



**PEAKS & PLAINS**  
Housing Trust

---

# The Trust

---

## Complaints Policy

---

Version number: V2

---

Effective Date: December  
2020

---

---

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- 1. SCOPE ..... 1**
- 2. INTRODUCTION ..... 1**
- 3. COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS..... 1**
- 4. COMPLAINTS PROCESS ..... 1**
- 5. EXTERNAL REVIEW ..... 2**
- 6. THE TRUST’S APPROACH..... 3**
  - Learning from complaints ..... 3
- 7. VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS ..... 3**
- 8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS ..... 4**
- 9. DATA PROTECTION..... 4**
- 10. FUTURE REVIEWS ..... 4**
- 11. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS..... 4**
- 12. POLICY INFORMATION ..... 4**

## 1. SCOPE

- 1.1. This Policy outlines how Peaks and Plains (the Trust) will manage complaints, ensuring that customers are dealt with fairly and consistently. This policy also describes how we acknowledge compliments.
- 1.2. We welcome all customer feedback and see it as a positive opportunity to improve our service delivery.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The Trust aims to provide an excellent service to all our customers. However, we acknowledge that sometimes things go wrong and our customers may wish to make a complaint.

The Trust welcomes all feedback in any format, from anyone who receives a service from the Trust or is affected by a decision or action taken by us. We are happy to take complaints and feedback from anyone who represents our customers. We will keep customers making a complaint informed of progress throughout.

This policy is to ensure that customers wishing to give feedback to us or make a complaint about a service they have received are able to do so easily, and that their issues are dealt with quickly and fairly. When we do something wrong, we put it right, apologise, and learn lessons so it does not happen again.

## 3. COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

- 3.1. **Compliments:** We receive compliments from our customers for a job well done, or recognition of a process that works well and exceeds expectations. This will be recorded to help us identify where our customers are happy with our service and enable us to share good practice within the Trust.
- 3.2. **Complaints:** Sometimes things go wrong. It could be that we have failed to meet service standards, not delivered against one of our policies or have not treated someone fairly. When this happens, our complaints process is used. We use the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint which is;  
*"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."*

## 4. COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 4.1. **First stage resolution;** the Trust will contact the customer to acknowledge the complaint and will respond within 2 working days with a resolution. Where we resolve the issue to the customer's satisfaction, we will record what has happened and use this feedback to improve services.

However, depending on the nature of the complaint an immediate response may not be possible or appropriate. If we need to investigate, the complaint will be logged as a formal complaint and dealt with under the “Investigation” stage of our process.

- 4.2. **Investigation;** If the customer is not happy with the First Stage Resolution, the appropriate manager will contact you and be responsible for investigating the complaint. Certain complaints will not have a first stage resolution opportunity, and these will be dealt with at Investigation stage. We will write to the customer if we are investigating their complaint within 2 working days, setting out the complaints process.

We aim to investigate and respond in writing within 10 working days. However, depending on the nature of the complaint it may take longer, if this is the case the Trust will contact the customer and agree a timeline.

- 4.3. **Review:** If a customer is not satisfied with the response to the investigation, they may request the complaint be reviewed. We will direct the customer to the review process at the end of the investigation stage. The review is not a repetition of the investigation. The complaint will be reviewed when our complaints process has not been followed or there are elements of the complaint that have not been addressed.

The Trust will confirm with the customer when a review is taking place. A senior Trust manager will contact you to confirm they are undertaking the review. They will assess how the complaint was handled, how our policies and procedures were followed and how the issue has affected the customer. If any failures are found with the way the complaint was investigated or dealt with, the review response will address these.

Our aim is to provide a final decision in writing within 15 working days. However, depending on the nature of the complaint it may take longer, if this is the case we will contact the customer to agree a revised timeline.

If the complaint cannot be escalated to a review and the customer remains dissatisfied with the Trust’s final response, they will be guided to seek an External Review (see section 5).

## 5. EXTERNAL REVIEW

- 5.1. If a customer remains dissatisfied beyond the Trust’s attempts to resolve their complaint, they can elect to have an external review of the matter.
- 5.2. The external review will allow the customer to present their complaint to a Designated Person (Local Councillor or Member of Parliament) or the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Trust will provide the customer with full details on how to do this at the conclusion of the Trust’s complaints process.

## 6. THE TRUST'S APPROACH

### When the Trust cannot consider a complaint

There are certain circumstances in which the Trust cannot consider a complaint. These include:

- The complaint has previously been investigated and addressed
- The complaint is over 6 months old
- There is already legal action being taken relating to the complaint
- We deem the complaint to be vexatious (see section 7)

In these situations the Trust will write to you confirm we are unable to consider your complaint and clearly explain our reason why.

### 6.1. Learning from complaints

- 6.1.1. We record customer feedback and regularly review cases to understand;
- the number and type of complaints received, at each stage and if they were resolved within timescale
  - the percentage of cases that are upheld and referred to the Ombudsman.
  - Customer satisfaction with the complaints process
  - lessons learned and service improvements
- 6.1.2. Managers will review upheld cases to analyse any learning points which may trigger changes to policy or procedures. We use a standard format to ensure consistency of approach.
- 6.1.3. Where learning from feedback and complaints results in a change to the way we do things, we publicise this through our publications, website and social media channels.
- 6.1.4. **Monitoring and evaluation**

Managers and Heads of Service will receive monthly performance data on 6.1.1 for their own service area. A quarterly review of complaints performance will be presented to senior leadership for review.

Overall annual performance on how well complaints are dealt with, outcomes and learning are reported to the Trust's Board and resident led Challenge Group. Complaint performance is publicised to customers as described in 6.1.3.

## 7. VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

- 7.1. The Trust is committed to investigating and responding to all complaints fairly, comprehensively, and in a timely manner. However, there are a minority of cases where a person complains in a way that prevents the Trust's staff from investigating the

complaint; takes up a disproportionate level of resources; or behaves in a way that is unacceptable. We deem these to be vexatious complaints.

- 7.2. In such cases, we will deal with the vexatious complaint on a proportionate basis which may vary from the standards described above. Our Vexatious Complaints Policy sets out the Trust's position fully.

## 8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The Trust will ensure that its Complaints Policy Statement is accessible to its diverse customers and will take into account the different needs of people wishing to make a complaint. We will offer practical support for customers who may otherwise find it difficult to make a complaint.
- 8.2. Analysis of feedback and complaint performance will ensure understanding of how customers with protected characteristics use the service, and how satisfied they are with that service.

## 9. DATA PROTECTION

- 9.1. The Trust recognises that confidentiality is important to customers and will ensure all performance reporting information is anonymised and are compliant with GDPR good practice.

## 10. FUTURE REVIEWS

- 10.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner in response to a change in regulation, audit recommendation or emerging best practice.

## 11. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- 11.1.
- Vexatious Complaints Policy
  - Compensation Policy

## POLICY INFORMATION

Policy Name:	Complaints Policy
Status:	V2
Approved by:	Board
Drafted By:	Head of Customer Experience
Date approved:	December 2020
Next Review Date:	December 2022

