



WILLOW TREE

HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Complaints Policy

Version:	v4
Responsibility for the Policy	Head of Corporate Services
Date approved by Executive	April 2023
Date approved by Board (if applicable)	May 2023
Date due for review:	April 2026

Statement of Intent

Willow Tree Housing Partnership Limited (WTHP) recognises the significant role the Housing Ombudsman has in setting out the standards required for our complaints service. Our Complaints Policy and Complaints Procedure have been developed in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, our statutory and legal duties and resident feedback.

Policy Objectives

WTHP's objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees is to:

- have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working together across our teams
- take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others
- act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing.

WTHP is committed to providing services that effectively and efficiently meet residents' needs. WTHP will listen to residents' experiences and respond to comments and complaints. Sometimes things do go wrong and when this happens WTHP will work hard to put things right.

WTHP will investigate fully all complaints made about its services from tenants, former tenants, residents, customers and their relatives and neighbours. WTHP has a three-stage procedure that provides for clear stages of progression and supports this policy for dealing with complaints. This Policy and Procedure are publicised on the WTHP website and also outlined within the tenants' handbook.

WTHP defines a complaint 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 or group of residents.

WTHP will carry out an annual assessment against the Ombudsman Code to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with the Codes requirements and publish the results to our Board and residents.

This Code will act as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the landlord's internal complaints procedure.

WTHP will;

- Make it as easy as possible to make a complaint, by phone, email, in writing, verbally on social media or any other reasonable method. Complaints will be registered as a complaint, even if the communication does not use the word complaint.
- Understand the different needs of complainants, especially in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, providing additional support where appropriate.
- Allow any complainant to nominate a representative to deal with their complaint at any stage of the process.
- Try to resolve issues at the earliest stage possible preferably informally as part of our normal business.
- Keep complainants informed of progress, even if there is none, and the outcome of any investigation.
- Treat all complaints confidentially and in accordance with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Where appropriate offer mediation between WTHP and the complainant, although the complainant is not obliged to take up the offer.
- Accept any request to escalate a complaint once a stage is completed.
- Where a complainant is exhibiting unacceptable behaviour, or the complaint amounts to abuse, refer to the appropriate policy.
- Give complainants the option to escalate their complaints with 14 days of the final decision at the end of stages 1 and stage 2.

WTHP will undertake to review, learn from and improve practices where complaints give rise to gaps in its service that need to be addressed.

Details of all complaints and compliments received is presented annually to WTHP's Audit and Risk Committee.

Response Time scales

Stage 1

- Acknowledgement within 5 working days of receipt
- Respond in full within 10 working days of acknowledgement

Stage 2

- Acknowledgement within 5 working days of receipt of request to escalate
- Respond in full within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated.

Stage 3

- Respond to request within 7 working days
- Review Panel to be convened within 20 working days of receipt of all required information.

- Final decision of Review Panel within 7 working days

Complaints Officer

The Corporate Services Manager is the nominated Complaints Officer who is responsible for tracking complaints and ensuring that a response is given within the published timescales.

Reference Documents

- WTHP Compensation Policy
- WTHP Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- WTHP Complaints Procedure & Internal Complaints Process
- Housing Ombudsman Code

When setting policy, the Willow Tree Housing Partnership will ensure a golden thread of best practice runs through all aspects of its operations in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion. It will seek to minimise adverse environmental impacts arising as a consequence of its work. This approach and all policies will be reviewed on their anniversary date or as new guidance or legislation is introduced, whichever occurs sooner.