

Complaints Policy

Approval Route	ELT April 2026 Operations Committee May 2026 Board June 2026
Applies to:	Residents, Prospective Residents, Non-Residents, Board Trustees, Employees

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1. Introduction

Policy Purpose & Aims

- 1.1 ExtraCare is committed to handling complaints fairly, transparently and in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

We aim to:

- Encourage residents and others to raise concerns without fear of disadvantage;
- Resolve complaints and put the issue right at the earliest opportunity;
- Respond fairly, consistently and on time;
- Learn from complaints to improve our services; and
- Ensure the confidentiality of those wishing to raise a complaint.

- 1.2 This policy explains:

- What we mean by a complaint;
- How a complaint can be made;
- How complaints are handled and reviewed; and
- How to escalate a complaint if a resolution is not achieved.

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2. Definitions

Term	Definition
Complaint	We use the Housing Ombudsman Service's definition of a complaint, as a Registered Provider of social housing: https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/ A complaint is '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 or group of residents.' A complainant does not need to use the word complaint for the issue to be treated as one. Any expression of dissatisfaction will be given the option of being recorded as a complaint.
A Service Request	A request for action to put something right, usually raised for the first time. Service Requests are not complaints but may become a complaint if the resident remains dissatisfied. If at any time a resident is dissatisfied with the action taken to resolve their Service Request, we will raise their concerns as a complaint whilst we work to resolve the issue.
Resident	A current tenant or leaseholder (outright owner / shared owner) in one of our ExtraCare owned locations, or locations that we manage on behalf of another landlord ('partner landlord').
Prospective Resident	Someone applying or considering applying for housing with ExtraCare.
Non-Residents	Visitors or others using ExtraCare services. Complaints made on behalf of residents require consent from the resident unless there is legal authority to act.

3. Regulatory and Legal Considerations

3.1 Summary of the main legislation/ Regulation relevant to this policy:

Legislation / Regulation	Relevance to this Policy
Housing Act 1996	Provides a framework for housing related complaints.
Equality Act 2010	Provides a duty for ensuring equality of opportunity for all protected groups and those associated with protected groups.
Localism Act 2011	Localism Act changes the way that complaints are dealt with once the complaints process of the landlord has been exhausted. The emphasis is that, where possible, complaints should be resolved at a local level, and this should ultimately reduce the numbers that are escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

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Legislation / Regulation	Relevance to this Policy
Human Rights Act 1988	Under the Equality Duty of the Human Rights Act, organisations have a duty to promote equality of opportunity. That duty applies when decisions about individuals are being made. Article 8 refers to the right to respect the right to private and family life.
Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024	Sets the requirements for complaint handling and learning. The Code can be viewed at: https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/
UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018, Data Protection Act 2018 and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025	All information held about our residents or colleagues must be in line with ExtraCare's Data Protection Policy and UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) guidance.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Detailed responsibilities are below:

Board	The Board ensures compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and is responsible for appointing a Member Responsible for Complaints (the 'MRC').
Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)	The MRC is a non-executive member of the Board. They provide independent oversight and assurance on complaint handling and learning.
Operations Committee	Trustees are responsible for ensuring they receive assurance that complaints are managed effectively.
Executive Leadership Team	The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) are responsible for ensuring: • Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code; • Learning from complaints is embedded; and • Annual self-assessment is published.
Senior Management Team and Department Heads	The Senior Management Team / Department Heads are responsible for supporting effective complaint handling and removing barriers to resolution.
Location Managers	Managers are responsible for promoting a positive complaint culture locally.
Complaints Team	The Compliance & Quality Manager leads complaint management, monitoring, reporting, and organisational learning. The wider team is responsible for ensuring complaints are recorded, monitored, supported and handled within timescales. They have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly. The team ensure complaint handlers are trained.
Housing & Resident Engagement Manager	Ensures transparency to residents and reporting through resident forums and annual publications. Also oversees the reporting and communication of Tenant Satisfaction Measures about Complaints.

