



Complaints Policy

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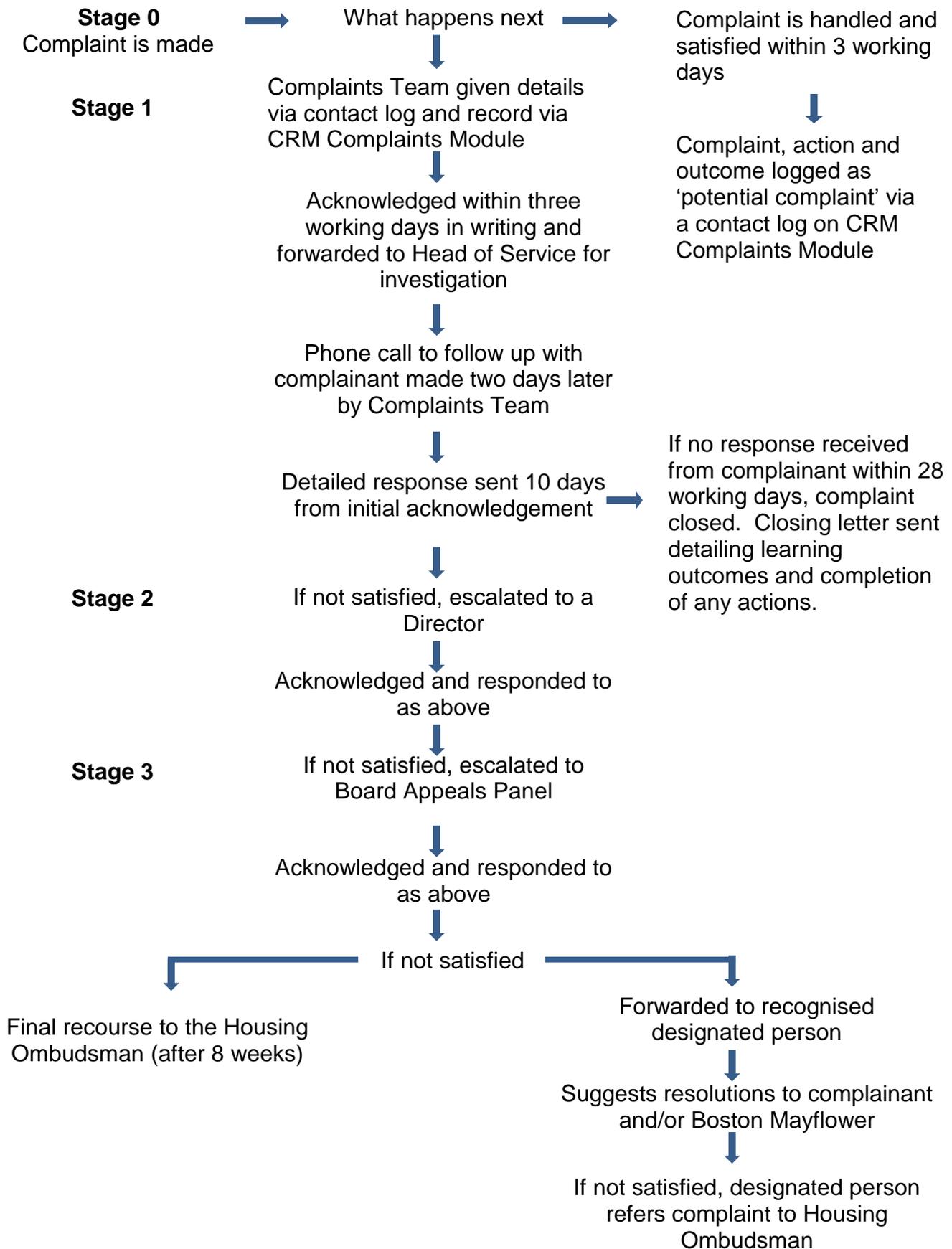


making a splash
in the areas we serve

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1.0 Work Flow - Complaints Process 2016



