

► POLICY: COMPLAINTS POLICY

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Thames Valley Housing is committed to providing a high quality service for its residents and working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our residents and in particular, by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right when things have gone wrong.

2.0 Background Legislation

2.1 This policy has due regard to the Housing Act 1996 and the Localism Act 2011.

3.0 Definitions

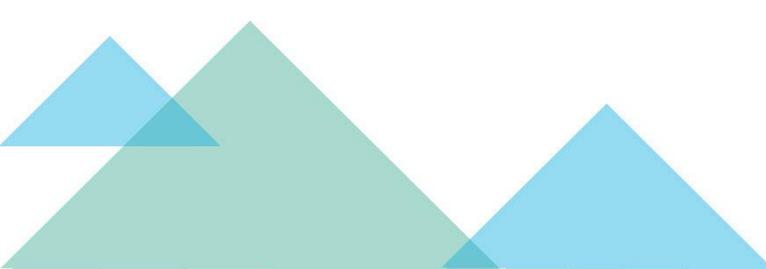
3.1 A complaint is when a resident is unhappy with a service provided by TVH and wants us to put it right. Examples of complaints are:

- We failed to do something that should have been done (e.g failed to carry out a repair as we stated we would or within an agreed timescale).
- We did something that should not have been done.
- We gave unclear, unsuitable or unhelpful information or advice.

3.2 Normally a complaint must be received by TVH within six months of:

- The issue taking place.
- The resident finding out they have a reason to complain, but must be no longer than 12 months after the issue took place.

3.3 This time limit is in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service guidance on complaints and the timescales they operate.



3.4 In exceptional circumstances, TVH may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit has passed. If a resident feels that the time limit should not apply, they will need to tell us why so that a decision can be made.

3.5 A complaint can be made by anyone who is entitled to receive a service from TVH or is affected by that service provision. This can also include former TVH tenants where applicable. With written consent, a family member, friend or advocate may act on behalf of a complainant.

4.0 Policy Statement

4.1 This policy explains how residents can make a complaint if they are not satisfied with our services. Current residents of Thames Valley Housing (TVH) living in rented, shared ownership, leasehold or freehold homes (on TVH developments), and applicants for housing with TVH, can make a complaint. Complaints can be made face to face, by phone, online, by email, by letter or by fax.

5.0 Priority Response Process

5.1 In order to try and resolve complaints as quickly as possible, we may initially deal with the problem or service failure under our 'Priority Response' process.

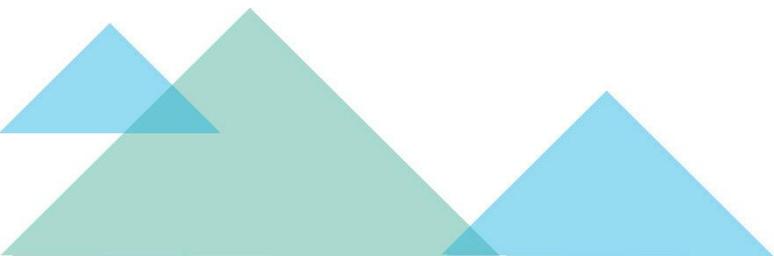
5.2 We aim to resolve the failure in service and get it 'back on track' within 5 working days. A priority response is dealt with much quicker than a formal complaint as we will not normally carry out an investigation or send formal letters, but will look to get the problem resolved as quickly as possible.

6.0 Complaints Process

6.1 We operate a three stage complaint process:

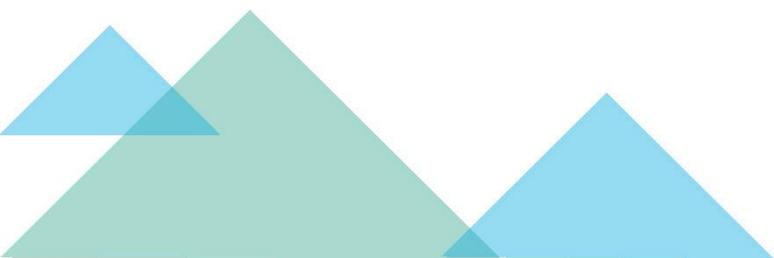
6.2 **Stage one complaint** – If a resident is unhappy with a service we have provided or if we have been unable to resolve an issue to their satisfaction under our Priority Response process, a complaint can be logged under stage one of our formal complaints process.

