure that the policy and procedure is available in a range of formats and is provided as part of our regular correspondence and information with the people we support and those living in our properties. We will also provide information about the Complaint Handling Code, Housing Ombudsman service and our regulators.

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Reasonable adjustments	Used to refer to any changes or adjustments to policy, procedure or service delivery to promote access for people identified with specific characteristics as outlined by the Equality Act 2010.

## POLICY SECTIONS

### 1. Principles and aims of policy

The policy is intended to achieve the following principles:

- Anyone who provides feedback on our services is listened to and treated with courtesy and respect
- Complaints will always be taken seriously, and the person making a complaint will be treated with respect and will not be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint.
- Complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly and openly, in line with our organisational values. We will always try to provide satisfactory resolutions.

- The person making the complaint will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the investigation in line with agreed timescales.
- Responding to comments and complaints as early as possible and at a local level will provide a more satisfactory resolution.
- We will apologise as appropriate and when we don't get things right.
- Action to address the cause of a complaint will be identified, implemented and evaluated.
- Colleagues will be supported if they are the subject of a complaint. They will be recognised and thanked for any compliments they receive.
- Information about how to make complaints, compliments and give feedback is accessible and freely available. We will promote the policy with our tenants, residents and people we support.
- Compliments are acknowledged and celebrated.
- All staff will understand the policy and can help people to give feedback or make complaint or compliment.
- Confidentiality will be maintained to ensure information is only shared with those who need to know. The way we handle complaints and compliments will comply with the requirements of GDPR.
- We will review all complaints to ensure we learn from them as an organisation.

Specifically, we aim to ensure that:

- Every complaint is acknowledged within 5 working days
- All complaints are investigated and we aim to respond to the person within 10 days of the complaint being made.

## 2. The outcomes of effective complaint management

The outcomes of effective complaint management are:

- Issues and concerns are resolved before a situation worsens. Issues that are not resolved in a timely way can take significant resource and time to remedy and will have a detrimental impact on trust and relationships.
- Involvement in complaint management develops staff learning and ownership and improves decision making and engagement.
- It is an essential part of organisational governance and provides insight into day-to-day operations and the experience of the people we support, ensuring our services are reflective of their needs and expectations
- Promotes a learning culture based on honesty, openness and respect.
- Improves trust and positive relationships with our tenants, residents, people we support and their families, and external partners.

## 3. Complaints Process

Anyone can give a compliment or make a complaint about New Outlook or Vision Homes under this policy. This includes the people we support, tenants, family members, commissioners, neighbours, contractors and other stakeholders.

Anonymous complaints will be investigated and concluded as far as possible with the information available.

All complaints will be dealt with reflecting the principles of this policy and the outcomes of effective complaints management set out on page 3.

A complaints log will be maintained by the Executive Assistant.

The people we support can request that a representative or advocate deals with their complaint on their behalf. They can also be represented or accompanied at any meeting.

All complaints will be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity with consideration to the outcome that would resolve the matter for the person making the complaint. Any urgent action required to ensure safety and wellbeing will be addressed immediately.

Information about how to make a complaint or give a compliment or feedback will be readily available for the people we support and their representatives. Information will be accessible and provided in a format that is relevant to the person. Copies of the policy and accessible information will be available in the services.

Complaints, compliments and feedback will be a standing agenda item on all resident and tenant's meetings.

### **Raising a concern**

A person may raise an informal concern with a member of staff. They may choose to not have their complaint dealt with through the complaints process. The member of staff receiving the concern must take a record of the concern and note the action required to resolve the concern.

Dealing with a concern in this way must not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or cause unreasonable delay. Other issues must be considered when resolving a concern in this way to ensure that more significant or urgent concerns are not missed.

### **Stage 1 – Receiving a complaint**

Upon receiving a complaint:

The member of staff receiving the complaint will provide the Complaints Management Team with details of the complaint so that this can be recorded on the complaints tracker. At this point, the Complaints Management Team will identify the member of staff to investigate the complaint. This person will also act the key contact for the complaint.

The investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner. The member of staff investigating the complaint should act independently and have had no prior involvement into the issues raised. Their role is to gather relevant information and consider the evidence carefully. They should give all parties involved the opportunity to set out their position and give their account of the facts.

**Within 5 working days** of the receipt of the complaint, we will provide an acknowledgement letter giving details of how the complaint will be investigated, who the key contact will be, and the timescales for the response.

If the complaint is not accepted, a detailed explanation must be provided to the person setting out why the matter is not being dealt with through the complaints process and informing them of their right to refer the decision to the Housing Ombudsman, or how to raise the matter with their local authority.

Outcome of the investigation:

**Within 10 working days** of receiving the complaint, the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation. This will include whether the complaint has been upheld, partially or fully, or not upheld. The response will include an apology, and what remedial action is required to address the issue.

