



# Complaints Policy

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## POLICY SUMMARY

EPIC aims to be a good landlord. The aim of this policy is to ensure that EPIC has an approach to complaints that is clear, simple, and accessible. By proactively listening to our customers and dealing with complaints about our services, we can make improvements based on the feedback from our customers. This also allows us to manage, respond and learn from complaints.

We aim to resolve all complaints promptly, politely, and fairly in line with the appropriate standards set by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing.

This policy sets out clear processes and timeframes to help our customers understand how we will investigate their complaint and how we will respond to them.

We have developed this policy in line with the dispute resolution principles recommended by the Housing Ombudsman, which are to:

- Be fair – treat people fairly and follow a fair process.
- Put things right.
- Learn from the outcomes.

## 1. APPLICABILITY

The Policy applies to all members of staff, including but not limited to:

- All full-time, part-time, and temporary staff employed by or working for or on behalf of EPIC.
- Volunteers.
- Contractors, consultants and third parties working for or on behalf of EPIC.
- Relevant to tenants and customers.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Empowering People Inspiring Communities Ltd (EPIC) is committed to providing high-quality services for all our customers. This includes all tenants, leaseholders, applicants, contractors and agents or anyone else who may use our services or is affected by our decisions. We are committed to providing a high-quality customer-feedback service, dealing with complaints in a fair and impartial way.

EPIC's clear purpose is to be a good landlord and our strategic objectives are the foundation of this policy: -

- **SERVICES – providing inclusive and accessible services meeting local and regulatory standards.**
- **ASSET MANAGEMENT – providing good quality & safe homes.**
- **PEOPLE – valuing & investing in our people to deliver desired outcomes.**
- **GOVERNANCE – operating as a well-governed, financially viable organisation and ensuring our services meet the required standard.**

The policy should be used for complaints about EPIC and the services that we deliver, including contractors' performance. The policy should not be used for complaints relating to a tenancy issue e.g., nuisance neighbours etc. which should be reported via the tenancy breach/anti-social behaviour process. However, it can be used to complain about our failure to deal with a tenancy issue appropriately.

### 3. CONTEXT

This document sets out our policy for dealing with complaints at EPIC Housing.

We define a complaint as:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action, or lack of action by the organisation, its staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

The resident does not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such. If a resident specifically requests an issue not to be treated as a complaint it will not be regarded as one. A complaint that is submitted by a third party or representative will still be handled in line with this policy.

We recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. A service request is a request from a resident requiring action to be taken by us to put something right. We will record, monitor, and regularly review service requests.

A complaint will be raised when the resident raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request.

Surveys will provide tenants with information on how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as part of the survey process if they wish.

To be clear residents can raise a complaint by any channel available, however, we recommend they use the link on the website [www.epichousing.co.uk](http://www.epichousing.co.uk)

We recommend that residents explain the details of the complaint from their point of view and the outcome they are seeking in their initial contact.

Our Complaints Procedure has 2 stages which are:

#### Stage one

- In all Stage One cases, a letter or email of acknowledgment will be sent to the complainant within three working days of receipt.
- The Complainant should receive a full written response within **ten working days of receipt of the original complaint.**
- The Complainant will have 21 days in which to escalate their complaint if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

## Stage two

- Complaints that are not resolved at Stage One will be reviewed at a more senior level within the organisation.
- The right to challenge the final decision is through the Housing Ombudsman along with their contact details: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

**Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ**

Call: 0300 111 3000

## 4. ESCALATING A COMPLAINT

EPIC will not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure and must have clear and valid reasons for taking that course of action.

When a complainant seeks to escalate a complaint, we will consider:

- What the escalation review will be about i.e., why the resident remains dissatisfied, and whether any part of the complaint has been resolved.
- Who will undertake the review.
- Who needs to be kept informed.
- What evidence needs to be gathered i.e., comments from those involved, relevant policies and contemporaneous records, inspections etc.
- How long the review will take and when it will be completed.

Where we decide not to escalate a complaint, an explanation will be given to the complainant. It will make clear that the previous response was its final response to the complaint and provide information on referral to the Housing Ombudsman.

## 5. EXCLUSIONS

We will accept complaints unless there is a valid reason not to do so; our exclusions are:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago. (N.B. we may not rely on this exclusion where complaints concern safeguarding or health and safety issues.)
- Legal proceedings have been started. We will take steps to ensure that residents are not left without a response for lengthy periods of time, for example, where a letter before action has been received or issued but no court proceedings are started, or settlement agreement reached.
- The issue giving rise to the complaint is not within EPIC's estate or was wrongly directed to EPIC.
- Complaints being pursued in an unreasonable manner, including persistent, repetitive, and vexatious complaints by one person, or where the complaint has already been dealt with in accordance with the complaint's procedure. In the case of a vexatious complaint being made, in exceptional circumstances we may take legal action against the complainant where this would be an appropriate and proportionate response.

