



# WILLOW TREE

HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

# Complaints Procedure

|                                       |                            |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Version                               | v7                         |
| Responsibility for Procedure          | Head of Corporate Services |
| Date reviewed & approved by Executive | August 2025                |
| Date due for review                   | August 2027                |

## 1 On receipt of a complaint

On receipt of a complaint, Willow Tree Housing Partnership Limited (WTHP) will decide whether the matter falls within the scope of WTHP's Complaints Policy. This will be decided by the Complaints Officer.

If WTHP decides not to accept the complaint, and it does not constitute a clear request for service which would be dealt with outside of the policy, a detailed explanation will be provided to the complainant. The explanation given will set out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right for the complainant to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may instruct WTHP to take on the complaint.

If the issue is considered as a complaint WTHP's stage 1 of the complaints procedure will commence. At all times where an issue is considered as a complaint the detailed internal complaints process will be followed.

## Complaint Stages

### 2 Stage 1

This stage will be led by WTHP's relevant Manager for the area of service.

- 2.1 WTHP will log the complaint as a stage 1 complaint and send an acknowledgment to the complainant within **5 working days** of receipt. Within the complaint acknowledgement, WTHP will set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the complainant is looking for. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, WTHP will contact the complainant directly, i.e. by phone and ask for clarification. Clarification of the complaint and desired outcomes will be included within an acknowledgement.
- 2.2 WTHP will respond to the complainant within **10 working days** of the complaint being logged. In exceptional circumstances if WTHP is unable to provide a full response within **10 working days**, WTHP will provide an explanation to the complainant containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further **10 working days** without good reason. At this point, the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman will be provided so the complainant can challenge WTHP's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of our response.
- 2.3 If the problem is a recurring issue, WTHP will consider any older reports as part of the

background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the complainant.

- 2.4 A complaint response will be sent to the complainant when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions needed to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions are identified and will be tracked, reviewed and actioned with regular updates provided to the complainant. WTHP will address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law, and good practice where appropriate.
- 2.5 Where complainants raise other complaints during the investigation, these will be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are relevant, and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint will be logged as a new complaint.
- 2.6 WTHP will confirm the following in writing to the complainant at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:
- the complaint stage.
  - the complaint definition
  - the decision on the complaint
  - the reasons for any decisions made.
  - the details of any remedy offered to put things right.
  - details of any outstanding actions
  - name of member of staff as their single point of contact
  - the Housing Ombudsman contact details.
  - details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2, within 28 working days, if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome or say that the complaint will be closed after 28 working days.
- 2.7 On a quarterly basis, Corporate Services will contact a minimum of 10% of stage 1 complainants for feedback on the complaints process. All feedback is to be recorded and followed up.

### **3 Stage 2**

This stage will be led by a WTHP Executive team member.

- 3.1 If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at stage 1, it can be progressed to stage 2, unless an exclusion ground applies. A complaint will only escalate to stage 2 once it has completed stage 1 and at the request of the complainant within the 28 day timescale.

In circumstances where WTHP declines to escalate a complaint, WTHP will clearly communicate in writing the reasons for not escalating as well as the complainant's right to approach the Ombudsman about the decision.

- 3.2 The person considering the complaint at stage 2, will not be the same person that

considered the complaint at stage 1.

- 3.3 On receipt of the escalation request to progress the complaint to stage 2, WTHP will within **5 working days** contact the complainant and set out their understanding of the position, in writing. The complainant will be asked why they still are unhappy, what issues are outstanding and what the desired outcome is. However, the complainant does not have to explain their reasons for escalation if they do not wish to do so.
- 3.4 The Exec member will call the complainant at this stage to discuss the complaint but will be mindful of point 3.3 that the complainant does not have to explain their reasons for escalation.
- 3.5 Where the complainant does not provide added context to the escalation, the Stage 2 will involve a full review of the original complaint and response at Stage 1 to ensure that everything was addressed.
- 3.6 WTHP will respond to the stage 2 complaint **within 20 working days** of the complaint being escalated. In exceptional circumstances, if WTHP is unable to provide a full response within **20 working days** WTHP will provide an explanation to the complainant containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further **20 working days** without good reason. At this point, the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman will be provided so the complainant can challenge WTHP's plan for responding and/or the proposed timelines of our response.

Additional actions identified will be tracked, reviewed and actioned with regular updates provided to the complainant.

- 3.7 WTHP will confirm the following in writing to the complainant at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:
  - the complaint stage.
  - the complaint definition
  - the decision on the complaint
  - the reasons for any decisions made.
  - the details of any remedy offered to put things right.
  - details of any outstanding actions
  - the Housing Ombudsman contact details if they are still unhappy with the final response.
- 3.8 On a quarterly basis the CEO and MRC meet to review a minimum of 25% of all Stage 2 complaints to identify any additional lessons learned and provide feedback on the quality of response. Actions identified are tracked and followed up. Following this review, The Resident Scrutiny Panel also undertake a review of the same complaints reviewed by CEO and MRC to give feedback and additional lessons learned from a residents' perspective.

- 3.9 On a quarterly basis the Head of Corporate Services will arrange contact with all Stage 2 complainants to obtain the tenants' views on the complaints process and to ensure that any actions identified have been completed or are in hand. All feedback is to be recorded and followed up.

### Risks and Mitigation

| Risk                                                                              | Control                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| That complaints are not resolved                                                  | The Complaints Officer will be responsible for ensuring that complaints are responded to within the appropriate timescales.                                                                                              |
| That complainants do not get a resolution to their complaint in a reasonable time | The procedure includes timescales for complaint resolution. However, it is understood that some complaints may be complex and where the timescales are not kept it is important for the complainant to be kept informed. |
| The complainant is unsure how to escalate complaints                              | The Housing Ombudsman's contact details will be published on the website and on standard responses at both stages of the complaints process.                                                                             |
| Tenants not satisfied with complaints process                                     | Formal documented follow-up is sought after stage 1 and stage 2 responses on the complaints process.                                                                                                                     |
| Quality of responses not adequate, relevant or tenant focussed                    | CEO and MRC quarterly reviews look at 25% of all stage 2 responses to ensure responses are appropriate.                                                                                                                  |
| Lessons learned not identified or followed up                                     | Complaint responses and CEO & MRC reviews identify lessons learned and these are tracked and followed up by Exec at monthly SLT meetings.                                                                                |

### Reference Documents

- The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
- All legislation and guidance relating to rights of complaint
- WTHP Complaints Policy
- WTHP Complaints Process
- WTHP Compensation Policy
- WTHP Unreasonable Behaviour Policy
- WTHP ASB Policy