



Axiom Housing Association Limited

Corporate Strategy 2015-2020

Supporting - Corporate Objective

To provide **DISTINCTIVE HOMES** and
PERSON CENTRED services

POLICY

Complaints

Our Mission is to make a positive difference to people's lives and our communities
Our Values: Committed Caring Creative

Approved 22 September 2015

Policy updated on 21 October 2015 by replacing references to the Performance & Improvement Committee with the Resident Services Committee

Service Owner: Operations Director

Complaints

Aim

Axiom aims to provide excellent services – we work hard to adopt a 'right first time' approach, and we want to deal with all our residents, service users and applicants in a prompt, courteous and efficient way. However, there will be times when we don't get things right – when that happens we will apologise and try to put it right as quickly as possible.

All complaints, no matter how small, will be handled promptly, sensitively and efficiently. If we have made a serious error, then we will escalate the complaint quickly to ensure a quick and satisfactory resolution.

We value our relationship with our residents, service users and applicants and try to resolve complaints in an open and honest way. We are happy to explore alternative ways to resolve problems and there may be situations where we suggest using an independent mediation service. We value complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve and welcome complaints as a positive way for us to provide better services and higher standards.

Our commitment

1. Where possible, complaints will be resolved by the end of the next working day.
2. Our procedures have no more than 3 stages, and we make no distinction between informal and formal complaints.
3. Ensure that there are no adverse effects to the customer as a result of making a complaint and reassure the complainant of this.
4. When a complaint that has entered the 3 stage process has been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant we will carry out a satisfaction survey to ensure that procedures were followed and to identify any areas of good practice or improvement.
5. Consider compensation as appropriate in line with our compensation policy.
6. To undertake complaints handling training within Axiom's Induction process and our core training programme.

How to make a complaint

Our definition of a complaint is:

"Anything that has caused you to be unhappy about the service you have received from us".

This policy does not apply to:

1. Complaints about anti-social behaviour or nuisance by tenants and residents. Such complaints will be handled by a separate anti-social behaviour policy and procedure. However, if the complaint is about the way in which the nuisance has been handled then this will be covered by the Complaints policy.
2. Initial requests for a service or information, for example initial reporting of a repair. However, when we fail to meet our service standards this will be covered by the Complaints policy.

3. Complaints where legal action is already taking place or a decision has been made by the court.
4. Complaints about our decision to end a starter tenancy; refusal to offer a tenancy or licence after an applicant has been referred or nominated to us; exclusion from one of our supported housing projects; schemes; refusal of a mutual exchange – these would be dealt with under our appeals policy. However if the complaint is about the way in which the process has been handled then this will be covered by Complaints policy.
5. Complaints where responsibility rests within legislation, government or local authority policy; however Axiom will endeavour to support, signpost and/or liaise with the relevant authority where we feel it appropriate to do so.

Who can make a complaint?

The policy applies to complaints about any aspect of service provided by us and any 3rd party contractors carrying out services on our behalf from:

1. Any Axiom resident, service user or advocate on their behalf (who could be a representative of the Axiom Residents' Forum (ARF)).
2. Housing applicants (who have been referred to us via a local authority or another agency, or who have bid for one of our properties via a Choice Based Lettings scheme).
3. Neighbours or members of the public.

Complainants can contact ARF for advice or assistance.

Complaints can be made in any way and we strongly recommend that anyone who has a complaint contacts us at the earliest opportunity. This will help us to investigate the complaint fully and ensure a quick response

- in person
- in writing
- via e-mail
- using our feedback form
- website
- by telephone
- by text
- at our offices

Our 3 Stage Complaint Process

In the majority of cases, the complaint will be dealt with immediately. Where possible, complaints should be resolved by the end of the following working day. (These are logged onto internal systems and used to help improve our service).

Stage 1 Any complaint that is not resolved by the end of the following working day will be referred to the relevant manager or relevant appointed person and will receive a first response within 3 working days. A full reply will be sent (when further investigation is required) within 10 working days.

There will be occasions when the investigation may take longer; we will ensure that the complainant is kept fully informed on a regular basis, even when we have no specific progress to report.

- Stage 1 will also include any complaint that has previously been resolved, but not moved to Stage 1.
- Stage 2 If, after Stage 1 the complainant remains unhappy with the response, the complaint will be referred to the relevant Service Director. An initial response will be sent within 10 working days. If not resolved by the 10 days, contact is to be maintained to an agreed date with the complainant.
- Stage 3 In the unlikely event that the complainant still remains unhappy with the response and the complaint is not vexatious, they will be offered the opportunity to have the issue considered by representatives of Axiom's Board of Management and an independent member of the Compliments & Complaints Advisory Panel (made up of tenants and residents).