2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.1 It is Boston Mayflower's aim to provide the highest quality services to its tenants, leaseholders, local residents in its area, the general public and anyone else with whom we come into contact.
- 2.2 To view the service from the customers' point of view and to encourage all our customers to compliment, comment on or criticise the actions of the Company.
- 2.3 To ensure that customers are assisted whenever necessary to communicate their complaints effectively.
- 2.4 To respond to the needs of our customers in a fair, helpful and efficient manner, using our best endeavours to find a satisfactory solution to those needs.
- 2.5 To define the Company's standards of service, so that customers know what type of service they can expect to receive.
- 2.6 To provide a simple and conciliatory system for customers of the Company to use if they consider that they have not received the service they have been promised.
- 2.7 To remedy, learn from and improve a defective service immediately, where this is possible.
- 2.8 To explain our actions and apologise for any inconvenience or offence caused by the Company and not to be afraid to own up to our mistakes.
- 2.9 To ensure through continuous appraisals, assessment and training that staff are able to deal properly with the customers of the Company, relating to them in an acceptable manner which conforms to the Company's aims in respect of Customer Care and Equal Opportunities.
- 2.10 To monitor the levels of performance achieved and comments made about the Company's activities.
- 2.11 To revise and/or revisit policies, procedures and standards etc. in consultation with our customers whenever the need arises.
- 2.12 To comply with Equal Opportunities legislation, the Assured Tenants Charter and the Company's Policies, especially in respect of Customer Care and the Corporate Strategy.

3.0 SCOPE

3.1 The complaints procedure is available to anyone who receives a service from the Company, i.e. its tenants, leaseholders, contractors, housing applicants or others affected by the Company's activities.

3.2 Issues, which can be raised under the policy, are wide ranging and include the following examples:

- any services provided by the Company
- the way in which requests for information are handled
- the way staff or other representatives have conducted themselves
- the way in which housing applications are dealt with.

This list is not exhaustive

3.3 A "complaint" may be defined as: "An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Company or its staff affecting an individual customer or group of customers".

3.4 Examples which are **NOT** considered to be complaints are:

- a "report" or "request" for service i.e. when a tenant notifies us of a central heating system breakdown. If we fail to deal with it in our specified timescales or the work is not properly carried out then it may become a complaint
- complaints by one occupier about another - these are dealt with under the Neighbour Disputes and Nuisance Policy and our Anti -Social Behaviour Policy.
- claims for compensation for work specified in the tenancy agreement, which the Company fails to provide - these are dealt with under the Company's Compensation for Service Failure Policy
- an "enquiry" i.e. if an applicant for housing contacts the Company about his/her application it is an enquiry not a complaint, until such time as the response to the enquiry is provided in an unsatisfactory manner.

3.5 The Policy sets out criteria for:

- advertising the Complaints Policy and Procedures
- ways for making complaints
- resolving problems and learning from complaints
- review and appeal
- mediation and arbitration
- referral to the Ombudsman
- monitoring

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 In the first instance the Customer Service Centre will take down the details of the complaint in a contact log and flag as a 'potential complaint'. The team may be able to address the complaint at first point of contact however if not the contact log should be forwarded to the relevant team to resolve within 3 working days.
- 4.2 If a customer is not satisfied with the response from Customer Service Centre or relevant team, the complaint will be escalated to a formal complaint by a member of the Complaints Team.
- 4.3 The Complaints Team consists of the Complaints Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Customer Services, Customer Services (Engagement) Manager, Customer Services Manager, Customer Services (ASB) Manager, PA to the Executive and Business Intelligence Analyst. In this way we ensure that regardless of annual leave, sickness absence or meetings, the complaint is picked up speedily ensuring that the customer receives assurance that their complaint is being addressed.
- 4.4 The Complaints team will receive those complaints which cannot be dealt with at stage 0. The team will acknowledge receipt of stage 1, 2 and 3 complaints in writing within 3 working days, follow this acknowledgment up with a phone call 2 working days later and give details of the complaints process by providing our leaflet.
- 4.5 At this point, the Director of Corporate Services will be made aware of any complaints the team feel may escalate to an insurance claim in order to notify insurers in a timely fashion.
- 4.6 The Director of Corporate Services is responsible for monitoring the progress and outcome of all complaints to the Company.
- 4.7 The Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing operation of the policy and procedure and reporting on a quarterly basis to the Board.
- 4.8 The Director of Corporate Services will also ensure that the current version of the Policy and leaflet are:
 - advertised via Company publications
 - made available at customer access points including Company sites and other local facilities
- 4.9 The Director of Corporate Services will also ensure that any identified learning outcomes are advertised via Company publications to inform customers of improvements made to services as an outcome of complaints.

