



# Plymouth Charity Trust

Safe and Happy Living ®

Charity Trust Office  
41 Hele's Terrace  
Plymouth PL4 9LH

T. 01752 663 107  
[www.plymouthcharitytrust.org.uk](http://www.plymouthcharitytrust.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1076364

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### **Policy statement**

We aim to provide a consistently high standard of service to everyone who uses or is impacted by our services, and we care about getting it right, first time. We recognise however the importance of putting things right once we know something hasn't happened as it should. Our aim is always to maintain good working relationships with our residents.

Plymouth Charity Trust is committed to ensuring views about our services are valued and we actively encourage feedback. Complaints, compliments and suggestions give us the opportunity to continually improve our service. We foster a culture which welcomes resident feedback and listening and responding effectively is very important to us. We deal with complaints impartially and will not treat complainants differently because they have made a complaint.

We define a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Plymouth Charity Trust, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'

A resident (or any other person) does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever dissatisfaction is expressed, we will give the resident (or any other person) the choice to make a complaint. In our Almshouse properties, even if the resident (or person acting on their behalf) decides not to make a formal complaint we will review the feedback as an opportunity to learn and make any necessary changes.

Plymouth Charity Trust is open to all forms of feedback and will look to consider all interactions that may help us to improve. These may include face to face, in writing (both letter and email) or by telephone.



Mr. S. Hole Trust Chairman | Mrs. S. Easton Trust Manager | Patron Lord Mayor of Plymouth

Incorporating Hele's and Lanyon Almshouses Charities and Plymouth Relief in Need Charity



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## Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Manager is accountable for the overall policy and is responsible for its implementation and for ensuring compliance.

All colleagues are responsible for:

- answering complaints when required,
- ensuring they take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified rather than blaming others having a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints.
- acting within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body or regulator.

## Getting in touch

A complaint can be raised by contacting any of our colleagues, however often the quickest way to put things right is to speak with the manager. We do however appreciate that sometimes this isn't possible.

Alternatively, the office can be contacted in any of the following ways –

- Telephone – 01752 663107
- Email – [info@plymouthcharitytrust.org.uk](mailto:info@plymouthcharitytrust.org.uk)
- Post – Plymouth Charity Trust, 41 Heles Terrace, Prince Rock, Plymouth, PL4 9LH

We don't accept complaints via social media or review website channels. However, if you contact us through social media or review websites to express dissatisfaction, you may be provided with the contact details (as detailed above) in response.



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## Timescales

We operate a two-stage complaints procedure, the timescales for responses are:

*\*When stated in this document 'working days' refer to standard Monday-Friday working days.*

- **Logging and acknowledgement of a complaint** – 5 working days from receipt, at this stage we will assess the complaint considering the complexity. Should we require additional time to respond we set the expectation within the acknowledgement letter.
- **Telephone call to the complainant by the complaint handler** - within 2 working days (from logging and acknowledgement).
- **Stage one decision** – 10 working days from logging and acknowledging of the complaint. Exceptionally, if this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date by when the stage one response will be received. This will not be more than a further 10 working days total without good reason.  
If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable us to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by the complainant. The complainant will be provided with the details of the Housing Ombudsman Service or Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- **Escalations to Stage two** should be requested as soon as possible, usually within 30 days of receipt of the Stage one response. We will however make exceptions to this timeframe.
- **Stage two** (response to any appeal made on a stage 1 decision) – 20 working days from logging and acknowledging We must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity



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of the complaint and then inform the complainant (or those acting on their behalf) of the expected timescale for response.

Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident

## **Our approach to complaints**

We aim to welcome, understand, and resolve individual complaints in a timely manner; applying an approach that allows for monitoring. We will seek to identify any lessons arising from complaints and use these to improve our service provision.

## **Making a complaint**

We welcome complaints from anyone, or the representative of anyone, who is affected by the services provided by Plymouth Charity Trust. This includes but is not limited to:

- residents
- customers seeking to rent a property
- family members
- friends, representatives, or advocates of residents
- neighbours
- service providers, healthcare or other professionals
- local authority concerns

We can engage with a third party pursuing a complaint on the complainant's behalf, as long as we have evidence or assurance that this person has their specific approval to act on their behalf. We will always work within what our Data Protection Policy allows.

During any meetings regarding a complaint, the complainant can be accompanied by a friend, family member, representative, advocate or other person.





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## Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

We are committed to ensuring that people are not disadvantaged when accessing our services. We will therefore make reasonable adjustments to our service for people when requested. We also try to anticipate some of the more frequent reasonable adjustments and provide these quickly and easily such as alternative formats or alternative ways of contacting us.

