PORTSMOUTH CHURCHES
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD.

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Scope

i) Throughout this document, Portsmouth Churches Housing Association Ltd will be referred either as PCHA or The Association.

ii) This policy applies to all Portsmouth Churches Housing Association Limited residents, applicants for housing and those who come into contact with The Association. PCHA will accept complaints for all residents living in the Association's Hostels (St. Paul's House, St. Monica's House and Somers Road) and the Association's General Needs Properties.

iii) You are entitled to make your complaint through a representative and be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the Association. PCHA will accept complaints raised on your behalf so long as we have your written consent. Where correspondence is received on behalf of residents from a Councillor, MP or Advocacy Service, consent will be assumed.

iv) Neighbours and other members of the public will not be able to use the complaints procedure, but PCHA will respond to correspondence as a responsible organisation.

v) PCHA ensures that it will provide all residents with a fair and accessible complaints process and that the Association learns from any failings and improves its services.

vi) PCHA will promote the Housing Ombudsman Service, complying with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.

2. Policy Statement

i) Portsmouth Churches Housing Association aim to provide a good service, but when something goes wrong, PCHA would like you to make a complaint so that the Association can investigate, learn, develop and put right any wrongdoings.

ii) PCHA have adopted the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint as follows:
"A complaint shall be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident of group of residents".

iii) If a resident is dissatisfied with the way their service request has been handled, they may raise a stage 1 complaint. For example, a resident reported a repair and is unhappy with how the Association has dealt with issue, the length of time to resolve and its impact on the resident's household. PCHA aims to action any service requests within 5 working days. If a Stage 1 complaint has been made, PCHA ensure that they will continue to work to resolve the request.

iv) When a resident makes a complaint regarding the behaviour of an individual member of staff, PCHA ensures that this person will not be involved in the decision on the outcome of the complaint.

v) Complaints will be handled by the Housing Manager (the Complaint Handler), unless the complaint is about them.

The Complaint Handler will ensure that the complaints will be dealt with as confidentially as possible and consider all the information and evidence carefully.

vi) All PCHA residents are advised that the Complaints Procedure can be found on the Association's website. The Complaint's Procedure flow chart and a QR code for the website are on display on noticeboards in all hostels.

3 When PCHA will not consider a complaint

i) Complaints will be considered on their own merits but there may be times when the Association will not consider a complaint. For example: -

The event occurred more than twelve months before the date the complaint is made.
The complaint has been considered previously.
The issue is or has been subject to legal proceedings.

ii) If the Association refuses to consider the complaint, the residents will receive a written explanation and will be informed of their rights to take the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

4 Making a complaint

i) A complaint can be made to any PCHA staff member verbally in person or via telephone call. Residents may wish to email, write a letter or complete one of the Association's forms.

ii) Letters can be sent to the Head Office at St. Monica's House, Lucknow Street, Fratton, Portsmouth PO1 1PA
Telephone number for the Head Office is 023 92 297877
To send an email or request a form residents can email admin@pc-ha.co.uk

iii) So that the complaint can be dealt with fairly and for the issue to be resolved quickly, we will ask the resident: -

- What did the Association do wrong or failed to do?
- How did it affect them?
- What can we do to put things right?

iv) If the resident is unable to provide these details, we will consider any reasonable adjustments that may help them to provide this information. These adjustments will be in line with the guidance within the Equality Act 2010.

5. Two stages of complaints

There are two stages within this Complaints Policy, Investigation and Appeal.

Investigation – Stage 1

i) When a formal complaint is logged, it will be investigated by the Complaint Handler. A written acknowledgement will be issued within 5 working days in which it will state our understanding of the complaint, the outcomes required for resolution and what aspects of the complaint the Association are or are not responsible for. The Complaint Handler may contact you for further clarification to ensure that there is full understanding of the complaint.

ii) PCHA will complete a fair impartial and thorough investigation into the complaint including making enquiries with parties involved, reviewing communications and records. The Complaint Handler will keep you regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.

iii) PCHA aims to provide a full written response within 10 working days from when the acknowledgement was sent. There may be reasons that the Association require an extension to that time scale. If that were to happen, PCHA would contact you and explain the reasons. If you do not agree to an extension, you would be advised of your right to stop the investigation and refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

iv) During stage 1 the Complaint Handler will give you and if applicable, any employee who is subject of the complaint the opportunity to provide their version of events and provide evidence to support this. The Complaint Handler will also discuss their findings before issuing the final written response.

v) In a written response, all the points raised will be confirmed and provide clear reasons for any decisions reference relevant policy, law and good practice were appropriate. All actions required to address the issue will be tracked and completed as soon as possible with regular updates provided to you.

Appeal – Stage 2

i) If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 response then you may appeal and escalate to Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure. Residents must contact the Association within 20 working days of stage 1 being closed.

ii) The Stage 2 request will be acknowledged within 5 working days of being received. You will be asked to provide answers to the following questions within 5 working days

- What specific parts of your original complaint have we not investigated?
- What part of our response do you disagree with and why?
- What can we do to resolve the complaint and put things right?

iii) If no answers are provided within 5 working days, the Association will proceed with the Stage 2 review with the information that was available at that time.

iv) Stage 2 will be investigated by either the Executive Officer or a Board Member of the Management Committee that has no conflict of interest. It is a review of the Stage 1

investigation, and the overall aim of Stage 2 appeal is to make sure that complaint was handled correctly, that the original decision was correct, that the resolution offered was fair and reasonable and other opportunities to resolve the issue. If during this review new evidence/information not provided during Stage 1 investigation or unrelated allegations to the original complaint are being made, then we may open a new Stage 1 complaint and assign another complaint officer to investigate independently.

v) The Association aims to provide a formal written response to the outcome for the appeal investigation within 20 days of the acknowledgement of Stage 2 request. If we require further time to investigate, we would advise you of a new completion date to provide our response, which would be an additional 20 days. If you do not agree to the extension, then a response will be provided based upon what information is available to us at that time. The Housing Ombudsman contact information will be provided to you to prevent delays for you to access their service.

vi) The Stage 2 written response will give a detailed explanation of the findings, opportunities to improve the service that were identified from the complaint. It would also outline the remedies offered to resolve the complaint and monitor them to ensure that they are completed. Contact information would also be provided for the Housing Ombudsman should the resident wish to have the matter independently reviewed. We would arrange a meeting to discuss the findings before sending a final letter.

6. Putting things right

i) The purpose of this policy is to enable you to have the opportunity to safely raise a complaint and we recognise that sometimes we do get things wrong and with which we will apologise and always consider ways to try and resolve the issue quickly.

ii) Compensation payments are not automatic but if offered are based upon individual circumstances and losses that have been incurred.

7. Unacceptable behaviour

i) PCHA understands that raising a complaint can be stressful and frustrating for the resident but advise that any form of harassment, verbal abuse, aggression and threats of violence are not acceptable and could cause delays with the complaint being investigated.

ii) If severe mental or physical health is the cause of the unacceptable behaviour then the resident will be offered the opportunity to appoint an advocate to act on their behalf to prevent delays in resolving their complaint.

8. Learning from complaints

PCHA will take on board the findings from complaints raised and continue to ensure that the resolutions made are implemented throughout the service.

9. Housing Ombudsman Service

The Housing Ombudsman Service is a housing watchdog in which tenants can contact for free advice and support to resolve a complaint.

Residents can contact the Housing Ombudsman by writing a letter to:
Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Online: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

10. Relevant regulations and legislation

Equality Act 2010
Data Protection Act 2018
UK General Data Protection Regulation 2021
Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024

Policy reviewed and updated May 2026
Next Review April 2027