5.0 METHOD

5.1 How to Make a Complaint

5.1.1 If a customer feels that we have failed them and wishes to complain about the service received, they can approach a recognised designated person (including local councillors and MPs) or independent agency at any point in the complaint's process for advice and/or to act as an advocate to help customers through the complaint's process. However, the Company will require written permission from the complainant to discuss details of the complaint with a third party.

5.1.2 A customer should inform the Company of their complaint using their preferred method whether that be in writing, over the phone, face to face, via email or online using the complaint form. A complaint form is also available on request (see appendix 1).

5.1.3 Complainants should provide details of:

- the nature of the complaint i.e. who or what it is about, what has gone wrong
- what the customer considers is necessary to put things right
- the complainant's name and address
- the date of the complaint

5.1.4 During the complaints process, staff should respond to the complainant using their preferred method of contact however, if complainants prefer communication via telephone, a written copy of correspondence must still be issued.

5.1.5 If it is identified that a translator is required, staff are advised to contact the Company's translating services.

5.2 Stage 0 Complaints

5.2.1 When making a complaint, customers should first contact a member of the Customer Service Centre. At this point the Company expect to resolve the majority of problems, failures, misunderstandings etc. without the need for further complaint.

5.2.2 Details of all complaints made will be noted and recorded even if the complainant is satisfied immediately by having their problem dealt with by the Customer Service Centre or relevant team. All contact logs of this nature will be flagged as a 'potential complaint' and monitored as Stage 0 complaints.

5.3 Stage 1 Complaints

- 5.3.1 If staff have not resolved the complaint to the customer's satisfaction within 3 working days, the complaint should be forwarded to the appropriate Head of Service by the Complaints Team.
- 5.3.2 As Heads of Service within the organisation, their primary responsibility is for ensuring appropriate service delivery to tenants and other customers. Therefore, Heads of Service will be expected to ensure the complaint is thoroughly investigated and identify any potential learning outcomes.
- 5.3.3 Complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days giving details of the name of the Head of Service dealing with the complaint on an individual basis (see appendix 2) and be provided with a leaflet explaining the complaints process.
- 5.3.4 The Complaints Team will conduct a follow up call 2 working days after the acknowledgment letter is sent to ensure that the complainant has received the information and explain the process where necessary.
- 5.3.5 A detailed response will be provided within 10 working days to the complainant from the Head of Service. If this is not likely to be possible the reasons should be included in the initial acknowledgement or if there are unavoidable delays, by contacting the complainant immediately by phone to explain the reason for the delay and follow up with a holding letter (see appendix 3).
- 5.3.6 In the detailed response, it should be made clear whether the complaint is upheld or not and should include any learning outcomes and actions identified during the investigation. These learning outcomes should then be shared with staff and partners and an improvement plan put in place to stop mistakes happening again. Mediation services can be used where it is identified that these would benefit the complainant, details can be found in the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- 5.3.7 If no further correspondence is received from the complainant within 28 working days, the complaint should be closed and a closing letter sent. The closing letter should detail any learning outcomes and confirm completion of any actions identified (see appendix 4).
- 5.3.8 The Complaints Team will be responsible for recording the receipt and progress of each complaint to a satisfactory conclusion including recording any learning outcomes via the Complaints Module on the CRM.

5.4 Stage 2 Complaints

- 5.4.1 If the complainant is still unhappy after the Head of Service's detailed response they must contact the Complaints Team within 28 days of receiving their written response from the Head of Service.

