




Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Policy

Document owner	
Document no.	
Version no.	1.0
Approved by	
Date approved	31/05/2021
Date of next review	
Link to where current version is stored on shared drive	
Separate procedures are available to implement this policy	

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Cill Dara HA (CDHA) tries very hard to always give excellent service but we know that sometimes things will go wrong. We have a complaints policy and procedure so that individuals using our services (for example, tenants, residents, local authority nominations for housing and any partner or stakeholder) can tell us when we have not delivered services as we have promised to do.
- 1.2 We also recognise the value of suggestions and the need for us to pay attention and be observant when tenants or partner organisations make suggestions about our services. These may not always be a formal complaint but may still be of value, supporting and driving service improvements.
- 1.3 In addition to formal complaints and suggestions, we also note and record where we receive compliments. Compliments may give us insight into the ways in which we provide services that tenants and service users value and appreciate. We can learn from these by understanding what it is that has been appreciated or worked well and applying it to other service areas.
- 1.4 We have developed this policy to direct and support service delivery in line with our vision and mission:

Cill Dara's vision is to provide the people of Kildare with a safe and supported home environment.

Our mission is to identify and meet the housing and associated support needs of members of the Kildare community who are eligible for social and affordable housing.

2.0 Scope of Policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to all CDHA tenants and any customer or partner organisation that has contact with us or uses our services.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The aims and objectives of this policy are to:
- Make sure that our tenants and partners are heard and properly responded to where they are not happy with the service we have provided

- b) Use insight and learning from complaints, suggestions and compliments in order to improve our services

4.0 Policy Statement

Complaints, suggestions and compliments are ways in which we receive feedback on our services. We will actively seek to learn lessons from all such feedback.

Regarding complaints, we will:

- Require that a complaint is lodged no more than 1 months after an incident has occurred
- Ensure that all staff are trained to recognise when a tenant or service user is raising an issue that should be classed as a formal complaint
- Tell tenants and service users about our complaints procedure so that they know the response and timescales that they can expect from us
- Seek early resolution of any matter raised
- Not insist that a complaint has to be made in writing. We may take down the details on behalf of a tenant or service user if they are not able or willing to make a complaint in writing
- Log all complaints
- Through our tenant handbook, service standards and website, publicise the details of our complaints procedure as well as advising tenants about the Residential Tenancies Board Dispute Resolution Service
- Actively use learning and insight from complaints to improve our services.

Regarding suggestions and compliments, we will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the value of suggestions and compliments and the need to capture these
- Actively use learning and insight from suggestions and compliments to improve our services

4.1 Dealing with a complaint

We have a 3-stage process for dealing with complaints:

Stage 1 - complaint is dealt with by the front-line member of staff responsible for the service area. The only exception to this is where the complaint is about that individual; in this situation, the complaint will be dealt with by the individual's line manager.

Stage 2 – Where a complaint is not resolved at stage 1, or if the complaint is about a front line member of staff, the complaint is dealt with by a manager

Stage 3 - Where a complaint is not resolved at stage 2 the complaint is dealt with by the Board

At each stage, we will advise the complainant of the timescales and the escalation process. KPIs required for turnaround times for resolution of complaints (RTB standard)

4.2 Appeals

The decision taken by the Board at Stage 3 is final. (But see paragraph 4.3 below on the Residential Tenancies Board Dispute Resolution Service.)

4.3 Residential Tenancies Board Dispute Resolution Service

At any point, a tenant may contact the Residential Tenancies Board to register concern or dissatisfaction with their landlord.

Free mediation is available through the Residential Tenancies Board, as well as the more formal process of Adjudication.

4.4 Persistent and vexatious complaints

A complaint may be defined as “persistent” and / or “vexatious” if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The complainant continues to pursue a complaint when the complaints procedure has been fully and properly completed
- The complainant makes repeated and unsubstantiated complaints.

4.5 Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints cannot be fully investigated as there is always a possibility that they may be vexatious or malicious.

Notwithstanding the fact that anonymous complaints cannot be subject to a full formal investigation, the manager should assure themselves that there are no issues that should be considered or investigated outside of the complaints process.

All anonymous complaints both written or verbal should be documented and reported according to the same procedures that apply to other complaints. They should be brought to the attention of the manager for a decision as to whether quality improvements are required on the basis of the complaint.

5.0 Equality and Diversity

5.1 We will apply this policy consistently, fairly and with professionalism. We do not discriminate against any person on grounds of their age, gender, disability, gender reassignment/transgender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or any other matter that may cause a person to be treated with injustice.

5.2 We will use plain language and make information available in different formats and languages on request.

6.0 Data Protection and Confidentiality

6.1 This policy will be operated in line with our Data Protection Policy.

7.0 Compliance

7.1 We have developed this policy and associated procedures with due regard to Regulatory requirements and key legislation.

7.2 As a registered Tier 2 Approved Housing Body, we work hard to ensure that we are fully compliant with the requirements of the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority.

7.3 Specifically, in relation to the Regulatory Performance Standard, this complaints, suggestions and compliments, policy (and associated procedure) ensures that we meet the regulatory requirement to have a published policy and procedure for dealing with complaints from tenants and service users.

