



Complaints:

CIH charter for housing



# Complaints: CIH charter for housing

The CIH complaints charter is a flexible framework that helps you to develop and deliver an excellent internal approach to managing and resolving customer complaints. It focuses on organisational values, the accessibility of the service, the processes and the overall customer experience.

The charter is focused on your internal complaints service - specifically in relation to complaints about your organisation and the services you provide. We have not attempted to set out a prescriptive definition of what constitutes a complaint in the context of this charter - this is up to you, in consultation with your customers, to determine. You may want to use or adapt the following definition, which is widely used across a range of industries and sectors: *a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation or its staff affecting an individual customer or group of customers.*

The charter includes a set of commitments which are underpinned by a range of outcomes - together, the commitments and outcomes provide a framework against which organisations can assess where they are now and where they aspire to be. By signing up to this charter, you are demonstrating to your customers that complaints are welcomed, taken seriously, resolved and learned from.

There are six core principles underpinning the complaints charter for housing:

1. Sign up is voluntary and based on self-assessment
2. It has been developed using sector expertise
3. It is flexible and can be tailored to suit the outcomes that matter to you and your tenants
4. It is focused on outcomes, not processes
5. It drives sector-led improvement
6. It complements existing frameworks or initiatives

# Signing up to the charter

We recognise that the housing sector is diverse and that capacity, resources and priorities will vary from organisation to organisation. It is also really important that organisations have the space to innovate and be creative in their approach. As such, we recommend that you use the complaints charter as a framework which can be built on and adapted to respond to individual and local circumstances. It is up to you, your staff and your customers how you use the charter - to drive continued excellence or to act as a springboard for change - the key thing is that you deliver the right outcomes for your customers.

Once you have signed up to the charter you can:

- Share practice and learn from others: CIH will support a free, open-access website and participating organisations will be invited to upload short practice examples that align to the charter principles, which they will share with the wider sector. This reflects the principles of transparency and sector-wide shared learning which underpins the charter
- Join our complaints network: organisations that sign up to the charter will join our free complaints network where they can share ideas, expertise and knowledge with other charter signatories to drive improvements in internal complaints management.

**Sign up at [www.cih.org/complaintscharter](http://www.cih.org/complaintscharter)**

## Support and assistance

CIH has a team of experts who can provide external assistance and critical challenge. Contact us to find out more by emailing [policyandpractice@cih.org](mailto:policyandpractice@cih.org) or calling 024 7685 1777.

HouseMark also offers a range of services including:

- Complaints benchmarking
- Complaints accreditation service
- HouseMark complaints adviser service, in conjunction with Rafael Runco, and complaints club

# What are we signing up to?

	Core commitment	We can demonstrate that
1	<b>Our positive and flexible approach to complaints is embedded throughout our organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our approach to complaints handling is reflected by our values, aims and objectives</li> <li>• We adopt the principle that all expressions of dissatisfaction should be taken seriously and acted on appropriately</li> <li>• We have a positive approach to complaints and they are welcomed as part of our wider approach to collecting customer feedback</li> <li>• We are committed to dealing with complaints in a fair, impartial and timely manner</li> <li>• We are committed to using complaints to review and improve the services we provide and to shape our business</li> <li>• We recognise the importance of complaints and allocate the appropriate level of resources to ensure we can deal with and resolve them effectively</li> </ul>
2	<b>Our complaints service is open and accessible to all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any of our customers wishing to make a complaint can do so freely in an easy and simple way, using a range of different methods</li> <li>• We ensure that information about our complaints service, and relevant support or advocacy services, is promoted, easy to understand and can be accessed by all of our customers</li> <li>• We use information about our customers to help us shape and develop a fair and accessible complaints service</li> <li>• All our staff will take ownership of a complaint and either seek to resolve it or pass it on to a relevant person</li> <li>• Our customers are confident that complaints are welcomed, treated seriously and will be dealt with in confidence</li> </ul>

# What are we signing up to?

	Core commitment	We can demonstrate that
3	<b>We deliver a quality complaints service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have clear processes and service standards in place so that customers know what to expect from our service. We regularly review these with customers to ensure that they continue to meet their needs</li> <li>• We keep the number of stages in our complaints process to a minimum and focus on resolving complaints at the first stage wherever possible</li> <li>• We focus on effectively resolving complaints within our published timescales</li> <li>• Customers are kept fully informed about who is handling their complaint, how to contact them and what will happen next and by when</li> <li>• Customers receive a decision that is objective, evidence-based and addresses all the issues that have been raised</li> <li>• We keep clear and accurate records as a matter of course and can account for the decisions that we have made</li> <li>• Customers are informed of how they might escalate their complaint once our internal procedure is exhausted, if they feel the problem is still not resolved</li> </ul>
4	<b>We work with our customers to shape and improve our complaints service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers are involved in the review and continuous improvement of the complaints process to ensure that it is fit for-purpose, objective and outcome focused</li> <li>• We will support tenant panels (or their equivalent) to operate independently and to be actively involved in facilitating the resolution of complaints</li> <li>• We provide appropriate training to customers who are involved in the monitoring, review and resolution of complaints</li> </ul>

# What are we signing up to?

	Core commitment	We can demonstrate that
5	<b>We monitor our performance and learn from feedback to continually improve our services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We use performance measures that are focused on monitoring the effectiveness of our complaints handling to improve the service</li><li>• We ask our customers if they are satisfied with our complaints handling and we use this feedback to learn and to improve the service</li><li>• We regularly compare our complaints service with other organisations to improve the quality and value for money of our service</li><li>• We consistently analyse the trends arising from complaints and use this information to inform our approach to customer service and staff training, to drive improvement and to target resources</li><li>• We seek to learn from all expressions of dissatisfaction, including those that are resolved at the first point of contact, and to use them to inform our improvement plans</li><li>• We regularly publish details of how we have improved our services as a result of learning from complaints</li></ul>



**Contact us:**

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