



Complaints Policy

Lead Officer	Carl Doogan, Head of Operations
Staff Affected	All
Drafted by	Carl Doogan, Head of Operations
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1. Introduction

- 1.1** At Local Space we work hard to provide a great service to all our customers but there may be times when we do not get things right.
- 1.2** When we make a mistake we will always apologise, aim to put it right, and improve so we do not make the same mistake again.
- 1.3** This policy ensures all complaints are handled fairly, promptly, and consistently.
- 1.4** Our primary intention is to resolve your dissatisfaction and put things right. We realise that this is much more important to you than providing a detailed explanation of what went wrong with our service. We will try to resolve the complaint quickly & informally first.
- 1.5** We actively seek feedback from all our customers. For example, customers are invited to complete a telephone survey following complaints, when we let a new home, and on completion of repairs and gas servicing works. We also periodically carry out general satisfaction surveys, to see how happy people are with their homes and the services we offer.
- 1.6** Compliments are a way of us finding out what works for our customers. We accept and record comments and compliments from customers in the same way as we do complaints. We will acknowledge all compliments and comments and use the feedback to repeat what we do well and to further improve services.

2. Definition

- 2.1** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Local Space, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.
- 2.2** There are several ways for you to give us feedback or to make a complaint:
- In person with a member of our team
 - Via email at info@localspace.co.uk
 - By phoning us on 0208 221 4000 (lines are open Mondays to Fridays, 9am to 5pm)
 - Or writing to us at: Local Space, 58 Romford Road, E15 4BZ
- 2.3** Examples of causes of complaints include:
- Failing to do something we should have or doing something we should not have
 - Giving unclear, unsuitable, or unhelpful information or advice

- Failing to fulfil statutory or contractual responsibilities (for example, we have not done something that we said we would do in your tenancy agreement or our contracts with you)
- Delays in our processes (for example, we have not called you back when we said we would) or failing to keep appointments
- Attitude of staff or our contractors
- Poor workmanship
- Dissatisfaction with the way we reached a decision or what has happened after a decision has been made
- Unequal or biased treatment or discrimination.

2.4 There are some complaints that we will not usually investigate. These are:

- complaints about something that happened more than twelve months ago.
- complaints about something outside of our control (for example, we cannot deal with complaints about other organisations but may be able to give you advice about who you should complaint to).
- matters that are already the subject of legal action.
- Personnel/staffing matters related to a Local Space employee.
- complaints concerning the content of an approved policy.

3. Complaints process



3.1 Early resolution stage

If you make a complaint, we will focus on resolving your complaint in our 'early resolution stage'. We will apologise and put things right quickly. We will seek to make whatever reasonable changes we can to resolve the complaint. We will let you know what we plan to do within 5 working days.

The primary focus is on speed of resolution, not investigation and apportionment of blame. Here a member of staff will work with you to resolve the complaint informally.

3.2 Stage 1

Where the complaint cannot be resolved to your satisfaction informally, and/or within 5 working days, we will refer it at Stage One to a manager to formally investigate. The manager will develop an action plan with you and the responsible officer. This will normally take no more than 10 working days and we will always let you know if it will take longer and why.

3.3 Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with our Stage 1 response, you have 10 working days to tell us that you want to take things further. You will need to tell us what the outstanding issues are and what outcome you are looking for.

The complaint is referred at Stage 2 to a senior member of staff within Local Space (this will likely be a Head of Service or Executive Management Team member). The senior member of staff will work with you to achieve a satisfactory resolution. This will normally take no more than 20 working days and we will always let you know if it will take longer and why.

3.4 The Housing Ombudsman Service

The Housing Ombudsman Service does not usually investigate complaints before they have completed the complaints process, but they can take steps to encourage landlords and customers to work together to resolve a complaint. This may include contacting us to make enquiries about the status of your complaint and to encourage us to communicate with you. Once you have received a response from us, the Ombudsman would encourage you to continue to progress the complaint until you complete the process and receive a final response.

If you are still not satisfied with our response once you get to the end of our complaints process/we have made it clear that we consider the matter is considered by Local Space to be closed, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to investigate your complaint.

You cannot bring your case directly to the Ombudsman until eight weeks after our final response to a complaint. If you received a response less than eight weeks ago, you will have to refer your complaint to a designated person to help resolve the issue.