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Complaint Handlers	They are responsible for investigating and responding to complaints professionally, fairly and on time.
All staff	All staff are responsible for following this policy and ensuring that complaints made, are managed appropriately and within the complaint handling timescales outlined in section 5.4.3. All staff are responsible for promoting the Complaints Policy and supporting residents to raise concerns.

5. Policy Statement

5.1 Scope of the Policy

- 5.1.1 This policy applies to:
- Residents
 - Prospective residents
 - Non-residents.
- 5.1.2 Housing management-related complaints in partner landlord locations may be referred to the partner landlord.
- 5.1.3 Complaints relating to ExtraCare's volunteers will be managed in line with the Volunteering Policy and related guidance.
- 5.1.4 We will investigate complaints about services provided by ExtraCare or by third-party contractors acting on our behalf (such as repairs or catering).
- 5.1.5 For care-related complaints, we may involve Social Services where necessary, including safeguarding or best-interest assessments. We also meet our duties under the 'Duty of Candour' and 'Making Safeguarding Personal' policies.
- 5.1.6 Complaints about independent traders will normally be directed to the trader. We will investigate complaints where services have been unsafe, discriminatory, or breach their agreement with ExtraCare.
- 5.1.7 An appeal against our decision to reject an application in relation to:
- Rent or purchase (either allocation, lettings or people wishing to buy properties); or
 - Alterations, Aids or Adaptations;
- will be processed as outlined in the appropriate policy i.e. ExtraCare's Letting Policy, Property Sales Policy and Alterations, Aids & Adaptations Policies. A complaint made regarding how an appeal was managed will be processed through this policy.
- 5.1.8 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) complaints are managed under the ASB Policy, except where the complaint concerns how ExtraCare has handled an ASB report.
- 5.1.9 We will process any complaint made from applicants or residents relating to an alleged breach of the Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO) Consumer Code as set out in section 5.11.1 (c) below.
- 5.1.10 This policy does not apply to staff who wish to raise a complaint about ExtraCare - these are managed by our Human Resources team (HR).

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- 5.1.11 This policy does not apply to complaints raised concerning ExtraCare's retail activities – these are managed by our Retail team.

5.2 How to raise a complaint:

5.2.1	Method	Definition
	'Tell Us Your Concern' Form	Complete the form available at our locations and submit it to the Location Manager/Location staff.
	In writing	By letter addressed to our Compliance & Quality Officer (based at our Head Office) at: The ExtraCare Charitable Trust, 7 Harry Weston Road, Binley Business Park, Binley, Coventry, CV3 2SN
	Email	complaints@extracare.org.uk
	Verbally (in person or by telephone)	To any member of staff at location or to our Head Office. Alternatively call 02476 506011 and select the Complaints Option to speak with our Complaints Team.
	Website	Complete the form on our website at: https://www.extracare.org.uk/contact/ or https://www.extracare.org.uk/feedback/

- 5.2.2 The Complaints Policy is accessible on the ExtraCare website (www.extracare.org.uk). Alternatively, they are available on request from the Complaints Team at complaints@extracare.org.uk or via 02476 506011.
- 5.2.3 The Complaints Policy or any related information can be requested from the Complaints Team in a different format e.g. large print.
- 5.2.4 We will exercise reasonable judgement in responding to expressions of dissatisfaction raised through other means, such as on our social media sites or ExtraCare's 'We're Listening' feedback system. We are unable to respond to anonymous complaints.
- 5.2.5 In general terms, we will respond to issues raised with us in writing as a complaint. However, we reserve the right to apply discretion depending on the nature of the issue being raised and to agree with the resident or complainant the most appropriate means of resolving the issue.
- 5.2.6 Where additional complaints are raised during a Stage 1 investigation, these will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if they are related, and the Stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the Stage 1 response has been issued, and the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.
- 5.2.7 Issues raised at resident meetings within our locations ('Street Meetings') may be addressed during the meeting or in follow-up meetings with individual residents to discuss their concerns. Where appropriate we will record these as either Service Requests (SR) or complaint.
- 5.2.8 Letters of complaint addressed to the Chief Executive, Executive Directors or Trustees will be processed the same as all other complaints and assigned to an appropriate member of staff for them to investigate and respond.

