

Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions Policy & Procedure

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Whilst DASH strives to provide a quality service, it recognises that there may be times when a resident wishes to complain about an aspect of the service, or someone wishes to make a complaint about DASH.
- 1.2 DASH is committed to ensuring that the process for customer feedback is clear, simple and accessible and ensures that these are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.
- 1.3 DASH will handle feedback in a timely and effective way and ensure that customers giving feedback are listened to and their views acted upon where appropriate.
- 1.4 This Complaints Policy can be used for complaints and/or issues of equal opportunities, harassment, discrimination allegations or any other issue. The term complaint in this policy also includes all the above.
- 1.5 DASH recognises that complaints can be a useful tool in evaluating service provision. The aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance for making/dealing with a complaint.
- 1.6 This policy will be adhered to for any allegations made towards DASH, its residents and staff, which includes the Management Committee and volunteers.
- 1.7 DASH will deal with all complaints regarding its own properties and the support service provided in the first instance and will refer any complaints regarding other properties to the superior landlord if it is their responsibility.
- 1.8 All complaints will be treated as confidential. (See Confidentiality Policy). Every effort must be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

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Information must be stored in a secure place with limited access to the designated people, in line with data protection requirements.

1.9 In all cases a complainant will have their concerns listened to and taken seriously. A complainant is assured they will not suffer detriment in any way as a result of making a complaint.

1.10 DASH will ensure that this overall policy:

- is fair, equitable and easily accessible
- is well publicised
- is simple to understand and written in plain English
- clearly states DASH's approach to customer feedback
- respects the customers' right to confidentiality
- reflects Housing Ombudsman best practice
- meets guidance from the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH) and requirements of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

2 Scope

2.1 The scope of this policy covers any customer (residents, leaseholders or any member of the public) accessing DASH's services that may wish to complain or give feedback about the service received and/or actions or lack of action from DASH staff including those working on behalf of DASH.

3 Customer Complaints and Feedback

3.1 DASH will collect feedback from customers in relation to:

- Compliments
- Complaints
- Comments and general suggestions for service improvement.

3.2 Customers can raise complaints or feedback independently, or via a 3rd party representative. Customers can also be represented or accompanied at any meetings with DASH. DASH will offer a range of options enabling customers to raise a complaint, give feedback or report a service request as follows:

- In person
- Via telephone (including text message)
- In writing
- Completing a Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Completing a 'Complaints Compliments and Suggestions' form on our website
- Submitting a 'Report a Repair' form on our website
- By e-mail
- social media

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3.3 DASH defines a complaint as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions of DASH, its own staff, or those working on behalf of DASH, affecting a customer or group of customers.”

3.4 Circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint include:

- Complaints relating to an issue which occurred over 12 months ago
- Where legal proceedings have started such as Claim Forms being filed at court
- Matters previously considered under DASHs Complaints Policy

3.5 DASH will ensure that any personal information collected will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations provision of the Data Protection Act 2018.

The Complaints Procedure

3.6 All complaints received by DASH will be referred to the Management Team for oversight regardless of who the complaint is initially referred to. This will ensure that all customers receive equality of service in complaints resolution.

3.7 DASH employees are expected to follow the complaints policy and procedure when handling a complaint.

3.8 Complaints will be dealt with in accordance with DASH’s escalated complaints procedure which is made up of:

- Stage 1 – Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. A manager will carefully investigate the complaint and will issue a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.
- Stage 2 – If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the customer’s satisfaction at Stage 1, it will be progressed to Stage 2. Complaints at this stage will be addressed by a manager not involved in Stage 1. If necessary, a trustee will review this stage. A final response will be issued within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

3.9 Escalation of a complaint is not automatic. The decision regarding escalation will be made taking into consideration the nature of the complaint and the complainant’s reasons for requesting further investigation. If new evidence is provided that was not presented by the complainant when reporting the original complaint DASH reserves the right to open and investigate this as a new complaint.

3.10 Following completion of a complaint’s investigation at Stages 1 and 2, DASH’s internal complaints handling process is complete.

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3.11 If a complainant feels that their complaint has not been handled in accordance with this policy, they may take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent body which deals with disputes between social landlords and their tenants.

