



Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. At Arc we are committed to providing high standards of service to our clients and other stakeholders. However, there may be occasions when we do not meet those high standards. We welcome feedback and we also take any form of complaint seriously.
- 1.2. As part of this commitment, we have adopted this policy and procedure, which aims to resolve any complaints effectively, within set targets, and to the satisfaction of the person bringing the complaint.
- 1.3. Staff complaints will be dealt with under our Grievance Policy.

2. Legal and Regulatory Requirements

- 2.1. This policy has been developed in line with the 2024 Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaint Handling Code.
- 2.2. We will operate our Complaints Policy in compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Standards and associated guidance documents.

3. Scope

- 3.1. The Complaint Policy and Procedure is applicable to anyone who receives or requests or is impacted by a service provided by Arc, and those acting on their behalf. This will include all clients, prospective clients, former clients [subject to time limits on bringing complaints under the procedures], and partner agencies, members of the public and other stakeholders.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Complainant:** anyone who makes a complaint about us.
- 4.2. **Complaint:** we use the Housing Ombudsman definition and define a complaint 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. (However, this complaint policy and procedure is also relevant to other stakeholders) Our complaints procedure includes two kinds of complaints:

Informal (Quick Resolution) complaint: Negative feedback where our response is much quicker than in the case of a formal complaint. These complaints do not normally require an investigation or sending of formal letters but will involve ensuring the problem is resolved as quickly as possible. Informal (Quick Resolution) complaints are dealt with through a response within 2 working days of the complaint being lodged.

Formal complaint: complaints which require some degree of investigation and / or follow-up.

4.3. **Complaints Officer:** The member of staff responsible for investigating and dealing with the complaint.

5. Exclusions

5.1. We will not consider a matter a complaint if:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months before the complaint was lodged. Where the problem is a recurring issue, we will consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this helps to resolve the issue for the complainant;
- Where legal proceedings have been started, we will take steps to keep the complainant informed (e.g. by letter) but will not consider a new complaint;
- Where matters have already been dealt with as part of the policy;
- Where the matter is a service request: contact from a client requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests should be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint should be raised when the client is dissatisfied with the response to their service request.

5.2. If we decide not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided to the complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

6. Access and Awareness

6.1. We allow complaints to be made via e-mail, by letter, by phone and in person to any member of our staff.

6.2. We will publicise the complaints policy and process, including on our website and as part of regular correspondence with clients.

6.3. We will comply with the Equality Act 2010 regarding reasonable adjustments to enable complainants to access this policy and follow the procedure.

7. Principles

7.1. Complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, systematically, and fairly.

7.2. Complaints will be dealt with in confidence.

7.3. Complainants will be kept informed of progress and the outcome of any investigation.

7.4. Complaints will be recorded, monitored, and acknowledged where appropriate.

7.5. Complainants will have the right to have a representative present at any interview.

7.6. Where any complaint is upheld Arc will offer an appropriate apology and will seek to put the complainant in the position they enjoyed before the mistake was made.

7.7. Arc will record information about its performance against standards and targets in handling complaints.

7.8. Arc staff likely to be involved in handling complaints will receive appropriate training.

8. Complaints Procedure

8.1. A complaint can be made by email, letter, over the phone or in-person to a staff member. An online complaint form and downloadable copy is available on our website but does not have to be used in order to make a complaint. The following contact details can be used:

- Write to: Complaints, Arc, 7 The Crescent, Taunton TA1 4EA
- Email: complaints@arcinspire.co.uk
- Phone: 01823 271326

8.2. Our complaints procedure is designed to be fair and transparent and aims to resolve the complaint quickly by putting things right. It comprises of an informal stage (quick resolution) and two formal complaints stages. This ensures that complainants can challenge any decision we make by correcting errors or sharing concerns via an appeal process.