A designated person can help to resolve a complaint after a landlord's internal complaints procedure is finished. Whilst the Ombudsman is unable to consider cases until eight weeks after our final response, a designated person can help right away. They can help resolve the complaint in one of two ways; by trying and resolve the complaint themselves or by referring the complaint straight to the Ombudsman. A designated person can be a Member of Parliament, a local councillor, or a tenant panel.

The Housing Ombudsman will investigate your complaint and write to you and us with their decision and any recommendations.

Ways to contact the Ombudsman:

- By post: Housing Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London, E14 9GE.
- By phone: 0300 111 3000 (see call charges - lines are open Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 5.15pm)
- By fax: 020 7831 1942
- By email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

- For information about the Ombudsman visit their website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

4. Compensation

4.1 There are certain situations in which you may be entitled to compensation:

- Home loss payments may be made for those who have lived in their Local Space property for a minimum of 12 months and are required to move home permanently because of redevelopment or demolition of their home.
- Disturbance payments may be made if you are required to move to another property temporarily or you have lived at a property less than 12 months and are required to move home permanently. This payment is for reasonable moving costs.
- If a tenancy is ending and you completed improvements to their property after 1 April 1994 you may be entitled to compensation for those improvements. This does not apply to fixed-term tenancies.

The Right to Repair scheme covers specific repairs, known as 'qualifying repairs' which cost less than £250 and should be done within a set time limit. If we do not carry them out within that time you may be entitled to compensation. We can tell you if your repair is a 'qualifying repair'.

Home loss; disturbance payments; decant costs; compensation for the cost of improvements (assured tenants only) and the Right to Repair are included in our Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

4.2 Payment for damage to your property/belongings

Generally, it will be a landlord's responsibility to insure the building and your responsibility to insure the contents of your home. For properties we lease from superior landlords, those customers are able to claim on the building's insurance of our superior landlords. If damage has occurred to your home and you think you may want to make a claim to our insurer, contact us to discuss.

4.3 Discretionary compensation

We will address your dissatisfaction in whichever way seems fit and reasonable to us via discretionary compensation. This is sometimes referred to as a gesture of goodwill and may take the form of non-monetary gestures.

4.4 Once a decision has been made against a compensation claim, you have the right to appeal the decision. This will be treated at Stage 2 within our complaints process. You have 10 working days to tell us that you want to take things further. You will need to tell us what the outstanding issues are and what outcome you are looking for. The senior member of staff will investigate. This will normally take no more than 20 working days and we will always let you know if it will take longer and why.

4.5 Claims for compensation must be made in writing to our head office or by email to info@localspace.co.uk within twelve months of the events leading to the claim.

4.6 Compensation payments ordered by the Housing Ombudsman Service

The Ombudsman can provide fair and proportionate remedies to complaints where maladministration or service failure has been identified. There are a wide range of proportionate remedies which include both non-financial remedies and compensation.

4.7 Please note that compensation will not normally be paid for:

- Lack of service or loss of facility due to circumstances beyond the control of Local Space or our agents
- Lack of service or loss of facility due to resident negligence
- Damage to goods or property unless the damaged item is retained for Local Space to inspect
- Damage or loss for which recompense is available through our insurers (in which case the insurer's timescales and claims process will apply).

4.8 Where compensation is payable and a customer is in rent arrears or has another outstanding debt to us, we reserve the right to deduct the amount of compensation from the outstanding debt.

5. Monitoring and review

5.1 We learn from our mistakes and will use the feedback you provide to improve our services. To help us do this we will monitor and review our complaints and compliments in the following ways:

- Customer satisfaction with the way complaints were handled
- The number of complaints received at each stage and whether these were dealt with within timescales
- The number of complaints upheld at each stage
- The number of cases referred to the Independent Housing Ombudsman and the outcome of these
- Lessons learned and service improvements actioned
- Compliment details
- Compensation payments awarded
- Benchmarking with other housing associations to compare trends and review best practice.

5.2 We will report on complaints to our Board frequently on the type we receive and the learning we have introduced as a result. Complaints learning will be a standing agenda item at staff team meetings.

5.3 We will publicise details of our complaints and compliments performance on our website and in our communication to customers (including the annual residents report).