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London, E14 9GE, or email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk or telephone: 0300 111 3000.

3.12 DASH will act upon and fully implement any determination made as a result of a case review by the Housing Ombudsman.

Health and safety complaints

3.13 Health and Safety complaints and incidents are handled by DASH's Health and Safety representative in accordance with DASH's Accidents and Incidents Procedure and prescribed timescales rather than the complaints policy. The procedure states that an accident and incident investigation should be concluded within:

5 working days for minimal or low-level investigations; or

10 working days or as directed by management for medium and high-level investigations.

DASH may consider complaints regarding the handling of a health and safety incident should the complaint meet the definition in 3.3.

Anonymous Complaints

3.14 Complaints made anonymously are more difficult to investigate and will be considered at the discretion of the Management Team. The following factors need to be considered:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the complaint and
- the complaint can be verified by a reliable source.

Complaints about a DASH contractor

3.15 Complaints received about a partner or contractor acting on behalf of DASH will be recorded and investigated in accordance with DASH's complaints policy and related procedures.

Unacceptable complainant behaviour

3.16 Violent or threatening behaviour to DASH staff handling a complaint will not be tolerated and will be treated as anti-social behaviour and dealt with in accordance with DASH's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

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3.17 Where unacceptable complainant behaviour is believed to be caused by severe mental ill health or other disability, the complainant will be treated with sensitivity and will be offered the opportunity to appoint an advocate to act on their behalf.

3.18 DASH reserves the right to manage and investigate a complaint outside of normal timescales where it would be beneficial to liaise with external support agencies such as the Housing Ombudsman to resolve the issue.

Compliments

3.19 DASH welcomes positive feedback from customers and ensures that this is referred to the relevant service area. DASH will share areas of good practice across its projects to improve the delivery of services.

Suggestions for service improvement

3.20 This type of feedback is important to DASH and can help to plan future services and generate ideas on how to improve the quality of existing services. This feedback is recorded in the Quality Management System and referred to Managers for action where appropriate.

4 Compensation

4.1 DASH aims to provide high quality services and to resolve any issues before the need for a compensation payment arises.

4.2 The aims of the compensation policy are to ensure that:

- problems are resolved quickly and efficiently
- practical solutions are explored completely to remedy the situation
- where financial payments are appropriate, they are proportionate to the loss or inconvenience caused
- financial payment is considered against clear agreed guidelines and
- all residents and service users are treated in a fair and equitable way

Compensation does not include statutory home loss and disturbance payments made under the provisions of the Land and Acquisition and Compensation Order 1973.

4.3 The following list is an example of the types of claim that may be made, but it is not exhaustive:

- right to compensation for improvements
- failure to repair under Right to Repair legislation
- home loss payments/Decanting payments
- loss of use of part of the property
- loss of service

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4.4 Compensation payments are not automatic, even where it is clear mistakes have been made. Where a practical solution would provide all or part of the remedy, this will be discussed with the claimant.

4.5 The RoSH has the power to award compensation to a victim of a failure on the part of a Registered Provider. This is an enforcement power and is set out in Chapter 7 and Sections 236 to 245 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (the Act) in conjunction with the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012. Direct reference of a complaint or claim for compensation to the RoSH can only be made in circumstances where it is believed DASH has acted illegally.

Ex Gratia / Full and final settlement

4.6 Any payments DASH makes under the Compensation Policy are referred to as ex gratia and will be in full and final settlement of the issue. This means that the resident or service user is accepting that the matter is resolved by taking the compensation payment and will take no further action.

5 Communication and monitoring

5.1 DASH will publicise 'A Guide to Giving Feedback' and make it available to all customers. Translation and support services can also be made available to help customers to give feedback. Information is also published on DASH's website under 'Customer Feedback' including the policy and complaints handling performance.

5.2 Data on feedback received from customers is monitored and analysed to identify trends in satisfaction/dissatisfaction, changes in customer's needs and areas for service improvement, ensuring that the customer voice is listened to and acted upon.

6 Review

DASH will review this policy at a minimum of every three years to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

7 Legislation

General Data Protection Regulations 2018, The Data Protection Act 2018, Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, Localism Act 2011, RoSH – The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England - April 2015, The Equality Act 2010.