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5.2.9 We will ensure that we record: the date when a complaint is received, the date it is acknowledged, the date of the initial (Stage 1) response and the date of any (Stage 2) final decision. We will record the actions taken.

5.2.10 The confidentiality of those wishing to raise a complaint will be respected in line with our Data Protection Policy.

5.3 Service Requests

5.3.1 A **Service Request** is a request for action to put something right (for example, a repair request, a contractor has failed to turn up as arranged or a request for information).

5.3.2 Service Requests can be raised in the same way as a complaint i.e. 'Tell Us Your Concern' Form, in writing, by telephone, verbally, or via the ExtraCare website (See Section 5.2 'How to raise a complaint') however they are managed by the team at the specific location.

5.3.3 We will assess whether the issue is appropriate to be resolved as a Service Request in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. We will agree with the resident/complainant whether they wish us to record the issue as a Service Request.

- Service Requests are **not complaints**.
- Service Requests will normally be acknowledged within **1 working day** and resolved within **7 working days**.
- If the resident becomes dissatisfied with how the Service Request is handled, it will be logged as a complaint.
- Written responses are not required unless requested by the resident/complainant.

5.3.4 If the issue being raised cannot be resolved via a Service Request, it will be recorded as a Stage 1 complaint.

5.3.5 All complaints raised in relation to care e.g. issues relating to care delivery, failure in care service and the conduct of our care staff, will be handled as a complaint and will not be managed via the Service Request approach, unless specifically requested by the resident/complainant.

5.4 Complaint Process (Housing and Care related complaints)

5.4.1 The timescales listed below are those that are required by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsmen. These are the maximum timescales under the Code.

Note: a 'working day' is Monday-Friday (excluding Bank Holidays).

5.4.2 ExtraCare operates a two stage complaints method to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code, which is also agreed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

5.4.3 Stage 1:

Where a complaint is raised, we will:

- Acknowledge the complaint within a maximum of 5 working days from the date of receipt as day 0. We will send our acknowledgement in writing (by letter or email);
- Assign the complaint to an appropriate member of staff for investigation;
- Respond in writing in writing (by letter or email) within a maximum of **10 working days** from the date of its acknowledgement; and
- The response will:

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- Explain our findings;
- Say whether the complaint is upheld;
- Set out any actions or remedies; and
- Explain how to escalate.

Where we legitimately need more time to respond at Stage 1, we will agree this with the resident/complainant (up to an additional **10 working days**).

5.4.4 **Stage 2 Complaint Resolution**

Where a complaint is upheld we will:

- Apologise;
- Explain what went wrong; and
- Confirm actions taken and learning.

Where we have agreed actions with the resident/complainant to resolve the issues raised, we reserve the right to close the complaint pending those actions being completed.

5.4.5 **Care Related Complaints**

Care complaints are handled in accordance with:

- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulation 16: receiving and acting on complaints;
- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities 2014: Regulation 16); and
- Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman Compliant Handling Code is also applicable to care related complaints.

Where locations have Local Authority Care contracts in place, we will refer to their terms within our complaint management process.

We will process care related complaints with an approach that is consistent with our 'Duty of Candour' and 'Being Open' Policies, ensuring that we are open and honest with residents who receive our care services and support.

5.5 Making a complaint from, or on behalf of, residents

5.5.1 A complaint does not have to be in writing and may be made verbally. The word 'complaint' does not need to be used for an issue to be treated as a complaint. We will accept complaints from individual residents or from any named tenant or leaseholder within a household.

5.5.2 Resident Associations

- Where a complaint is raised by a Resident Association, we will normally respond to the Chair.
- We may ask the Association to confirm that its members consent to the complaint.
- Resident Associations cannot take complaints to the Housing Ombudsman. A **lead complainant** will be required for any external escalation.
- We will refer to the [Housing Ombudsman's guidance on group complaints](#) when a complaint is lodged by a Residents Association.

