

## **Berhamsted and Hemel Hempstead Society Complaints policy**

We are committed to providing you with an excellent service. We understand, however, that sometimes the service we provide may not meet your expectations. If this is the case, we want to know about it.

### **1. Context aims & objectives of this policy**

Our Society has adopted this policy in recognition that a formal complaint process is occasionally needed. We hope that most problems can be resolved more easily and if something is wrong, we want to put it right. Usually a word with the House Manager or a volunteer will be enough. If not, the following notes explain what needs to be considered and who to contact in a variety of circumstances.

This policy is essentially for the benefit of residents, but the process described may be used for any complaints received, excepting those which are covered under the Staff Disciplinary and Grievance policy.

All complaints will be kept confidential. We will only divulge your name with your permission or in situations where the investigation requires this to proceed.

### **2. What to do if you have a concern or a complaint?**

We are committed to providing a high quality of service but understand that sometimes we may not meet expectations. If so, we want and need to know about it. Don't be afraid to complain - sometimes it is the only way we can find out that things are wrong. We welcome suggestions and comments from residents, their families and representative, to help improve the services we provide.

If you have a concern, the first person to speak to is usually the house manager or a house volunteer. A note will be made, and we will try to sort it out immediately (or, if not, within five working days). In most cases this will resolve the matter quickly and satisfactorily. If you feel you cannot raise your concern in this way, or are not satisfied with the initial response you receive, please

- put details of your complaint in writing or an email and send it to the Business Manager who will act as, or arrange the appointment of, a "Complaints Officer" to look into the complaint. OR
- ask a member of staff or a volunteer to write down your complaint and show or read it to you for your approval and signature. They will then pass it on appropriately.

### **3. What happens next?**

Our procedure, then follows three stages.

#### **Stage 1: Investigation by the Complaints Officer**

The Complaints Officer will be someone who has not had previous involvement with (nor is the subject of) the complaint. The person looking into your complaint will try to resolve it within five working days. They will also aim to send you a full written response to your complaint within 10 working days but will let you know sooner if this is not possible.

#### Stage 2: Review by the House Chair

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, you can contact our House Chair to ask for a review. Someone else will be appointed to undertake the review if the House Chair was involved at an earlier stage. You will need to explain why you are dissatisfied and the Reviewer will consider your comments in relation to the complaint and investigation. A full written response will be issued within 10 working days, but we will let you know sooner if this is not possible. We hope that by this stage you will be satisfied with how your complaint has been dealt with.

#### Stage 3: Appeal to the Board of Trustees

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 2 response, you can contact your Secretary, Treasurer or Executive Chair, advising that you wish to appeal the decision. The person you contact will arrange for three members of the Board not previously involved with your complaint to hear your appeal at a meeting in a suitable location. We will try to set this up within one month at a date convenient to you and will invite you to the hearing. You can ask someone (but not a legal representative) to come and support you and help you to present your case. Others involved in the complaint may also be present. We will tell you the outcome of the appeal within 10 working days of the hearing.

#### Stage 4: Ombudsman

Our Society subscribes to the Housing Ombudsman Service

Their requirements involve a three-step process, the first of which is that the complainant must have completed the complaint process of the landlord, i.e. the steps listed above.

Having done so, if you are still dissatisfied with the outcome you can find out more about how to proceed at - [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) or by telephone on 0300 111 3000

Following your complaint and after a reasonable interval we will write to you to find out whether you are happy with the way we have dealt with it.

#### 4. Further points and information

Our Business Operations Manager will normally be the person who acts as Complaints Officer. If the complaint relates to our Business Operations manager, write instead to the House Chair. Complaints addressed to him or her should be marked "Private & Confidential." You can obtain full contact details for all of our Society Officers from the House Manager or Business Operations Manager.

We cannot deal with a complaint if it raises issues that are already the subject of legal proceedings, including insurance claims. If this happens, we will write to you to explain the situation.

We are a member of The Abbeyfield Society, but please note that they are a separate legal entity and will not be involved in our complaints process.

If there is anything above which you don't understand or if you have any questions or comments about how the complaints procedure works, the House Manager or a Volunteer will be happy to answer your questions.

Our Society is committed to providing the highest standards of support for older people and we welcome any comments, suggestions or feedback you may have either about our complaints procedure or anything else which helps us to improve our services for residents.

## 5. Changes since last version of this Policy

This version has been prepared for use by member Societies.

The underlying content is largely unaltered from the previous version.

### **[Download the Complaints form](#)**

In line with the Housing Ombudsman's Code, we complete an annual self-assessment of our complaint handling procedures.

[Summary of findings from The Abbeyfield Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead Society's self-assessment of our complaint handling procedures in 2023](#)

[Annual complaints performance and service improvement report 2025](#)

[Appendix A: Self-assessment form](#)