8.3. Informal - Quick resolution

8.3.1 Where we receive negative feedback, the relevant manager will contact the complainant within 2 working days of their complaint being raised and will work to agree a suitable resolution in a mutually agreeable timeframe. The response is much quicker than a formal complaint as we will not normally carry out an investigation or send formal letters but will look to get the problem resolved as quickly as possible.

8.4. Formal Complaints

8.4.1 Where we are unable to resolve a complaint through our quick resolution process, or a request is made to make a formal complaint, we operate a two stage formal complaints process.

8.5. Stage One

8.5.1 We will investigate the complaint and provide a written response within 10 working days of acknowledgement of the complaint and will keep the complainant informed of the progress until resolution.

8.5.2 We aim to fully resolve the complaint within 20 working days where it is the responsibility of Arc or one of our contractors. If longer is required where there is good reason, we will contact the complainant to agree a new timescale.

8.5.3 If a complaint is received where actions are required by a third party e.g., any servicing of grounds or common parts for example, we aim to fully resolve the complaint within 30 working days.

8.6 Stage Two

8.6.1 If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint review at stage one, they can make a request for their complaint to be escalated to stage 2 (appeal panel).

8.6.2 We will acknowledge an escalation request within five working days of it being received.

8.6.3 If the complaint is escalated to the appeal panel the complainant or those acting on their behalf will be given the opportunity to provide additional written information to the panel.

8.6.4 The appeal panel will consist of a board member and/or a senior staff member acting on behalf of Arc who were not involved previously with the case. The appeal panel will review the case and provide a written response to the complainant within 20 working days of our acknowledgement of the escalation request. If longer is required where there is good reason, we will contact the complainant to agree a new timescale. This is the final stage of our complaints process.

9. Putting things right

9.1. Mediation

9.1.1 It might become clear during investigations that it will be difficult to resolve a complaint.

9.1.2 This can arise when there is no right and wrong but a difference of opinion about the best way to go about things.

9.1.3 In these situations, Arc will offer professional mediation using an independent mediator agreed with the complainant.

9.2. Apologies/Compensation

9.2.1 Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have already taken, or intend to take, to put things right. These can include:

- acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons
- apologising
- taking action if there has been a delay
- reconsidering or changing a decision
- amending a record
- providing a financial remedy
- changing policies, procedures, or practices.

10. Guidance for Contractors

10.1. This policy requires any contractor providing services on our behalf to:

- Record and respond to customer complaints within the timescales detailed in our internal complaints process;
- Provide us with any information relating to a complaint upon request; and
- Assist us with investigating complaints where appropriate.

11. Learning from complaints

11.1. We aim to learn from complaints and use this information to improve how we work. Arc will record and monitor every complaint, including details such as the subject of the complaint, resolution time and any learning points.

11.2. Arc will regularly review this register of complaints in order to identify recurring themes, policies or procedures that require revision and continuously improve how the organisation operates. The review will also be used to inform staff training. Where possible, Arc will share with clients how learning is being applied.

- 11.3. A member of Arc’s board has responsibility to support a positive complaint handling culture and will ensure the board receives regular reports about the volumes of complaints received, at which stage they were resolved, and any trends or themes within the complaints.
- 11.4. In addition, Arc will proactively monitor the effects of our complaint’s procedure. Areas to be monitored will include:
- Total number of Informal (Quick Resolution) and Formal complaints;
 - Nature of complaints (e.g. ASB, repairs issues, contactor issues);
 - Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage of the internal process;
 - Percentage of complaints resolved at the second stage of the internal process; and
 - Percentage of complaints escalated beyond the internal process.
- 11.5. This information will be reported to the board quarterly.

12. Policy Management

- 12.1. The board is responsible for ensuring this policy is kept up to date, implemented within the organisation and monitored and evaluated.
- 12.2. This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently when there is a change in circumstances, in work practices or the introduction of new legislation.

13. Background Documents

- 13.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the regulatory documents listed below:
- The Regulator of Social Housings Regulatory Standards
 - The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code (2024)
 - Equality Act 2010

Author	Senior Management Team
Policy owner	Board
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