5.5.3 Complaints Made on Someone's Behalf

We will accept a complaint from someone acting on a resident's behalf where:

- Verbal or written consent is provided (e.g. family member or Power of Attorney. We will only correspond with the nominated person in relation to the complaint (not any other aspect of the resident's tenancy or lease));

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- The authority to act is relevant to the complaint; and
- The complaint relates only to the specific issue raised.

- 5.5.4 Where a resident lacks capacity, complaints may be accepted from someone with appropriate legal authority, such as a Power of Attorney or solicitor.
- 5.5.5 We will comply with the Equality Act 2010 by ensuring that we support residents appropriately to raise a complaint or take reasonable steps to ensure they have a third-party advocate if required.
- 5.5.6 Complaints relating to deceased residents may be accepted if raised by someone authorised to administer the estate and the issue is legitimately related to the interests of the deceased.

5.6 Complaints from non-residents, not relating to a resident

5.6.1 Definition

If we receive a complaint in relation to an issue that is not directly related to a resident or prospective resident, we will accept the complaint if it is *“an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to either staff conduct; services provided by ExtraCare direct to external residents; our retail shops; or to commercial lease or licence arrangements where there is a potential breach of such agreements”*.

5.6.2 Resolution

These complaints cannot usually be escalated to the Housing Ombudsman (except housing applications) and we will advise complainants of this at the outset. If unresolved after escalation, complainants will be advised that ExtraCare’s final decision is definitive. Complainants will be signposted to independent advice where appropriate e.g. Citizens Advice, local council or solicitor.

- 5.6.3 We will apply the same principles used for resident complaints regarding exclusions, reasonable adjustments, and compensation.
- 5.6.4 If we receive a non-resident related complaint in reference to a contract or agreement we have with a third party, we will consider using mediation/arbitration to resolve the issue. We reserve the right to refer the matter to our solicitors for resolution.

5.7 Complaints regarding ExtraCare staff members

- 5.7.1 Complaints about staff conduct are investigated by Human Resources in line with the Disciplinary Policy.

5.8 Reasonable Adjustments

- 5.8.1 We will make any reasonable adjustments required so that residents can make a complaint and support them through the complaints process. Reasonable adjustments will be made in line with our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and in the best interests of residents. These may include:
- Advocacy support;
 - Translation and alternative formats;
 - Adjusted meeting arrangements; and/or
 - Mediation or alternative dispute resolution.

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5.9 Exclusions

- 5.9.1 We will always accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. We will not be able to accept or escalate a complaint where:
- They are made anonymously (unless safeguarding or whistleblowing applies. In these instances they will be processed in accordance with the relevant policy);
 - They are raised more than 12 months after the issue occurred (unless good reason is provided);
 - They have already been fully investigated and/or where the Housing Ombudsman or other relevant body have determined on the case;
 - They relate to matters outside our responsibility i.e. about services, organisations, or individuals, but we will signpost accordingly;
 - They relate to Data Protection. Any concerns regarding how ExtraCare handle personal data will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy;
 - Multiple complaints are raised by the resident/complainant. We reserve the right to incorporate these into one complaint. The approach we take will be based on the most reasonable course of action for us to resolve the issue(s);
 - Legal action or statutory review is underway (for example, First Tier Tribunal in relation to variable service charges). Such issues will be referred to our solicitor as appropriate. Claims for personal injury will be dealt with by our insurers;
 - We decide not to accept a complaint or not escalate a complaint to Stage 2. In these cases, we will clearly explain the reasons for the decision in writing and where applicable offer an alternative dispute resolution (e.g., mediation) or advise the resident/complainant of their right to seek advice from the appropriate Ombudsman service i.e. Housing Ombudsman Service or Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman; or
 - New issues are raised by the resident/complainant at Stage 2. We reserve the right to raise these new issues via Stage 1 of the complaints process. This would not delay or prevent us from seeking to resolve the original issue(s) raised through Stage 2.

5.10 Compensation

- 5.10.1 We will consider offering fair and reasonable financial compensation to those who have been adversely affected by an issue where this is appropriate and in line with the Housing Ombudsman remedies guidance.
- 5.10.2 Residents should not withhold rent or the payment of other charges in relation to a complaint or dispute with us. All charges should be paid as per the terms of the tenancy or lease. Where a resident is in arrears with rent or charges with us, we reserve the right to offset any compensation payment against such arrears.

