

Our policy on Complaints

We aim to provide you with a positive experience of our services. If you are unhappy, this policy explains how you can make a complaint.

If you aren't satisfied with the way we did or didn't do something, you can make a complaint.

If we agree that we didn't meet our service standards, we will:

- apologise
- accept responsibility
- put things right when they're in our control
- listen to you to improve what we do, and
- when possible, make changes to our procedures.

We want to learn from complaints, as this helps us to improve our services. We collect information about the complaints we receive, to make sure we do this.

Who can complain

We can take complaints from anyone who lives in a THCH home, or who carries out work for our company. But only people who live in our homes can take their complaint to the review stage.

You can choose to ask someone to complain on your behalf – for example, a friend or family member, or someone from Citizens Advice. You will need to tell us this in writing – an email is fine.

You can't ask a solicitor or someone legally trained to complain for you, as our complaints process is not a legal one.

How you handle your complaint

However frustrated you feel, we expect you to behave reasonably when you make a complaint. It is not reasonable to:

- threaten, verbally abuse or attack our staff
- be rude or offensive, or
- approach several staff at the same time – after we have agreed who will handle your complaint.

What you can complain about

We can accept your complaint, providing:

- the failure happened within the past six months – but we may be able to extend this if you have been unwell, or the failure wasn't immediately obvious
- you follow our process, and
- you don't try to launch a new complaint about the same issue.



We will not use our complaints policy to handle the following:

- complaints about our policies and policy decisions
- unreasonable complaints – we'll choose one person to deal with your concerns instead
- complaints from someone we are taking legal action against – we will use the legal process instead
- insurance claims – our Insurance Team will deal with claims on our buildings insurance, but otherwise you need to speak to your contents insurers
- anti-social behaviour – see our separate policy on this
- complaints about Council and other services not provided by us
- complaints about our commercial decisions or commercial contracts, and
- anonymous complaints – the manager responsible for the particular service will investigate.

We reserve the right to refuse to deal with complaints or deal with them differently.

Our complaints process

When you first tell us you're unhappy, our frontline staff will try to resolve the issue straight away.

If you're still dissatisfied, you can make a formal complaint by contacting our Customer Service Team.

Stage one

Within 24 working hours, the team will contact you to confirm the details and ask what you're hoping for. They will normally aim to resolve the problem by phone or email, but we are also willing to visit you at home.

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We will choose a lead officer to investigate your complaint and give a full response within 15 working days. If they need more time, they will keep you informed.

However, please note that if you won't work with us, we reserve the right to close the complaint.

Stage two

If you're not happy with our stage one response, you can ask for a review panel to look at it. You must do this within three weeks of hearing from us. You will need to tell us why and what you are hoping for. You can send additional information, providing it arrives at least two working days before the panel considers your case.

The panel will include up to three senior staff, Board or Committee members from THCH. It will aim to consider your complaint within 20 working days of your request.

The panel may hold a 'virtual' meeting – where the papers are circulated and discussions are held by email or on the phone, but the people involved are not in the room together. We will explain why we think that's appropriate before going ahead.

Or, if the meeting is held in person, we will agree a suitable time and place with you, so that you can attend if you wish. You can bring a friend or family member, but we will limit the number of people coming. We won't allow you to bring a legal representative. We can arrange for an interpreter or similar service to be available.

The panel will try to make a decision on the day, but may have to get back to you later – for example, if they need to consult a specialist or take legal advice.

The panel's decision is THCH's final response.

When a panel is not appropriate

If your reason for being unhappy is that you are asking for compensation, we will instead ask a senior manager who has not been involved so far to make the decision. They will get back to you within 15 working days. Their decision will be final.

If we refuse a review panel for any other reason, we will contact you to explain why.

Taking your complaint outside THCH

If you reach the end of our complaints process, but you still aren't happy, you can take your complaint to a 'designated person', usually an MP or local councillor. They will try to resolve your complaint with us, or refer it to the Housing Ombudsman.

You could involve the MP or councillor earlier in the process too.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman can look at your complaint if:

- an MP or councillor refers it to them, or
- if you wait eight weeks after going through our whole complaints process and getting our final response.

To contact the Housing Ombudsman, write to:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Phone: 0300 111 3000

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 5.15pm (except public holidays).

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

You can also submit your complaint and download supporting documents using their online form.

Enquiries from councillors and MPs

We can accept general enquiries from councillors and MPs. We aim to give a full response within 15 days, or keep them fully informed if a longer time is needed.

Mediation

If you agree, we may offer to invite an independent mediator to help find a solution.

Petitions

We will treat a petition in the same way as we handle complaints. If it helps, we're happy to meet the petitioners as a group. But to process the complaint efficiently, we will ask you to choose someone as your point of contact.

This leaflet provides a summary of our policy.

For more information send a message through your 'My Corner' account, or email customerservices@thch.org.uk