5.4.2 This complaint will then be escalated to a stage 2 complaint for investigation by a Director. The same timeline and commitments from stage 1 apply (see point 5.3.3 to 5.3.8)

5.5 Stage 3 Complaints

5.5.1 If the customer should be dissatisfied with the detailed response from a Director, they can contact the Board's Appeal Panel and request that the complaint be referred to the Panel for further deliberation.

5.5.2 The escalation of the complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days and the complainant advised within 10 working days of Panel's meeting date which the complainant will be invited to attend (see appendix 5).

5.5.3 The complainant should be advised that:

- they can attend the meeting with a family member or friend however they are not permitted to bring legal representation
- they can submit written evidence to support their case however this must be received by the Complaints Team 7 days before the appeal meeting date

5.5.4 The complainant will be advised of the outcome within 3 working days of the meeting. At that time they will also be informed of their right to contact the Housing Association Ombudsman Service and for the case to be referred to a recognised designated person.

5.6 Taking a Complaint Further

5.6.1 Once a customer has been through all the stages of a complaint, the case can be referred to a recognised designated person who can review the case, facilitate a local resolution and check that the complaint was properly handled. The Complaints Team will act as liaison between the complainant and the designated person. If the designated person considers that they cannot help to resolve a complaint locally they can refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman at the request of the customer.

5.6.2 A designated person is either:

- The local Member of Parliament
- The local Councillor
- A recognised tenant panel

5.6.3 Any complaints received from the Ombudsman will be dealt with directly by the Director of Corporate Services in liaison with the Chief Executive and the relevant Departmental Director.

6.0 VEXATIOUS AND PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

- 6.1 Boston Mayflower recognises that in a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource issues for the business.
- 6.2 Boston Mayflower is committed to dealing with all complaints equitably whilst ensuring that no complaint is missed or ignored because the complainant regularly complains.
- 6.3 In order to address these issues, Boston Mayflower has produced a separate policy to support both customers and staff in dealing with vexatious and persistent complaints.

7.0 TRAINING

- 7.1 All staff are required to undertake Dispute Resolution Training as a part of their annual training through the Boston Mayflower Learning Management System.
- 7.2 The Complaints team receive specific training regarding the management of complaints at all levels
- 7.3 The Customer Service Centre staff will receive complaints training and the delivery of excellent services at first point of contact as a part of their induction programme
- 7.4 All other staff and volunteers will receive additional training in addition to the dispute resolution training appropriate to their involvement with the process and own personal development.

8.0 MONITORING

- 8.1 The Business Intelligence Team will collate information for use by the Corporate Management Team, Board and Performance Monitors for monitoring purposes.
- 8.2 The Business Intelligence Team will conduct user satisfaction surveys via the telephone once a complaint has been closed.
- 8.3 The primary data used to test compliance with performance requirements will be:
 - number of all complaints received
 - number of formal (stage 1, 2 and 3) complaints received
 - number acknowledged within 3 working days as a %
 - number answered within 10 working days as a %
 - number of complaints received via the Ombudsman

- breakdown of complaint by type and service e.g. failure to complete a repair on time, failure to respond to a request to succeed to a tenancy, and service e.g. Housing, Finance, Property Services
 - number of praise received broken down by type and service
- 8.4 The monitoring information will be evaluated on a monthly basis by the Corporate Management Team and the learning outcomes actioned which could include reviews of policy, procedure and / or service delivery.
- 8.5 Information will be provided to the Board on a quarterly basis.
- 8.6 The Complaints Service will be monitored by our customers on a regular basis by reviewing performance data, carrying out quality assurance checks on the detailed responses to complainants and by monitoring customer journeys to ensure that staff are fair, consistent and customer focussed.
- 8.7 The Business Intelligence Team will submit monthly data to HouseMark benchmarking club using data collected on the key performance indicators.

