

Policy Name:	Customer Care and Complaints
Lead Directorate:	Corporate Services
Author:	Naz Ahmed, Deputy Director, Strategy
Reason for change:	Review
Date:	June 2025

CURRENT VERSION

Presented to:	Services Committee
Date:	June 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.

3. Unreasonable Behaviour

PH may restrict access to services and staff for individuals demonstrating aggressive, abusive, or unreasonable behaviour. Decisions will be reviewed by a senior manager at least every 6 months.

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.

4. Definition and Scope

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.

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.

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 that occurred more than 12 months ago.
- 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.

5. 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaints will be acknowledged within 2 working days.• 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.• Decision will be communicated within 10	<p>If dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A review can be requested within 4 weeks of the stage 1 decision.• 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.

working days.

- Extensions will be approved for complex cases and communicated with you

- Decision will be communicated within 10 working days.
- Extensions will be approved for complex cases and communicated with you.

6. Remedy

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

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

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?	<p>The policy was informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Performance is considered quarterly by Services Committee and Poplar Board, and JEP.

indicators?)	
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.