The response will be provided in a format that is accessible for the person making the complaint.

All points within the complaint must have been addressed, with clear reasons to support the outcome, referring the evidence that was considered. This may include reference to relevant policy, legislation and good practice.

The response must include details about how to appeal using stage 2 of the process, including the role of the Housing Ombudsman.

The progress on action taken to address the matter should also be regularly reported to the complainant.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to extend the timescales for informing the complainant of the outcome of the investigation. The complainant will be given a reason for the delay and a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 working days.

## **Stage 2 – Appealing the outcome**

Receiving an appeal:

The complainant has the right to appeal the outcome of their original complaint. This should usually be submitted **within 10 working days** of receiving the outcome.

The appeal will usually be heard by a member of the Executive Team. This may involve considering new information or evidence that was not originally reviewed as part of the original investigation. The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal, **within 20 working days** of the receipt of the appeal.

Stage 2 is the end of the New Outlook and Vision Homes complaints process.

If the complainant continues to be dissatisfied, they can refer their complaint to a relevant external body. This would usually be:

- The Care Quality Commission
- The Local Authority funding the person's service
- The Housing Ombudsman

## **Exclusions to the process**

New Outlook and Vision Homes operates an exclusions policy to not investigate complaints that fall into the following categories:

- A complaint that has already been investigated and resolved
- Where legal proceedings have started and relate directly to the complaint
- A complaint which is made more than 6 months after the event occurred or, the date when the event came to the attention of the complainant
- A complaint made by an employee which relates to their employment. This should be addressed under the relevant HR policy and procedure.

## **4. Putting things right – Dispute resolution**

Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. Where something has gone wrong or where there has been a failure to follow process, New Outlook and Vision Homes will

acknowledge this and apologise to the person making the complaint. We will also set out the actions we have taken or intend to take to address the issue and to prevent it from happening in the future.

Any resolution offered must reflect the extent of any service failures and the detriment caused to the person as a result. The expectations of the person must be managed and this includes not promising anything that is not able to be delivered or that would cause harm, detriment or inequity to any other individuals. The resolution must set out clearly what will happen and by when, in agreement with the person if appropriate.

When reviewing learning from complaints, New Outlook and Vision Homes will consider factors such as policy and procedure amendments, staff training or systems change.

## 5. Compliments

New Outlook and Vision Homes is always pleased to receive compliments and positive feedback about something we have done well or to thank members of our team. Recognising the achievements of our staff and celebrating success is an important aspect of our work and one of our core values.

We recognise that learning from compliments is vitally important to enable us to understand what works well and how we can reflect it across the organisation.

All compliments received will be recorded. We will share compliments with the people we support and their families, tenants and other stakeholders.

The Executive Team will give appropriate recognition to thank a member of staff or team for providing an outstanding service.

## 6. Unreasonable and vexatious complaints

New Outlook and Vision Homes takes all complaints and concerns about our services seriously. However, there are a small minority of situations, where people pursue their cases in a way that is unreasonable. They may behave in an unreasonable way, such as being unreasonably persistent in their contact or how they submit information. This can create excessive demands for our teams and resources. This can occur both during the investigation of the complaint or after the investigation has concluded.

If the person presents behaviour that is threatening, abusive or violent, staff should refer to the Violence at Work Policy, Anti-Social Behavior Policy or Safeguarding Policy. Outlined below is a list of possible actions and behaviours that could be considered unreasonable and may need to be managed differently:

- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with our policy and procedure, organisational values or recognised good practice
- Raising excessive, unrelated or irrelevant questions, insisting they are all answered as part of the complaint
- Covertly recording meetings and conversations
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of our teams, with lengthy phone calls, emails or detailed letters, and expecting immediate responses
- Submitting repeated complaints with minor additions, or variations
- Refusing to accept the decision, repeatedly arguing points without new evidence
- Pressuring, intimidating or harassing other residents, tenants or staff
- Combinations of some or all of the above

It is reasonable for people to raise legitimate concerns or challenges to the complaints procedure. For example, they may be dissatisfied with what they perceive as a lack of communication, or a failure to meet the required timescales, or they may not be satisfied with the outcome of their complaint. This should not result in the person being regarded as unreasonable or vexatious.

If a complainant, or a person making a complaint on their behalf, behaves in a way that may be considered unreasonable, our staff must follow the procedure set out below, to ensure that all complaints are managed fairly, consistently, and comprehensively.

## **Procedure**

1. Evidence of unreasonable behaviour is recorded and the person is advised that their behaviour is considered unreasonable. The person will be notified by letter of the behaviours of concern and any possible actions or controls the organisation will take to address the issue. The person should also receive a copy of this procedure. The information should be provided in a format that is accessible to the person.