6.3 A manager will investigate the complaint and provide a written response within 10 working days of receiving the complaint and will keep residents



informed of the progress until resolution. We aim to fully resolve the complaint within 30 calendar days where it is the responsibility of TVH or one of our contractors. If longer is required, we will contact the resident to agree a new timescale.

- 6.4 If a complaint is received where actions are required by a third party e.g a developer in the case of defects, or a managing agent in the case of estate services or a Local Authority, we aim to fully complete the complaint within 90 calendar days.
- 6.5 **Stage two complaint review** – If a resident is dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage one investigation, the complaint will be reviewed by a TVH Director, Deputy or Assistant Director. The facts and responses at the previous stages will be carefully reviewed and we will provide a written response within 10 working days. If longer is required, we will contact the resident to agree a new timescale.
- 6.6 **Stage three appeal panel** – If a resident is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint review at stage two, the resident can make a request for their complaint to be escalated to an Independent Appeal Panel hearing. The appeal panel will review the case and provide a written response to the resident within 10 working days. This is the final stage of the TVH complaints process.
- 6.7 If a resident would like to escalate their complaint after completing the TVH internal process, they can contact the following:
- 6.8 **Designated Person** – A designated person is a Councillor, MP or Tenant Panel. A designated person will help resolve the complaint in one of two ways; they can try and resolve the complaint themselves or they can refer the complaint straight to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the complaint remains unresolved.
- 6.9 **Housing Ombudsman Service** – A resident can wait eight weeks after completion of TVH's internal complaint process and contact the Housing Ombudsman Service directly or the case can be referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service by a designated person.



7.0 Complaints relating to TVH contractors

7.1 We require any contractor that provides services on our behalf to comply with this policy by:

- Recording and responding to residents' feedback when required.
- Providing us with any information relating to a complaint when requested.
- Assisting TVH with complaints investigations as appropriate.

8.0 How we learn from complaints

8.1 A complaint should be seen as an opportunity to learn about what or how we need to improve our service at TVH. We therefore want to learn from every complaint and capture and share the things that we learn so that improvements can be made where appropriate.

8.2 In order to do this we will record and monitor every complaint including details such as what the complaint was about, how it was resolved, how quickly it was resolved and what we learnt.

8.3 We will carry out regular complaint reviews in order to continuously look at how we can improve our handling of complaints and the services we provide.

9.0 Other useful links

9.1 Housing Ombudsman Service website - <http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/home/>

9.2 The National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations - <http://www.nftmo.com/>

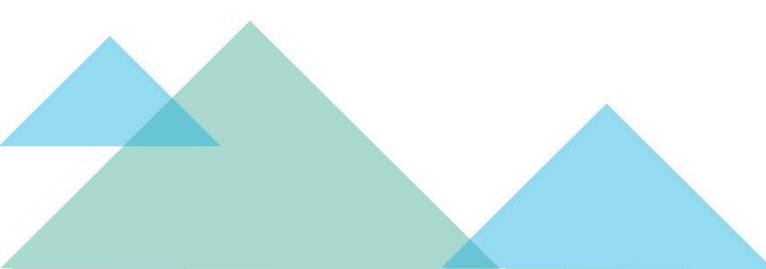
9.3 Information Commissioners Office - www.ico.gov.uk

9.4 Thames Valley Housing Compensation Policy

9.5 Thames Valley Housing Vexatious User Policy

10.0 Equality Impact Assessment

10.1 No impact noted



11.0 Policy Information

Policy owner: Housing Services Manager

Approved by: Deputy Director of Housing

Last review date: April 2014

Next review date: December 2018

Equality assessment: December 2016

Resident consultation completed: December 2016