7.4 Key legislation relating to this policy is as follows:

a) Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015

Brings tenancies of the non-profit housing association sector under the remit of the Residential Tenancies Board.

Puts the legal regulation of tenancies under the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). A tenant may lodge a dispute with the RTB if their landlord is in breach of its legal obligations.

8.0 Linked Policies, Procedures and Guidance

8.1 There are no specific linked policies, procedures and guidance, as this policy covers all aspects of CDHA's operations.

9.0 Responsibilities

9.1 All relevant employees have a responsibility to ensure that this policy is applied as intended. Including, but not exclusively:

- a) Reporting any areas of concern or non-compliance to their manager.
- b) Keeping accurate records.
- c) Attend training to ensure they have the required knowledge and skills to deliver the service.

9.2 Board will ensure that:

- a) CDHA has an overview of this policy and reviews it in a timely manner to assess its effectiveness and appropriateness.
- b) CDHA has the necessary arrangements and resources to implement and monitor operational effectiveness.

9.3 Managers will ensure that:

- a) This policy is implemented through agreed operational procedures, monitored and reported.
- b) Resources are deployed and monitored effectively.
- c) Insight and learning from complaints, suggestions and compliments is captured and used to influence service improvements.

10.0 Definitions

10.1 **Complaint** - For the purpose of this policy, we define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with the service provided against an agreed service standard. This applies specifically where a tenant or service user reports that:

- We have not followed our policies, procedures or service standards
- An employee, agent or contractor has behaved in an unprofessional manner
- We have treated them unfairly
- There are excessive or unexplained delays, or enquiries have not been dealt with promptly and in full
- We have failed to apologise properly where we have made mistakes
- We have failed to meet the requirements of the Regulatory Code.

We do not class the following as complaints:

- Reporting an issue for the first time
- A report of anti-social behaviour. (Anti-social behaviour is dealt with by our anti-social behaviour policy and procedure)
- Complaints about services not provided by CDHA.

The following issues will be dealt with outside of the complaints procedure:

- Issues involving insurance or personal injury claim. These matters are dealt with by our insurers and/or our solicitors
- Where the complainant has appointed a solicitor and is taking legal action against us. These matters are dealt with by our solicitors
- Where a tenant is dissatisfied with a rent increase. These issues will initially be reviewed by a manager to ensure that the correct calculation has been made

based on information provided. Where we have made an error, the tenant will be advised of this and that they may make a formal complaint if they so wish.

- 10.2 **Suggestion** – For the purpose of this policy, we define a suggestion as feedback from tenants or service users or those who are affected by our services. A suggestion, as opposed to a compliment, is likely to suggest areas for improvement.

We acknowledge that tenants or service users may from time to time make comments on our service that are not defined as complaints but may, nonetheless, give us an opportunity to learn lessons and to improve our services.

- 10.3 **Compliment** – For the purpose of this policy, we define a compliment as feedback from those using or who are affected by our service. A compliment is a positive comment on any aspect of our service.

We believe that it is important to acknowledge and learn from compliments so that CDHA recognises and reinforces positive behaviours as well as replicating good practice across other services.

- 10.4 **Tenant** - For the purpose of this policy, we define a tenant as someone who pays rent for the place they live in, or for land or buildings.

- 10.5 **Customer** - For the purpose of this policy, we define a customer as an individual or company that purchases goods or services. Customers are the end users of those goods or services.

- 10.6 **Service User** - For the purpose of this policy, the term refers to a person who uses or has used CDHA services.

- 10.7 **Partner Organisation** - For the purpose of this policy, we define a Partnership Organization as an association of two or more persons to carry on as co-owners of a business for profit, working with CDHA for the provision of services to our tenants.

11.0 Key Performance Indicators

We will monitor and report on the following key performance indicators to check that our services are delivering the intended outcomes.

In addition to the KPIs listed in the table below, we will also maintain a record of where we have learnt from complaints, suggestions or compliments and how that learning has influenced service improvement.

Performance Indicator	Performance Target (where applicable)	Measure reported to Board?
No. of complaints opened and closed	n/a	Yes
Stage 1		
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints acknowledged within agreed timescales	100%	Yes
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints resolved within agreed timescales	100%	Yes
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints resolved in favour of the complainant	n/a	Yes
Stage 2		
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2	n/a	Yes
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints acknowledged within agreed timescales	100%	Yes
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints resolved within agreed timescales	100%	Yes
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints resolved in favour of the complainant	n/a	Yes
Stage 3		
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints escalated to Stage 3	n/a	Yes
No. and % of Stage 3 complaints acknowledged within agreed timescales	100%	Yes
No. and % of Stage 3 complaints resolved within agreed timescales	100%	Yes
No. and % of Stage 3 complaints resolved in favour of the complainant	n/a	Yes
Appeals against process		
No. and % of appeals received	n/a	Yes

No. and % of appeals found in favour of complainant	n/a	Yes
Residential Tenancies Board Dispute Resolution Service		
No. of cases lodged with the RTB Dispute Resolution Service	n/a	Yes

12.0 Policy Review

12.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or earlier to take into account changes in legislation, regulation, service improvements and related initiatives.