9.0 RELATED POLICIES

- 9.1 For further information please see:
- Compensation for Service Failure
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
 - Neighbour Disputes and Nuisance Policy
 - Customer Participation Policy
 - Performance Management & Assurance Framework

10.0 APPENDICES

10.1 Complaint Form Request Letter and Form

<address>

<date>

Dear <name>

Complaint Form

I write further to your conversation with <name>, <title> regarding <enter details>.

As agreed, please find enclosed a Complaint Form and a stamped addressed envelope for you to be able to return this. I have also enclosed our 'Compliments, Complaints and Claiming Compensation' leaflet explaining the process to you.

Alternatively, you can contact the Complaints Team to make your complaint on 0300 365 5000 or via email at complaints@bostonmayflower.org.uk

Yours sincerely

<your name>

<your job title>

COMPLAINT FORM

Please provide us with details about yourself:

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel:

Please describe your complaint in as much detail as possible:

Please state clearly what you think should be done to solve your problem:

Have you reported this problem previously? Please state:

Who to:

Which Office:

Date Reported:

How reported:

10.2 Acknowledgement Letters

For Stage 1

<enter address>

<enter date>

Dear <name>

Complaint

Thank you for your complaint <details> received on <date>.

As a member of the Complaints Team, I will ensure the circumstances surrounding your complaint are investigated following our complaints process by <name and title>.

I enclose our “Compliments, Complaints and Claiming Compensation” leaflet which explains the complaint process and our commitment to our responses and timelines to you.

Our process of complaints requires that we discuss a complaint received once we have sent out this acknowledgement letter so I will contact you shortly.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact me on 0300 365 5000.

Yours sincerely

<your name>

<your job title>

Enc.

For Stage 2 & 3

<address>

<date>

Dear <name>

Complaint

Thank you for your response to our letter regarding <enter details> received on <date>.

I write to inform you that in accordance with the complaint process, I have escalated your complaint <name&title>, for further investigation. As a member of the Complaints Team, I will ensure the circumstances surrounding your complaint are investigated following our complaints process.

Our process of complaints requires that we discuss a complaint received once we have sent out this acknowledgement letter therefore I will you shortly.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact me on 0300 365 5000.

Yours sincerely

<your name>

<your job title>

For Advocates / Designated Persons

**delete where appropriate*

<address>

<enter date>

Dear <name>,

Complaint

I acknowledge receipt of your letter regarding concerns raised by your *constituent / client <enter name>.

I will arrange for the matters highlighted in the letter to be thoroughly investigated by <name&title> and, following that investigation, <name> will respond directly to your enquiry within 10 working days of the date of this letter.

If you have any queries in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0300 365 5000.

Yours sincerely

<your name>

<your job title>

10.3 Holding Letter

<address>

<date>

Dear <name>

Complaint

I write to request an extension on the 10 working day timeline as stated in the complaints process to enable us to investigate in full your complaint regarding <details>.

This is due to <explain>.

I apologise for the delay in resolving your complaint. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact me 0300 365 5000.

Yours sincerely

<your name>

<your job title>

10.4 Closing Letters

Closing Letter Upheld

<address>

<date>

Dear <name>

Complaint

Thank you for your complaint made on <date> regarding <detail>.

As part of the full response from <investigating officer name & title> dated <date> the following learning outcomes were identified:

-
-

I write to advise you that this complaint will now be closed. The learning outcomes identified above have been completed and we would like to thank you for raising your concerns, identifying that there is a problem that we need to address and providing us with the opportunity to learn from our mistakes.

If you don't feel that your complaint should now be closed or you have further questions to raise regarding this complaint, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Complaints Team on 0300 365 5000 or via email to complaints@bostonmayflower.org.uk

Yours sincerely

<your name>

<your job title>

Closing Letter Not Upheld

<address>

<date>

Dear <name>

Complaint

Thank you for your complaint made on <date> regarding <detail>.

I write to inform you that this complaint is now closed as no further correspondence has been received from you within 28 working days from your full response dated <date> from <investigating officer name and title>.

