

Abeona Housing Co-operative

Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

Abeona Housing Co-operative is committed to providing good quality housing services and maintaining a respectful and supportive community for all members.

We recognise that sometimes things may go wrong. This policy explains how members, residents and others can raise concerns or complaints and how the co-operative will respond.

The aims of this policy is to:

- ensure that complaints are dealt with **fairly, promptly and transparently**
- provide a **clear and accessible process** for raising concerns
- encourage **early and informal resolution** wherever possible
- ensure the co-operative **learns from complaints and improves services**
- comply with the **Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**

2. Who Can Make a Complaint

A complaint can be made by:

- members of Abeona Housing Co-operative
- applicants or prospective members
- residents living in co-op properties
- neighbours affected by the co-operative's services
- contractors or partner organisations
- anyone acting on behalf of a complainant (with their permission)

You do not need to use the word “**complaint**” for it to be treated as one.

3. What Is a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about:

- the standard of service provided by the co-operative
- a decision made by the co-operative
- something the co-operative has done or failed to do
- the behaviour of someone acting on behalf of the co-operative

A complaint may relate to actions taken by the co-op, its managing agent, contractors or volunteers acting on its behalf.

4. Issues Not Treated as Complaints

The following issues may be handled through other processes:

- neighbour disputes or anti-social behaviour (see the ASB policy)
- requests for repairs or services
- matters that have already been considered through the complaint's procedure
- issues that occurred more than **six months ago** unless there are exceptional reasons

Where possible, the co-operative will help direct the person to the appropriate process.

5. Making a Complaint

Complaints can be made in several ways:

- by email
- in writing
- by telephone
- through the managing agent (Co-op Homes)
- through a representative acting on the complainant's behalf

Complaints should include:

- what the complaint is about
- when the issue occurred
- what outcome the complainant is seeking

Where required, the co-operative will make **reasonable adjustments** in line with the **Equality Act 2010** to support members with disabilities or other needs.

6. Informal Resolution

Where possible, the co-operative encourages concerns to be resolved **informally and quickly**.

This may involve:

- discussion with the member or resident
- clarification of decisions

- mediation between parties
- practical action to resolve the issue

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the issue can be raised as a **formal complaint**.

7. Complaints Process

The co-operative operates a **two-stage complaints procedure**.

Stage 1 – Investigation

- The complaint will be **acknowledged within 5 working days**.
- A Complaints Officer or nominated person will investigate the issue.
- The complainant and any other relevant parties will have an opportunity to provide information.
- A written response will normally be provided within **10 working days**.

The response will explain:

- the findings of the investigation
- any actions the co-operative will take
- the reasons for the decision
- how to request a review if the complainant is dissatisfied.

Stage 2 – Review

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, they may request a review.

The review will:

- be carried out by members of the **Management Committee** or an independent panel
- consider whether the complaint was handled fairly and correctly
- review any new information provided

A written response will normally be issued within **20 working days**.

This response will confirm the co-operative's **final position**.

8. Complaints Officer

The co-operative will appoint a **Complaints Officer** to oversee the process.

Their responsibilities include:

- ensuring complaints are logged and acknowledged
- coordinating investigations
- maintaining communication with complainants
- ensuring complaints are handled fairly and sensitively
- reporting outcomes to the Management Committee

9. Housing Ombudsman Service

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after completing the co-operative's complaints procedure, they can contact the **Housing Ombudsman Service**.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Website: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

The Ombudsman can provide advice and may investigate complaints about housing services.

10. Confidentiality

The co-operative will handle complaints **sensitively and confidentially**.

Information will only be shared where necessary to investigate the complaint or where required by law.

11. Record Keeping

The co-operative will:

- keep records of complaints and outcomes
- monitor trends and recurring issues
- report complaints regularly to the Management Committee

12. Learning from Complaints

Complaints provide an opportunity for the co-operative to improve.

The Management Committee will review complaints periodically to:

- identify patterns or service issues
- improve policies and procedures

- strengthen service delivery for members.