Policy Name:	Customer Care and Complaints Policy
Lead Directorate:	Corporate Services
Author:	Naz Ahmed, Director of Corporate Services
Reason for change:	HOS Compliance Review
Date:	Jan 2026

CURRENT VERSION

Presented to:	Services Committee
Date:	Sep 2025
Decision:	Approved

1. Introduction

This Policy outlines Poplar HARCA's (PH) commitment to providing excellent service, ensuring residents and service users are treated with respect, are heard, and complaints are managed fairly, transparently, and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Code.

PH will comply with data protection legislation and ensure staff are appropriately trained.

Policy details and information about the Housing Ombudsman is online at poplarharca.co.uk/about- us/complaints and in our resident newsletter, HARCA Life.

2. Our commitment

Residents can expect to:

- Be treated with respect.
- Have concerns taken seriously.
- Be informed of how PH is performing.
- Live in a safe home.

PH staff will:

- Listen.
- Explain what can / cannot be done.
- Fulfil commitments.

PH will comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements relating to data protection. All staff and volunteers will receive appropriate training to ensure personal information is handled securely and lawfully. Details of how PH processes personal data are published on its website.

PH is committed to meeting its legal and regulatory obligations on equality, diversity, and inclusion. It will assess the potential impact of its decisions on different groups and consider reasonable adjustments to mitigate disadvantage. The Board will receive monitoring reports on workforce diversity and service access and delivery.

A copy of this policy can be made available in an accessible format by emailing complaints@poplarharca.co.uk.

3. Definition and Scope

What will be logged as a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by PH, its staff, or those acting on its behalf.

An expression of dissatisfaction does not need to include the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as one. Anyone expressing dissatisfaction will be given the choice to make a complaint in line with this policy,

PH will accept complaints made within 12 months of when the issue happened or when an individual first became aware of it. If it's been longer, PH may use its discretion to investigate.

Service requests

Service requests will not be treated as a complaint. However, a complaint will be logged, if an expression of dissatisfaction is raised following our response to a service request, This will not delay or impact any actions needed to be taken.

Who can complain?

Anyone with a contractual relationship with PH (tenants, leaseholders, shared owners, licensees, service users), and a representative authorised by a complainant to act on their behalf.

A complaint submitted via a third party or representative will be processed in line with this policy.

A complaint may be made in person, in writing, on the phone, via the portal or via social media.

Petitions

A petition is a complaint submitted by two or more individuals from different households.

The lead petitioner will be treated as the complainant, and all communications will be directed exclusively to them.

What won't be logged as a complaint

a. **Service Requests:** requests for actions, e.g. reporting repairs or ASB or requesting breakdown of charges.

b. **Alternative Resolution:** Matters that can be resolved through other channels, such as insurers, courts, or tribunals.

c. **Proceedings:** Action has commenced, or has been determined, by a Court or Tribunal.

d. **Historic Complaints:** Events or issues giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago except where evidence suggests the individual has only become aware of it now.

e. **Previously Addressed:** considered already, unless there is new material evidence.

f. **Third Parties:** About the actions of third parties outside PH's control.

g. **Building Safety:** Issues covered by the separate *Higher-Risk Building Complaints Policy*.

h. **Employment:** Complaints related to PH as an employer.

i. **Parking:** Enforcement, or a remedy is outside PH's legal powers.

PH will explain why it considers a matter excluded from this policy, and provide information about alternative dispute resolution, including the Housing Ombudsman Service.

4. Process

If additional information is requested from the complainant and not provided within four weeks, the complaint will be closed.

Stage 1: Resolve	Stage 2: Review
• Complaints will be logged, acknowledged and defined within 5 working days setting out the complaint, outcomes and areas which PH is and isn't responsible for • The review will be carried out by the service manager. • A meeting with the manager will be offered. It will usually be online. 3 dates will be offered. If none are suitable or the complainant does not attend, the decision will be based on the information already provided. • Response will be communicated within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. • A 10 working days extension will be approved for complex cases and communicated with you outlining reasons and expected timeframe for response.	• Complaints will be escalated to a stage 2, if all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the individual's satisfaction. • An individual does not need to provide reasons for escalation. • Escalations will be logged, acknowledged and defined within 5 working days setting out the complaint, outcomes and areas which PH is and isn't responsible for. • The review will be carried out by a more senior manager. • A meeting with the senior manager will be offered. It will usually be online. 3 dates will be offered. If none are suitable or the complainant does not attend, the decision will be based on the information already provided. • Response will be communicated within 20 working days of the complaint being logged. • A 20 working days extensions will be approved for complex cases and communicated with you outlining reasons and expected timeframe for response.
• Where issues are unclear, PH will seek clarification from the individual. If we do not hear back, we may respond based on the information we have or close the complaint. • Where it takes longer (outside of extended timescales) PH will agree suitable interval to keep individuals updated • An individual has the right to approach the HOS if extension timescales exceed those stated by this policy or the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. • PH will include any related additional complaints in the stage 1 or stage 2 response if it has not yet been issued. New or unrelated issues, or those that would cause an unreasonable delay, will be logged as a separate complaint.	

5. Remedy

Reasons for a decision will be explained. If the complaint is upheld, PH will apologise and consider compensation:

	PH's responsibility		
Impact on complainant	**none**	**some**	**Full**
Minimal	zero	zero	Zero
Moderate	zero	up to £100	up to £250
Serious	zero	up to £500	up to £1,000

A Director may award a higher amount if exceptional circumstances are identified.

Reimbursement	Compensation
Compensation is payable for out-of-pocket expenses, such as increased costs, bank charges, or lost earnings. The amount claimed must be reasonable and supported by evidence. Payments will be made directly to the complainant.	Compensation to acknowledge that PH has failed to meet expected standards. The amount of compensation will be based on the specific circumstances of the complaint. Payment will normally be used to offset money owed to PH.

6. Unreasonable Behaviour

PH may restrict access to services and staff for individuals demonstrating aggressive, abusive, or unreasonable behaviour. In considering whether a request or contact constitutes unreasonable behaviour, PH will explore whether;

- the complaint is repetitive, without new evidence, or already resolved.
- the complainant is making unreasonably persistent demands or expecting unrealistic outcomes.
- the complainant is behaving in an aggressive, abusive, or threatening way.
- the complaint is deliberately misleading, false, or intended to cause disruption.

Decisions will be reviewed by a senior manager.

Except where doing so would present a greater risk, individuals will be informed of the decision. An individual may complain about a decision to restrict access. In extreme cases, PH may involve the police, end any direct contact or take legal action.

7. Councillor and MP Enquiries

Enquiries will be accepted only through the approved Council channel. They will be treated as correspondence and responded to within 10 working days of receipt.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 5 years, or sooner if required.

9. Impact assessment

How does the policy contribute to Poplar HARCA's aims?	Delivering quality services is central to PH's commitment to its residents and community. This policy outlines how PH will respond when things go wrong.
Which group(s) of people will benefit from the policy?	No group has been identified as being disadvantaged.
How have residents been involved in developing the policy? If they have not been involved, why not?	The policy was informed by: • Complaints and Housing Ombudsman determinations • Estate Boards, Gatherings and JEP • Survey and focus group feedback
How will the policy be monitored and measured? (e.g. performance indicators?)	Performance is considered quarterly by Services Committee and Poplar Board, and JEP.
If any, what are the Value for Money implications?	To maintain consistency, this policy establishes a clear framework for awarding financial compensation.
Data Protection implications.	Personal information is collected, processed, and stored solely for the purpose of managing contacts, handling enquiries, and addressing complaints.