

# Complaints Policy

## 1 Purpose

This policy sets out Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) approach when dealing with dissatisfaction raised by a customer. This policy is published on our website, along with information about ombudsmen and regulators which may oversee complaints to or about MTVH, and is publicised in our 'How to Complain' leaflet, which all customers receive upon sign up.

All formal complaints are recorded to enable us to analyse the data, to recognise reoccurring issues and themes, to make sure that learning is applied, and look to improve procedures and policies where necessary.

## 2 Scope & Definitions

The Policy and accompanying procedures apply to:

- All customers who live in our properties, regardless of tenure
- All customers who receive services provided by us
- Former customers, new applicants and third parties

Term	Definition
Complaint	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.
Service Request	A request from a customer or resident asking us to take action to put something right.
Resolution	Where a complaint is dealt with to the satisfaction of the person complaining.
Local Resolution	Where a complaint is dealt with at the initial point of contact to the satisfaction of the person complaining, without the need for a formal complaint investigation.
Ombudsman	An independent external body which investigates complaints against an organisation. An ombudsman can only investigate complaints that fall within its remit (usually a specific sector or type of service).
Regulator	An independent external body with statutory powers to monitor, investigate and enforce regulatory compliance on an organisation.

## 3 Our Approach

### 3.1 How you can make a complaint

Our centralised Customer Care Team manage all complaints, including complaints regarding a contractor or third party acting on our behalf. If you have already complained directly to another party and are not satisfied with their response, you can escalate your complaint to us for review.

You can contact our Customer Care Team, in several ways:

- **Online Complaints Portal:** <https://www.mtvh.co.uk/contact-us/>
- **Phone:** 020 3535 3535 (calls are charged at local rate)
- **In writing:** MTVH Customer Care Team, Waterfront House, Technology Dr, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 1LA

We are committed to making our services as accessible as possible; please let us know if you require any assistance or reasonable adjustments to help you make a complaint.

You do not need to make a complaint yourself; if you prefer, you can nominate someone else to make a complaint on your behalf or accompany you to any meetings or conversations you may have with us. If this happens, we may need you to confirm that you are happy for them to act on your behalf, and consent to us discussing your complaint with them.

Any complaints made to an MTVH representative will be referred to our Customer Care Team for acknowledgement and investigation if a local resolution has not been possible. Expressions of dissatisfaction received via social media will be signposted to our online complaints portal.

### 3.2 How we handle your complaint

MTVH is committed to using customer complaints to improve our services and focus on their needs.

We will endeavour to use your preferred method of contact, however there may be occasions when we need to speak to you over the phone to confirm our understanding of your complaint. Once this has been established, we will use your preferred method of contact wherever possible.

When handling your complaint:

- We will look to resolve complaints quickly and effectively with a local resolution
- If a local resolution isn't possible, we will contact you to log a formal Stage One complaint
- We will send you an acknowledgment of the complaint, confirming your complaint reference number, details of the appropriate ombudsman for your complaint, along with the name and contact details of your assigned complaint handler
- We will investigate your complaint, keeping you informed throughout, and provide a resolution to you as soon as possible, in line with requirements of the appropriate ombudsman for your complaint
- Where additional, related, issues come to light during the initial investigation process, we will add these to your original complaint, unless this would unreasonably delay our response

When providing you with a resolution to your complaint, we will acknowledge what has gone wrong and set out the actions we have taken, or intend to take, to put things right. These can include:

- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong, providing an explanation and apologising
- Taking action if something has not happened that should have
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Amending a record or adding a correction
- Changing policies, procedures or practices
- Providing a financial remedy

For more information on financial remedies, please see our ***Compensation Policy***.

### 3.3 Stage Two complaints

If your complaint falls under an ombudsman with a two-stage complaints process, and you are not satisfied with our Stage One response, your complaint will be escalated to Stage Two.

You have twelve months from the date of the Stage One final response to voice your dissatisfaction, or longer if the resolution identified at Stage One hasn't been delivered within twelve months.

We will then send you an acknowledgment of the Stage Two complaint, confirming your complaint reference number, details of the appropriate ombudsman for your complaint, along with the name and contact details of your assigned complaint handler.

When handling your Stage Two complaint:

- We will investigate your complaint, keeping you informed throughout, and provide a resolution (as described in section 3.2 above) to you as soon as possible, in line with requirements of the appropriate ombudsman for your complaint
- If you remain unhappy with our response, we will signpost you to the appropriate ombudsman service and other organisations who can provide support

We will only consider issues included in your complaint at the point that we issued our Stage One response (including repeat occurrences of the same issue).

### 3.4 Timeframes for responding to complaints

When investigating and responding to your complaint, we will abide by the timeframes set out in the relevant ombudsman's code of practice (see **Appendix 1: Ombudsman & Regulator Information**). We will confirm which ombudsman your complaint falls under in our written acknowledgement of the complaint.

