

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Approved by Management Committee: March 2021

Responsible for Implementation: Chief Executive Officer & Management Committee

Date of Review: March 2024

Aim of the Policy

Causeway aims to provide residents with a quality service. It is important to us that everybody who comes into contact with the service has a positive experience of it. However, we accept that sometimes things can go wrong and we want to put those things right as quickly and as fairly as possible. We welcome complaints as a means of understanding and resolving such matters, and as one of several ways for us to continuously improve the service.

Should tenants find the service unsatisfactory, they may make a formal complaint.

When dealing with any complaint our aim is to ensure that we:

- deal quickly and politely with all complaints.
- investigate fully and effectively the grounds for complaint.
- keep the complainant informed of progress in dealing with their complaint.
- put matters right wherever necessary and within the shortest possible time.
- to learn from complaints and change our practices or procedures to meet the needs of our residents.

Scope

You may make a complaint to the organisation if you are:

- a tenant or licensee
- an applicant for housing
- a neighbour or other member of the public affected by Causeway's activities
- another agency – though if complaining on behalf of an individual, you will need their signed consent

The Complaints Procedure cannot be used to complain about the Association's policies. Policies are decided by Causeway's Management Committee. (We welcome applications from current residents to join the Committee. Alternatively, we have a Tenant's Forum through which you can contribute to the organisation's policies). If you wish to comment on a particular policy, please contact a member of staff who will ensure that your views are taken forward to the Committee.

You may complain if a policy has been unfairly operated in your case. For example, you can complain if you believe that:

- you have been unfairly refused housing
- you have been offered unsuitable housing (and no other offer has been made)
- you have been treated unfairly
- you have reported an issue but received a poor, or no, response
- your repairs have not been completed in accordance with policy
- your application to transfer has not been fairly dealt with
- our staff have been unhelpful or rude

Complaints do **not** include:

- reporting a repair for the first time
- reporting a problem with your neighbour, though you may complain about our response to an issue you've reported previously
- disputing action over rent arrears or any other breach of tenancy – there is a separate legal procedure for this.

Please note that we are committed to getting things right first time and we urge you to discuss the issue with us informally before you consider the formal complaints procedure so that we can take the necessary action.

If you feel that Causeway has failed to meet its obligations as a landlord, you should consult a solicitor or go to a Citizens Advice Bureau or law centre.

How to make a complaint

The following procedures should be observed when making a complaint against staff, or any aspect of the service provided by, or in the control of Causeway.

Stage 1

If you are unhappy with any issue, you should in the first instance try to resolve it with your Housing Officer, Support Worker or the member of staff with whom you disagree, either in writing or by telephone. A member of staff may telephone you or arrange to meet you to discuss the matter.

The staff member will:

- Listen to and record your complaint
- Ask how you would like the complaint to be resolved
- Offer a solution within 24 hours if possible

If the staff member cannot resolve your complaint immediately, they may:

- Investigate the matter further, giving you an estimate of how long this will take
- Pass your complaint to their manager or other appropriate person within the organisation

This should take no longer than fourteen days though in most circumstances we would hope to resolve the matter much sooner.

If you feel uncomfortable about raising the issue with a particular staff member, you are unhappy with the proposed solution, or you do not feel you have received an adequate response, you may escalate the complaint to Stage 2.

Stage 2

If the matter cannot be resolved informally you should write to the Chief Executive via our website or at our postal address at:

Causeway Irish Housing Association
Haringey Irish Community Centre
Pretoria Road

London N17 8DX

Your complaint should detail;

- what you are unhappy with
- what you have done to deal with the problem
- what you would like us to do

If you are not confident about communicating in writing (for example, if English is not your first language, or for any other reason) you can ask any staff member for help. If you want someone from outside the organisation to take up your complaint on your behalf, you must provide your signed consent for us to be able to discuss the matter with them.

The CEO will usually assign the complaint to the most appropriate manager who will investigate the matter and respond. Sometimes the CEO may decide to respond to you directly. Again, this should take no longer than fourteen days but, in the event of a delay, you will be kept informed.

If your complaint remains unresolved at this stage, you may proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3

You should ask the CEO to refer your complaint to the Chair of the Management Committee within 28 days of receiving your Stage 2 response. The Chair will discuss your complaint with the Management Committee. Depending on the nature of your complaint, the Chair and other members of the Management Committee may choose to interview you to hear your case or ask the CEO to do so on their behalf. You will receive a written report from the Chair with a proposed solution and action within 28 days. The Chair's decision is final, unless you take your complaint outside the organisation.

If you wish to do this and your tenancy or licence is with Causeway you should proceed to Stage 4. If you are not a current resident of Causeway, you will be advised of the options open to you at this stage.

Stage 3a

If you have a tenancy agreement with a Housing Association other than Causeway (e.g. Clarion, L&Q, Southern, Veridian or PA Housing) you may then use their complaint procedure as outlined in the tenancy or licence agreement.

Stage 4

If you are still unhappy with the outcome and want to take the matter further, you should complain to:

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square
London
E14 9GE

The Ombudsman will only deal with your complaint if you have first gone through our own procedure.

Exceptions to this Procedure

Litigation

Where the matter is subject to litigation, i.e. where you are bringing a legal case against us, for example, for Disrepair, or we have taken legal action against you for rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or other breaches of tenancy, this procedure cannot be used at the same time (unless it's about a different issue).

Abusive, Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

It is easier for us to understand and respond positively to complaints when they are made in a reasonable, calm and rational manner. We understand that the matter which has caused you to complain may have made you angry, upset or frustrated. However, we will not tolerate threats, abuse or personal comments against members of staff. We will therefore not accept complaints which we consider abusive. Similarly, unreasonable and /or persistent demands with regard to timescales, decisions, and matters beyond the limits of our service, may be viewed as a misuse of this procedure. In such cases, we may decide to close your complaint and restrict your access to certain members of staff. If we do, we will write to you and explain our decision.

Other ways to provide feedback

We value complaints as a way of learning from our mistakes and continuously improving the organisation. However, we would never want this to be the only way you can influence the organisation. We are always happy to listen to your feedback and your ideas for improving Causeway. There are many ways to do this:

- **Tenant Satisfaction Surveys**
We send these out regularly and try to make them quick and easy respond to. Please take a few minutes to respond when you receive them.
- **Tenant's Forum**
We hold these quarterly. Please contact the Lifeskills & Support Manager if you wish to be involved. You may even like to join our Management Committee.
- **Talk to Us**
Our staff are often out and about visiting our shared houses. Say hello and tell us how you're feeling. We'd love to hear from you.
- **Social Media**
Follow us, like us, be our friend.
- **Email us**
We have a dedicated email address for your comments and suggestions
info@irishcauseway.org.uk