If you don't feel that your complaint should now be closed or you have further questions to raise regarding this complaint, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Complaints Team on 0300 365 5000 or via email to complaints@bostonmayflower.org.uk

Yours sincerely

<your name>

<your job title>

10.5 Invitation to Board's Appeal Panel

<enter address>

<enter date>

Dear <name>

Complaint

Thank you for the escalation of your complaint to the Board Appeal's Panel regarding <details> received on <date>.

An appeal's committee meeting has been scheduled for <date>.

You are invited to attend this meeting in person if you would like. A family member or friend can accompany you however you are not permitted to bring legal representation.

You are also able to submit written evidence to support your case to the appeal panel but I must receive this by <enter date 7 days before meeting>. Please find enclosed a pack of evidence we have put together for your information.

If you require help preparing for this meeting, you can contact the Complaints Team for guidance or there are independent local agencies available to assist you, for example the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

After the meeting, you will be advised of the outcome within three working days. If you are not satisfied with this response you can take your complaint further and details on how to do so are available in our 'How to Complain' leaflet.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact the Complaints Team on 0300 365 5000 or via email to complaints@bostonmayflower.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Bridget Lloyd
Director of Corporate & Customer Services

11.0 Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy / strategy / project (the" initiative"):

Complaints Policy

Provide a brief summary of the aims and main activities of the initiative: (bullet points)

- It is Boston Mayflower's aim to provide the highest quality service.
- To respond to the needs of our customers in a fair, helpful and efficient manner, using our best endeavor to find a satisfactory solution to those needs.
- To define the Company's standards of service, so that customers know what type of service they can expect to receive.
- To explain our actions and apologise for any inconvenience or offence caused by the Company and not to be afraid to own up to our mistakes.
- To comply with Equal Opportunities legislation, the Assured Tenants Charter and the Company's Policies, especially in respect of Customer Care.

Completed by: Bridget Lloyd

Date: April 2017

STAGE 1: SCREENING

This stage establishes whether a proposed initiative will have an impact from an equality perspective on any particular group of people or community – i.e. on the grounds of race, religion/faith/belief, gender (including transgender), sexual orientation, age, disability, or whether it is "equality neutral" (i.e. have no effect either positive or negative).

Q 1. Who will benefit from this initiative? Is there likely to be a positive impact on specific groups/communities (whether or not they are the intended beneficiaries), and if so, how? Or is it clear at this stage that it will be equality 'neutral' i.e. will have no particular effect on any group? *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

This policy has been designed to impact in the same way regardless and it is envisaged that it will be equality neutral.

Q 2. Is there likely to be an adverse impact on one or more minority/under-represented or community group as a result of this initiative? If so, who may be affected and why? Or is it clear at this stage that it will be equality 'neutral'? *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

This policy will have a positive impact as it is available to all through various different mediums and is supported through a range of formats. Boston Mayflower does not envisage any negative impact with the scope of the Service Delivery through the implementation of this policy as we believe this policy is Equality Neutral.

Q 3. Is there sufficient data on the target beneficiary groups/communities? Are any of these groups under or over represented? Do they have access to the same resources? What are your sources of data and are there any gaps? *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

The policy is designed to provide a framework to enable complaints and praise that promotes fair treatment and therefore supports the good community relations and is promoted through the complaints leaflet and is available in a number of formats including different languages as well as being available through a number of mediums. It is also supported by our disability pack.

Q 4. Outsourced services – if the initiative is partly or wholly provided by external organisations / agencies, please list any arrangements you plan to ensure that they promote equality and diversity. *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

Boston Mayflower will deliver this policy whilst working in close consultation with partner organisations who are committed to our Equality and Diversity Policy, through our complaint contractor meetings.

Q 5. Is the impact of the initiative (whether positive or negative) significant enough to warrant a full impact assessment – see guidance? If not, will there be monitoring and review to assess the level of impact over a period of time? *Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality*

No.

Q 6. To be completed at six monthly review Detail actions taken to assess the level of impact over a period of time, or to address any gaps in data.
Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality

A review will take place in line with the review of the policy as defined within our policy review programme or when legislative changes require an update immediately.