If an investigation cannot be concluded within the timeframe set out in **Appendix 1: Ombudsman & Regulator Information** we will contact you to let you know and agree a new deadline.

### 3.5 What is excluded from the complaints process

In certain circumstances, we cannot consider a complaint as it is excluded. This will be for one of the following reasons:

- The cause of the complaint occurred outside of the permitted timeframe (see **Appendix 1: Ombudsman & Regulator Information**)
- Court proceedings in relation to the substance of the complaint have been initiated (defined as claim papers having been filed at court)
- The complaint has already been considered under MTVH's Complaints Policy
- Requests for compensation or restitution which are being dealt with as part of an insurance claim
- Complaints about rent increases or service charges or their reasonableness
- Planned Section 20 works (unless the complaint is that we did not follow the required consultation process)

Reports of antisocial behaviour are considered a service request and will be dealt with in line with our Antisocial Behaviour Policy.

Each complaint will be considered on its own merits, and in some cases we may still consider a complaint which would normally be excluded, at our discretion, if there are compelling reasons to do so.

Where a complaint is excluded, we will write to you explaining our reasons for doing so and provide you with contact details for the relevant ombudsman, should you wish to take your complaint further.

### 3.6 Ombudsman and Regulator referrals

If you are not satisfied with our response to your complaint, you can choose to escalate it to the appropriate ombudsman. Most ombudsmen expect complaints to be addressed through the in-house complaint procedure before being submitted for an independent review by them.

When notified of an escalated complaint by the ombudsman, we will review the complaint and our response to it and may offer additional redress if appropriate. This does not affect your right to ask the ombudsman to review your complaint.

Depending on the nature of your complaint, you may also be able to contact a regulator with your concerns.

Details of the ombudsmen and regulator services which may oversee complaints to MTVH are listed in **Appendix 1: Ombudsman & Regulator Information**, along with any time limits which apply when submitting your complaint.

## 4 Our responsibilities

MTVH will make sure that:

- All colleagues who interact with customers are trained on our internal complaints procedure and understand how to escalate any expression of dissatisfaction to the correct team
- Our Customer Care Team, all complaint handlers and decision makers are fully trained on complaint handling and are empowered to make the appropriate decisions in line with our Policies and Procedures
- All complaint handlers and decision makers will complete their duties independently, with an open mind and without bias

Each complaint is reviewed to make sure there are no actual or potential conflicts of interest with the appointed handler. If a conflict is identified (such as the complaint involving the complaint handler or the customer being known to them) the complaint will be transferred to another member of the appropriate team.

As part of our complaints assurance and governance structure, we will produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, which will be reviewed by our board. This report will include a qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance, a summary of any excluded complaints, any ombudsman findings of non-compliance and recommended service improvement actions arising from complaints lessons learnt exercises.

## 5 Other support

For further support and guidance regarding your complaint, see the table below.

Organisation	Service Provided	Contact Details
Citizens Advice Bureau	Advice Service	<b>Phone:</b> 03444 111444 <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk">www.citizensadvice.org.uk</a>
LEASE	Advice Service	<b>Phone:</b> 01483 890672 <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.lease-advice.org">www.lease-advice.org</a>
Shelter	Advice Service	<b>Phone:</b> 0808 800 4444 <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://shelter.org.uk">shelter.org.uk</a>
Homes England Capital Funding Guide	Government Scheme Guidance	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/capital-funding-guide-1-shared-ownership-guidance">Capital Funding Guide - 1. Shared Ownership - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>

## 6 Background legislation

- Localism Act 2011
- Schedule 2 of Housing Act 1996
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standards
- GDPR and DPA 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Ombudsman Scheme 2013
- Local Government Act 1974
- Financial Services and Markets Act 2000
- Building Safety Act 2022

## 7 Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In implementing this policy MTVH will not discriminate against any colleague, customer, or stakeholder on the grounds of their sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment status, ethnic origin, age, religious belief, disability, marital status, and pregnancy/maternity.

We capture any reasonable adjustments our customers request on our Customer Relationship Management system and tailor our services accordingly, including how we support customers to make, and how we investigate, complaints.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this Policy and is retained by the Policy Team.

## 8 Key Policy Information

Policy Owner	Director of Customer Experience
Author	Policy Team
Approved by	Customer Services SLT
Effective from	April 2024
Approach to review	This Policy & associated Procedures will be reviewed as required by the owner for changes in legislation, regulation, and operational need. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off before being clearly communicated to customers and colleagues. Next expected review is 5 years from the 'Effective date' of this document.
This is a controlled document maintained and accessible via MTVH's intranet, The Hub. When viewed outside of the intranet, this document should be checked against the master copy held by MTVH to verify that it is the current version, or it shall be considered uncontrolled.	

## 9 Appendices

Appendix 1: Ombudsman & Regulator Information