If a reasonable adjustment is required in relation to a complaint, please contact the Manager.

This document can be made available in large print, please speak to the manager if you need audio or large print versions.

The complaints policy is available online at [www.plymouthcharitytrust.org.uk](http://www.plymouthcharitytrust.org.uk)

## Refusing to accept or escalate a complaint

We will not discriminate against anyone who makes a complaint, and we will look at each complaint based upon its own merit and individual circumstances.

If a complainant behaves inappropriately in making a complaint, we will seek to manage that behaviour as necessary (which is detailed in the unacceptable behaviour policy), while treating the complaint like any other. However, there will be some rare occasions when we will not accept or escalate a complaint, examples of this are given below (this list is not exhaustive):

- Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour, which is threatening, abusive or aggressive.
- Where the issue giving rise to the complaint happened over 12 months ago. Though we will apply discretion, and an exception will likely be made for any complaint that has a safeguarding or health and safety element.





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- The same matters have been fully addressed under a previous closed complaint.
- Where the complaint is a dispute over legislation or is a matter that is already the subject of legal proceedings.
- The complaint is disputing the term of a lease, cost, or reasonableness of a service charge (re service charges: we use the Housing Ombudsman jurisdiction guidance to help guide us on this matter) or rent increase.

If we do not accept a complaint for any of the reason, including those described above, we will write to the complainant within 10 working days (of its acknowledgement and logging) providing our reasons. The complainant will also be told of their option to appeal this decision by contacting the Housing Ombudsman Service or Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

## Mediation

We will explore the use of mediation by an external organisation where it is appropriate.

## Compensation

We may consider an offer of compensation or good will when we have, through our own actions or inactions, failed to deliver services of an acceptable standard.

## Internal escalation and appeals

A complainant can request that their complaint be escalated to stage 2 if they are dissatisfied with the initial response at stage 1.







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There may be rare and exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to immediately escalate a new complaint to the final stage of the internal process. This will be at the Trustees discretion.

## Referring a complaint to an ombudsman

### a) Housing complaints

Complainants may formally refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, after it has completed stage two of Plymouth Charity Trusts complaints process (contact details are shown below).

**Please note: the Housing Ombudsman Service is available for advice or support throughout the complaints process not just when they are formally asked to respond (please see contact details below).**

### b) Care complaints

In the case of complaints relating to care, a resident may refer a complaint to The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman who provides a free, independent service. This can be done directly; however, the Ombudsman will require an internal process to be completed before they become involved.

Our care services are registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and they are, however, happy to receive information regarding our services. Contact details are provided below:

### c) Contact details

Housing Ombudsman Service  
PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET  
Tel: 0300 111 3000  
E-mail: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)





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The Complaint Handling Code is available via the Housing Ombudsman Website, or you can request a copy via the manager.

## **Local Councillor or a Member of Parliament (MP)**

Names of local councillors can be found in local libraries or via the local council.

## **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**

PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

Tel: 0300 061 0614

[www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk) **Care**

**Quality Commission**

**Customer Service**

**Centre**

Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4PA

Tel: 03000 616161

[www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

## **Energy Ombudsman**

P.O. Box 966, Warrington, WA4 9DF

Tel: 0330 440 1624

Email: [enquiry@energyombudsman.org](mailto:enquiry@energyombudsman.org)

[www.energyombudsman.org](http://www.energyombudsman.org)

The Energy Ombudsman handles disputes between consumers energy suppliers (in some situations this will be Anchor).

We will co-operate fully with the relevant Ombudsman Service during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting decision which will be binding on us.



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## Complaint governance, reporting and internal monitoring

Monthly performance reports tracking compliance against the above KPIs are provided to managers and Trustees

On an annual basis we publish our 'Complaints Performance and Service improvement Report' this is a quantitative and qualitative analysis of our performance throughout the year. This also includes our annual Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code. This is available on our website.

## Equality and diversity

We are committed to respecting diversity in all aspects of our work and meeting our obligations under the Equality Act. In line with this, we welcome feedback on any aspect of this policy where there is a question over its adherence to the above legislation.

## Data Protection

We are committed to applying this policy in line with the General Data Protection Regulations as set out in our Data Protection Policy.

## Other relevant documents

- Complaints Procedure
- Compensation Policy
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy

## Commitment and review

The Board of Trustees looks to the support and professionalism of staff at all levels in making this policy truly effective. This policy statement, along with other related supporting policies and procedures in use, will be regularly reviewed and revised as and when necessary.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024.



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