A resident has the right to challenge this decision not to consider a complaint by taking their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. If appropriate the Housing Ombudsman will instruct EPIC to take on the complaint.

## 6. UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

We define an unreasonable and persistent complainant as:

“Complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with EPIC, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints.”

Although unreasonable or persistent, the complainant may have justified complaints which they are pursuing in inappropriate ways, therefore, before treating a complainant as such EPIC must be satisfied that:

- Their complaint is being or has been investigated in line with our procedure.
- The decision reached at the end of this was the right one.
- All communication with the complainant has been adequate and reasonable.
- The complainant is not providing any significant new information that may affect EPIC’s decision.

If the above conditions have been satisfied, the decision will be taken by a member of the Executive Team as to whether to treat the complainant as unreasonable, persistent, or vexatious. If we decide to proceed, the Complaints Procedure will be followed.

Any restrictions imposed on complainants will be reviewed every 6 months and a decision taken as to whether to continue or lift the restrictions. All decisions must be communicated to the complainant in writing (including via email where appropriate).

If a complaint is forwarded to the Housing Ombudsman for consideration, EPIC will co-operate fully and comply with all reasonable findings or recommendations.

Any complaint, even from a persistent or vexatious complainant, will be reviewed to ensure that EPIC comply with legal obligations.

## 7. ACCESSIBILITY AND AWARENESS

- EPIC operate efficient, helpful, and professional customer services which are available online; telephone and face-to-face services continue to be available for customers who cannot access our services digitally or for more complex queries or advice.
- The Director of Housing Management is the person assigned to take responsibility for complaints handling.
- EPIC provide access to this complaints policy via our website [www.epichousing.co.uk](http://www.epichousing.co.uk)
- Where our services do not meet this standard EPIC wants to hear from you.
- EPIC will consider the needs of our customers and residents and stakeholders when implementing our complaints policies and procedures.

- We communicate with our customers and seek feedback via several methods; EPIC encourages complaints, compliments, and suggestions about our services. Customers are encouraged to submit their comments via our website at [www.epichousing.co.uk](http://www.epichousing.co.uk)
- While we are happy to receive feedback through any channel, we would strongly recommend that you use the direct channels rather than social media for your own protection and confidentiality. If we are contacted via social media, we will respond in a private environment rather than any public forum in the interests of confidentiality.

## 8. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

### How to Make a Complaint

Information about how to make a complaint or give feedback can be found on our website [www.epichousing.co.uk](http://www.epichousing.co.uk)

Residents can complain via the following mechanisms; we will, however, take a complaint via whatever mechanism it is raised:

Online via our website:  
[www.epichousing.co.uk](http://www.epichousing.co.uk)

In writing to:  
EPIC,  
131-141 Ubberley Road,  
Bentilee,  
Stoke-on-Trent,  
ST2 0EF

By telephone:  
Tel: 01782 252575

Via email: [mailbox@epichousing.co.uk](mailto:mailbox@epichousing.co.uk)

Our residents can ask a friend, relative, a trusted person or an advocate to contact us on their behalf. In these cases, we will need the resident's consent to discuss any issues or provide a response to them.

## 9. RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring that they adhere to this policy.
- Escalate complaints in accordance with the complaints procedure.

The Director of Housing is responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedure are effective and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint-handling code.

## 10. TRAINING

Staff will be given the appropriate training to enable them to deal effectively with complaints.

## 11. DATA VALIDATION, REVIEW AND MONITORING

Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy lies with the Director of Housing Management.

## 12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

We are committed to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity for all. We are opposed to discrimination on any grounds, including race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, or any unjustifiable criteria. We are committed to developing a culture that values people from all sections of society and the contribution which everyone can make. We will ensure our approach to accessing properties is considerate of people's individual needs. We also adhere to the Equality Act 2010.

EPIC Housing recognises that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio-economic circumstances and will strive to ensure no person or groups of persons is treated with injustice due to their personal circumstances. EPIC will also ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation and will make sure the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998) will be adhered to.

## 13. MONITORING / REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years. A review may be conducted earlier if there are significant changes to either legislation or EPIC's operating practices.

## 14. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Housing Ombudsman – [Complaint Handling Code](#)
- Compensation Policy
- Regulator of Social Housing – [Consumer Standards](#)

## Version Control

Date of Review	Reviewer	Version Number	Changes	Date of Next Review	Approved By
05.04.2023	Cindy Gleghorn	V.8	<p>Removal of, and changes to procedure which was previously combined within this policy.</p> <p>Timescales added to response and escalation times.</p>	April 2026	Board