Examples of possible controls may be:

- Restrictions on contact with the organisation that are appropriate and proportionate
- Appointing a single point of contact to discuss the complaint
- Limiting contact to written correspondence only
- Agreeing to address the concerns raised in the initial complaint first, whilst dealing with any subsequent issues separately
- Refer to other agencies, such as advocacy or the person's care manager

The decision to apply any of these options will only be taken in exceptional circumstances, and only with agreement of the Director of Quality and Care. The control applied must be proportionate and relate to the behaviour of concern.

2. If the behaviour of concern continues, additional controls will be considered. The Director of Quality and Care will write to the person to explain the decision, the controls being made and how long they will be applied. A control will not be applied for more than 12 months and should be reviewed on a regular basis. The letter will also inform the person of the options for referring their complaint to an external body.

It may be necessary for the Director of Quality and Care to meet with the person to provide the decision.

When applying any control, the person's circumstances must be considered, along with any reasonable adjustments required.

Any controls introduced must only relate to the organisation's contact with the person in relation to their specific complaint. It should not impact or influence any other interactions that the person may have with New Outlook or Vision Homes.

Clear records must be maintained. Any controls applied will be reviewed by the Director of Quality and Care at least every 6 months. If the complainant disagrees with the review decision, they should appeal to the CEO for a final decision.

## 7. Links to the regulatory quality statements

This policy has been developed in accordance with the requirements of our regulators and its implementation demonstrates the quality statements for care and support in the following ways:

### **We Statements**

We have a proactive and positive culture of safety based on openness and honesty, in which concerns about safety are listened to, safety events are investigated and reported thoroughly, and lessons are learned to continually identify and embed good practices.

We make it easy for people to share feedback and ideas or raise complaints about their care, treatment and support. We involve them in decisions about their care and tell them what's changed as a result.

We always treat people with kindness, empathy and compassion and we respect their privacy and dignity

We provide appropriate, accurate and up-to-date information in formats that we tailor to individual needs.

We actively seek out and listen to information about people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes. We tailor the care, support and treatment in response to this.

We foster a positive culture where people feel that they can speak up and that their voice will be heard.

### **I Statements**

I am encouraged and enabled to feedback about my care in ways that work for me and I know how it was acted on.

I am treated with respect and dignity.

I can get information and advice about my health, care and support and how I can be as well as possible – physically, mentally and emotionally.

I can get information and advice that is accurate, up to date and provided in a way that I can understand.

## **RELATED POLICIES AND OTHER REFERENCES**

The policy has taken into account the requirements and guiding principles of the following legislation and guidance:

- Health and Social Care Act (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2015
- Human Rights Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulation 2016
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2022
- Chartered Institute of Housing Professional Standards
- Complaint Handling Code Self Assessment 2023
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy



## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

List the job titles and business offices directly responsible for the policy.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Board	The Board are responsible for approving the Complaints, Compliments and Feedback policy, consider reports relating to the management of complaints and action taken to resolve complaints, review complaints management performance on a regular basis.
Board Complaints Lead	A member of the Board will be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints. They will review policy, procedure and practice of complaints handling and management. They will review the reporting of complaints to provide assurance to the Board that appropriate management and action has been taken to conclude complaints and to learn from complaints.
Executive Team	<p>The Executive Team are responsible for implementing and embedding the Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy, consider all reports relating to complaint management and the implementation of action taken to resolve complaints, consider lessons learnt and their implications, consider complaint analysis reports on a regular basis to highlight performance and identify areas for improvement, themes, trends and risks.</p> <p>The Executive Team will consider lessons from best practice and findings from the Ombudsman to ensure policy and procedure is current.</p> <p>Members of the Executive Team will provide recognition and acknowledgement to colleagues receiving compliments and positive feedback.</p>
Scrutiny Committee	The Scrutiny Committee will consider complaint analysis reports on a regular basis, highlighting performance and identifying areas for improvement, themes, trends and risks.
Complaints Management Team	<p>The Complaints Management Team will consist of the Executive Assistant, Senior Housing Manager and Group Director of Quality and Care. They will be responsible for receiving all complaints to agree the appropriate response and allocate to a colleague to investigate. They will track all complaints to ensure that responses are timely, thorough and compliant with our policy. The team will ensure that the management of complaints reflects the principles of the policy and outcomes of effective complaints management.</p> <p>The team will carry out an annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code to ensure compliance. The team will report the findings of the self-assessment to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration and to commend to the Board.</p>
Operational Leadership Team	The Operational Leadership Team will consider lessons learnt from complaints, compliments and feedback, and their implications for day-to-day operations. The team will ensure that the management of complaints reflects the principles of the policy and outcomes of effective complaints management.
All staff	All staff are to ensure that they are familiar with the principles and operation of this policy. All staff must keep appropriate records of concerns, complaints and feedback they receive.