The Board of Management representatives and the Compliments & Complaints Advisory Panel member will receive a report, detailing the circumstances of the complaint. This will include any comments from the complainant including why they remain unhappy with Axiom's response, who will be given the opportunity to attend and put the complaint directly to the Board, with a friend or advisor.

The Board of Management will formally respond within 5 working days of the meeting.

If after Stage 3 the complainant still remains unhappy, they may take their complaint to a 'designated person' who will help them to resolve the complaint. A designated person can be a recognised tenants' panel, local councillor or Member of Parliament. If the designated person is unsuccessful in working with them and the Association to resolve the complaint, they can refer it to the Housing Ombudsman. However, should they not wish to refer the complaint to a designated person, they can make a direct referral to the Ombudsman after 8 weeks from the date the final response is received from the Board of Management.

See Appendix A – leaflet to be sent to complainants remaining unhappy after Stage 3.

The Housing Ombudsman -

We will work with the Housing Ombudsman and provide all relevant information, ensuring that we comply fully with any findings or recommendations made.

Housing Ombudsman Service, 81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 0300 111 3000
Fax: 020 7831 1942
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Vexatious, serial or unacceptable complaints

We recognise that a small minority of complaints may be vexatious (aggravated), serial or unacceptable. We will not accept:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour.
- Unreasonable demands which impact on our staff's time – for example continually making calls or changing the content of the complaint. Insisting on

- only dealing with a particular person.
- Unreasonable persistence – persistent refusal to accept a decision or explanation, or continuing to pursue a complaint without providing any new information.

Where a complaint has been identified as vexatious (aggravated), serial or unacceptable, the case will be referred to a member of the Executive Team who will decide whether Axiom agrees or refuses to progress the complaint. In these circumstances the complainant may be advised that the correspondence is at an end, the reason for this decision and that further letters received may not be responded to unless they contain new relevant information.

Monitoring and Reporting

All complaints (including those resolved by the end of the next working day) and satisfaction results are monitored on a quarterly basis by the Compliments and Complaints Monitoring Panel (made up of residents and staff) and also the Resident Services Committee, against targets set annually. These groups make recommendations for improvement. Results are reported in the Tenant's Annual Report and published on our website.

We also monitor the satisfaction results of the resident making the complaint by the following:

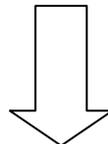
- Gender
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Disability
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender



Making a Complaint

Designated Persons and the Housing Ombudsman

You have now exhausted our three stage formal complaints procedure. *If you remain dissatisfied, please follow the steps below.*

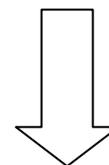
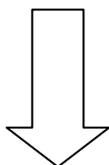


Designated persons' referral.

You may now take your complaint to an independent 'designated person', who will help you to resolve it. A designated person can be a Member of Parliament, local councillor within the district you live or a tenants' panel recognised by the Housing Ombudsman. *If you wish to refer your complaint to a tenants' panel, please see details overleaf.*

OR

Wait 8 weeks. If you do not wish to refer your complaint to a 'designated person', you can wait 8 weeks following receipt of our final response before making a direct referral to the Housing Ombudsman Service.



Independent Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman will consider your complaint when received as a referral from a designated person or following clarification that 8 weeks has passed since you received the response from our Appeal Panel. You can contact the Housing Ombudsman at Housing Ombudsman Service, 81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN, tel: 0300 111 3000, fax: 020 7831 1942, email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk, web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk



Complaints Tenants' Panel

In order to ensure that complaints are resolved locally, when you have exhausted our complaints procedure you may refer your complaint to a Tenants' Panel, who will act as your **designated person**.

The specialist Complaints Tenants' Panel is made up of members of Axiom Residents Forum. Panel representatives are selected at random from those members that have advised they have an interest in resolving complaints.

The Panel is an **independent** body, who will hear your complaint and make recommendations for resolution to our Chief Executive. The Panel and their recommendations will not be influenced by employees of Axiom Housing Association.

If you wish to refer your complaint to the Complaints Tenants' Panel, please advise Axiom's Customer Services Team. The Panel will hear your complaint within 20 working days of receipt of your referral and, following the Panel meeting, you will be provided with details of their recommendations and the action that will be taken by Axiom Housing Association within 10 working days.

If you remain dissatisfied following receipt of the Complaints Tenants' Panel process, you may then refer your complaint to the **Housing Ombudsman Service** using the details overleaf.