5.11 External Adjudication

- 5.11.1 a) Housing – related complaints
Residents/complainants who remain dissatisfied with the complaint response after it has completed Stage 2 of ExtraCare's complaints process, may formally refer their complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman by contacting them at:
- Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET Telephone: 0300 111 3000
Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

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In line with our commitments under the ARCO Code, we will co-operate fully with the relevant Ombudsman Service during any investigation and comply fully with the Ombudsman's final decision, which will be binding on us. Care-related complaints

b) Care-related complaints

Where the complaint relates to our care or our well-being services, these may be referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman by contacting them at:

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: <https://www.lgo.org.uk>

(Note: that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) do not investigate individual complaints, so we advise those who wish to escalate a care-related complaint to refer to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. This does not preclude direct contact with the (CQC) if the resident chooses to do so).

Should a complaint be escalated to an Ombudsman for External Review we will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Ombudsman and comply fully with the resulting final decision

c) Breaches of ARCO Consumer Code

As an ARCO Approved Operator, we always seek to comply with the Consumer Code of the Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO). ARCO itself does not have a complaint handling function but can refer evidence of a breach of this Code to its Standards Committee. In issuing our final decision on any complaint that relates to compliance with the ARCO Consumer Code, we will signpost residents who remain dissatisfied with our response to 'The Property Ombudsman' (TPO). TPO is ARCO's nominated approved Alternative Dispute Resolution provider for disputes under the Code. Either we or the resident may refer the dispute to TPO.

5.12 Acceptable Behaviour

- 5.12.1 We will seek to ensure that we respond to all complaints however made and expressed and will not discriminate against anyone who makes a complaint. If a resident/complainant behaves inappropriately in making a complaint, we will seek to manage that behaviour as necessary, while treating the complaint like any other
- 5.12.2 Where the expression of the complaint breaches our Acceptable Behaviour Policy, we will make reasonable efforts to support a resident/complainant to raise a complaint in a way that complies with our Acceptable Behaviour Policy.
- 5.12.3 We will advise the resident/complainant of the specific breach of our Acceptable Behaviour Policy, the remedy that we require them to make and offer support to enable them to make a complaint in an appropriate way. This could include seeking an advocate to act on their behalf, and to facilitate meetings / discussions with the resident/complainant in an environment suitable for their needs.
- 5.12.4 In situations where, despite our best efforts to support a resident/complainant to make a complaint in a way that complies with our Acceptable Behaviour Policy, we may still be unable to progress the complaint. In these circumstances, we reserve the right to decline to consider the complaint further, subject to ensuring compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

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5.13 Information, Learning, Training and Reporting

5.13.1 All reasonable steps will be taken to publicise this policy to all residents, including through Resident ('Street') Meetings, with the aim of ensuring that their rights and obligations under this policy are explained.

5.13.2 Learning from complaints

Learning is recorded, shared and reported annually.

Residents/complainants will be contacted at the conclusion of their complaint journey to determine their satisfaction with how we handled their complaint.

5.13.3 Reporting

We will:

- Report on complaints handling at least annually to our Resident Forum;
- Publish a summary of our complaint handling in our Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report;
- Self-assess our complaint handling against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code each year and publish compliance annually on our website; and
- Seek feedback from residents annually on satisfaction on complaints / complaint –handling via our Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

5.13.4 Training

Staff receive appropriate complaint handling training.

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1 Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Compliance & Quality Manager. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years with the Resident Forum consulted for feedback during the review process.

7. Associated Policies

Acceptable Behaviour Policy *	Data Protection Policy *
Lettings Policy *	IT Cyber Security Policy
Property Sales Policy	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy *
Volunteering Policy	Anti-Social Behaviour Policy *
Whistleblowing Policy *	Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk Policy *
Dignity, Privacy and Respect Policy	Duty of Candour and Being Open Policy

8. Associated Work Instructions

Complaint Handling Guidance	
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