

Complaints and Comments Policy Statement

Doorstep is committed to using feedback from young people, agencies and the general public as a basis for assessing satisfaction and shaping and developing services. A range of methods are used in order to gain such feedback; however, an accessible, usable and relevant complaints and comments procedure is fundamental to ensure that the views of those affected by our services are used to improve the delivery of services.

Doorstep recognises a complaint as:

“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service provided, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its staff or agents, which affects any individual service-user or group of clients, agency or member of the public.”

The organisation is committed to the following policy whenever we accept a comment or investigate a complaint about our services, our staff or agents, or our procedures from any young person, agency or member of the public.

- We will operate an open and accountable procedure to ensure views expressed are given due consideration and that any complaint is fully investigated and a response given in an agreed period of time.
- We will operate a clear, simple and widely publicised procedure, with guidance on how to complain or make comment.
- We will promote a positive culture about complaints to ensure that staff understand policy and procedures, are trained and supported, and that front-line staff, where appropriate, are able to resolve matters directly and speedily to the satisfaction of the complainant, without recourse to the formal Complaints Procedure.
- We will accept complaints verbally, in person or by telephone, or in writing by letter or email or in any other reasonable format which meets the commentator's needs (e.g. audiotape). We will also accept these when submitted by advocates and others on behalf of clients or members of the general public.
- Receipt of a formal complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days along with information to the complainant about who is dealing with their complaint, how they will be contacted and the date by which they will receive a written response.
- We will respond to complainants within agreed timescales at each stage, explaining what action is being taken and what else they can do if still dissatisfied.
- We will offer complainants two stages of appeal if they remain dissatisfied with our initial response.
- We will assist complainants to take their case to an outside agency e.g. our funders, or the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service or similar agency if our internal procedures fail to give them a satisfactory response to their complaint.
- We will seek to use mediation services at any stage of the complaint investigation if this will improve the chance of reaching a satisfactory outcome to the matter.
- We will ensure systematic monitoring of each complaint, and of the complaints process to ensure that procedures are adhered to and to feed into the development of policy and best practice.

Complaints and Comments Procedure for Young People, Agencies and Members of the Public

1.0 Introduction

Complaints, compliments and comments are important sources of information that tell us how satisfied people are with our services. Doorstep welcomes and encourages feedback of this type to enable us to continuously improve the quality of the services we provide. This procedure should be read in conjunction with the **Complaints Policy Statement**.

2.0 Purpose of the Procedure

This procedure provides a means for:

- Resolving **complaints** about our services, staff, agents, policies or procedures
- Using positive feedback (**compliments**) to inform the development of our services, policies and procedures
- Looking at aspects of the service highlighted by client **comments** and making any necessary changes accordingly

3.0 Who is the Procedure For?

The procedure is for use by anyone receiving a service from the organisation whether that service is support, accommodation, making an application/registering, receiving advice or information.

The procedure is also for use by any agency or member of the general public affected by the services offered by Doorstep.

An information sheet explaining how to make complaints and other comments will be issued to all new clients and will be part of the information pack given to all new tenants/licensees.

4.0 Informal Resolution Procedure

All clients, agencies and members of the public are able to choose whether to make a complaint formally or informally.

In most cases feedback is provided informally and front-line staff are able to respond quickly to resolve issues and acknowledge complainant's input, a wide range of issues are satisfactorily resolved in this way.

In all cases where an informal resolution is reached, appropriate records should be kept detailing the issues, actions and outcomes. A simple form is provided in the Complaints, file to be completed by the member of staff involved. The file will be monitored by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and used in developing policy and practice in the future.

If it is not possible to resolve a complaint satisfactorily *or* if a complainant chooses to make his/her feedback formally *or* if the feedback has implications for others within the organisation then the formal procedure should be followed.

5.0 Formal Resolution Procedure

There are three stages to the formal procedure:

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Stage One

All formal complaints from young people, agencies or members of the public should be passed to the CEO who will manage the complaint through to its conclusion. Formal neighbour complaints should be passed to the Housing Manager who will manage the complaint through to its conclusion.

Complaints can be made verbally or in writing to a member of staff, or through an advocate or other agency. A member of staff receiving a verbal complaint should record it on the appropriate record sheet in the complaints file.

On receipt of a complaint an acknowledging letter or email will be sent to the complainant within 5 working days informing them of the procedure for dealing with their complaint and the timescales involved.

The manager dealing with the complaint will investigate it fully and will let the complainant know the outcome of this within 28 days or less if at all possible. Occasionally investigations may take longer in which case the complainant will be kept informed and any delay will be explained. Once a decision is made, a letter will be sent to the complainant by the manager dealing with the complaint detailing the outcome and any action taken. The letter will inform the complainant of their right to appeal against the decision.

Stage Two

If the complainant is not happy with the result of the investigation or actions taken s/he can ask for the complaint to be taken to the Chair of Doorstep's Board of Trustees. An acknowledging letter outlining the procedure for dealing with the complaint will be sent to the complainant by the Chairperson within 5 working days. The complaint and the way it was handled will be investigated by the Chairperson who will respond to the complainant within a maximum 28 days. The complainant will be advised of any delay in the process. Once a decision is made, a letter will be sent to the complainant by the Chairperson detailing the outcome and any action taken. The letter will inform the complainant of their right to take their complaint further if they remain dissatisfied.

Stage Three

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the result of the investigation into their complaint after stage two, or the way the complaint was dealt with they can appeal to the Appeals Panel which is made up of at least two Trustee Board members and an appropriate independent person. Procedure and timescales for completing Stage Three will be the same as for Stage Two. The decision of the Appeals Panel will be final and there will be no further internal right of appeal. Complainants who remain dissatisfied will be supported to seek help from outside agencies who can give further advice and / or assist them in pursuing the matter further. Examples of appropriate outside agencies might be a major Funder; the Independent Housing Ombudsman; or the Charity Commission for England and Wales.