

## Complaints Resolution & Customer Care Policy

<b>Operating area:</b>	Housing		
<b>Approved by:</b>	Board		
<b>Effective date:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2020	<b>Next review date:</b>	November 2022
<b>Author &amp; responsible officer:</b>	Director of Housing		
<b>Status:</b>	Approved	<b>Version:</b>	2
<b>Audience:</b>	All staff who work with residents		
<b>Supersedes:</b>	Complaints Resolution and Customer Care Policy 2018		

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Board of the Industrial Dwellings Society (IDS) aims to give an excellent customer experience. We will listen, explain what can and cannot be done and do what we say we will. If we do not meet our service standards we will apologise, accept responsibility, put things right when they are under our control and listen to improve what we do.
- 1.2 IDS recognises and supports the need to deal with all complaints promptly, thoroughly and in an even-handed manner. Complaints present an opportunity for continuous improvement and, as such, will not be dealt with in a defensive manner.
- 1.3 We take full regard of the Regulator of Social Housing's published Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard paragraph 2.1.2 and shall:
  - *offer a range of ways for tenants to express a complaint*
  - *set out clear service standards for responding to complaints, including complaints about performance against the standards, and details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint*
  - *inform tenants how we use complaints to improve their services and publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints*
  - *accept complaints made by advocates authorised to act on behalf of a tenant/s*

### 2. What is a complaint?

- 2.1 A complaint is when you tell us that you are unhappy with our service, what we did or failed to do. We recognise that most complaints will be from customers who believe that we have failed to carry out responsibilities as a landlord. This may be because you feel that
  - service standards have not been achieved
  - we have disregarded or not fully considered factors we should have
  - we have consciously or otherwise acted in a discriminatory way or unfairly.

### 3. What is not considered as a complaint?

- 3.1 This policy is designed to cover issues that are not resolved by the normal landlord and tenant relationship - we would not include issues that can be resolved simply by reporting to us (e.g. an overflowing refuse bin or a broken light fitting). A complaint will usually be an issue which it has not been possible to resolve to the customer's satisfaction by local intervention.
- 3.2 IDS will not consider as a complaint anything that
- happened more than 6 months ago
  - has already been complained about or could have reasonably been raised during a previous complaint
  - can be considered as a vexatious
  - can be considered through an alternative complaint or appeal process such as transfer appeals or another customer's anti-social behaviour
  - is about compliance with a policy, law or regulation
  - is about IDS as an employer
  - is about repairs which are 'resident responsibility'
  - is an insurance claim – you are responsible for claims on your contents insurance
  - is, or has been, subject to legal, court, tribunal or Ombudsman proceedings
  - is made anonymously
- 3.3 We cannot accept a complaint if your behaviour is unreasonable eg if you threaten, verbally abuse or attack our staff, or are rude or offensive to staff or if you make approaches to several members of staff at the same time about the same issue after we have agreed a single point of contact. In such circumstances, we reserve the right to refuse to deal with complaints or deal with them differently.

#### **4. Who can make a complaint?**

- 4.1 Complaints and petitions will be considered from anyone who receives a direct service from IDS or from their authorised representative or advocate.
- 4.2 An advocate can be a friend/relative or representative from an external organisation, such as Citizens' Advice Bureau, but not a solicitor. If you authorise an advocate to act to act on your behalf, you must inform us in writing. Letters from solicitors or anyone legally trained will be responded to outside this complaints process. Issues raised by anyone else will be responded to as correspondence.

#### **5. How will we resolve your complaint?**

- 5.1 When you first let us know you are unhappy about a service, we will try to resolve the issue outside our complaints process e.g. we will re-book a missed appointment or complete an outstanding repair.
- 5.2 If you remain dissatisfied after we have taken the agreed action (or failed to do so) you can make a complaint. You can do this online, by email, phone, face to face or post.

- 5.3 You will be provided with a complaints form. We will ask you to provide full details of what has happened and how you would like us to resolve the complaint. We need you to tell us the remedy you are seeking before the matter is investigated.
- 5.4 We will also provide a leaflet explaining the complaints process with information about the Housing Ombudsman and how and when to access those services. Advice will be clear, accessible and available in formats appropriate to customers' needs. We will ensure that linguistic and other barriers to accessibility do not prevent customers from using this policy or its related procedures.
- 5.5 When we receive a complaint, we will acknowledge receipt within 3 working days and appoint a lead officer to carry out the investigation. We aim to respond with a resolution or an explanation within 10 working days.
- 5.6 If your complaint cannot be resolved straight away, we will write explaining that your complaint is being investigated. We may need to interview you or other parties and if we need more time or information from you, we will let you know. If you refuse to engage with us, we will have to close your complaint.
- 5.7 We will write to confirm our response and agreed actions. If we receive no response from you within 21 working days, we will close the complaint and send you a satisfaction monitoring form.

## **6. What if you are not satisfied with our decision?**

- 6.1 If you are unhappy with our decision, you can ask within 21 working days for your complaint to be reviewed by a member of the Corporate Management Team. You will need to explain why you remain dissatisfied and what remedy you are seeking.
- 6.2 We will respond within 10 working days outlining our proposed resolution.
- 6.3 If you do not accept the resolution further to the review, you can request that your complaint is considered by a Panel which will consist of a member of the Corporate Management Team who has not previously been involved with your case and one or more members of the Tenant Forum. You must set out what you would like IDS to do and what remedy you are seeking.
- 6.4 A Panel meeting will be convened within 1 calendar month and a response will be sent within 10 working days of the Panel meeting. You will have the opportunity to attend the Panel hearing and to present your case.

## **7. Compensation**

- 7.1 IDS may offer compensation in accordance with our Compensation Policy.
- 7.2 IDS will use compensation to offset money it is owed.

## **8. Feedback and monitoring**

- 8.1 We send feedback forms as this information helps us improve how we provide services and respond to complaints.

- 8.2 Complaints will be reviewed by the Corporate Management Team and the Housing Committee with consideration being given on how these might contribute toward the Association's continuous improvement approach to service delivery.
- 8.3 The Board will be provided with an annual summary of complaints activity and how they have contributed to service improvement. We will publish and review annually the process for dealing with complaints along with these associated timescales.

## **9. Enquiries from Councillors and MPs**

Enquiries on behalf of residents made by Councillors and MPs will be treated as correspondence and responded to within ten working days.

## **10. Unacceptable Behaviour and Person Warnings**

- 10.1 When someone's behaviour presents a real or imminent risk to others, IDS may restrict access to its staff and services, and register a warning on its computer database.
- 10.2 Examples of unacceptable behaviour include (but are not limited to) aggressive or abusive behaviour; unreasonable demands; or unreasonable persistence.
- 10.3 Restrictions and warnings must be approved by a Head of Service or a Director.
- 10.4 Except when doing so would pose a greater risk to staff or others, those about whom a warning is recorded will be told about it.
- 10.5 Warnings and restrictions will be reviewed every 6 months, and removed if no on-going risk is confirmed.
- 10.6 Appeals regarding a warning will be registered as a complaint.

## **11. Policy Review**

- 11.1 Policies are reviewed every 2 years or sooner if they no longer reflect best practice or legislative or regulatory requirements.
- 11.2 This policy was formulated in consultation with staff and residents.