George Green's Almshouses Complaints Policy

Policy statement

We're committed to providing a consistently good, local service that is accessible and easy to use. However, we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong.

When they do, we aim to be easy to access, easy to deal with, fair and flexible in our approach to provide the best possible outcomes for our residents to put it right. We are committed to being accountable and learning how we can do better by listening to what our residents are telling us, including through the form of complaints.

We recognise that complaints are often an early indication that something is not working and have developed practices where complaints give us a greater understanding of our residents' expectations helping us reduce disruption to service provision and prevent repeat complaints of the same nature.

In line with the Housing Ombudsman Code, we define a complaint as:

'An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by GGA, those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'

A resident does not need to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such.

It's important to distinguish the difference between a complaint defined above, and a service request. We define a service request as *'a request from a resident to us, the landlord, requiring action to be taken to put something right.'* Service requests are not complaints, but will be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.

Complaints along with service requests can be reported in different ways by telephone, in person, a letter or digitally.

A complaint may be made by any George Green's Almshouses (GGA) resident, any third party adversely affected by our actions or decisions, any person acting on behalf of a resident with their consent, or as a community complaint.

We will provide reasonable adjustments for those who may need it to make a complaint in line with our reasonable adjustment statement.

When we receive a collective [petition or strike] or community complaint, we will only liaise with the lead person.

When a resident contacts us, our managing agent will do their best to resolve the issue or concern as soon as they are made aware. If they are unable to resolve this and the resident expresses dissatisfaction, we will offer a choice to the resident on whether they want to raise a complaint.

Complaints should be submitted to GGA within twelve months of when the event occurred or became known to the complainant.

In all cases, we will record, store, and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Full details of our complaints process, our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman code, the Housing Ombudsman's contact details and ways to contact us are detailed on our website.

An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to.

We will investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated time frames as shown below:

George Green's Almshouses Complaints Policy

Stage 1	Stage 2
We will acknowledge the complaint in writing within five working days and our managing agent, with the support of our Trustees, will work with the complainant to try and resolve the complaint. They will provide a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. In exceptional circumstances we may extend the timescales up to an additional 10 working days, if we do this we will inform you of the reasons why. Within the response we will include our understanding of the complaint and the desired outcome the resident is seeking. Where actions are required, we will not wait to carry these out until after the complaint response is sent, we will engage with the resident throughout the process. Upon a response being sent, the complaint will be closed. The complainant will be notified of how to progress their complaint to Stage 2 if they wish to appeal the outcome. Where a resident raises additional complaints during the investigation, these will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if they are related, and the response has not been issued. If they are unrelated or would unreasonably delay the response these will be logged as a new complaint.	If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome from Stage 1, they can ask for their complaint to go to Stage 2. This review will be led by a Trustee of GGA. We will acknowledge the request in writing within five working days. A full response will be provided within 20 working days of the acknowledgment being sent. In exceptional circumstances we may extend the timescales up to an additional 20 working days, if we do this, we will inform you of the reasons why. A resident does not have to explain their reasons for escalating to stage 2, however this information will help us to better provide the outcome a resident is seeking. Regardless, we will make a reasonable effort to understand why a resident remains unhappy. This is our final stage of our complaints process.

We will advise complainants throughout the life of the complaint of their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service and the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman Dispute Support Advisors.

Putting things right

Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have already taken, or intend to take, to put things right. Examples of what this may include are:

- Apologising
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
- Providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons
- Taking action if there has been a delay.
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- Providing a financial remedy

• Changing policies, procedures, or practices.

Issues that may not be considered as a complaint

In some circumstances it may not be appropriate to consider the complaint or escalate it. This could be because:

- The complaint occurred over twelve months ago, although it may be considered when it concerns safeguarding, health and safety issues or by our discretion as a landlord.
- It is about dissatisfaction with the costs of service charges.
- It is a claim that should go to our insurers or where courts or lawyers are involved, such as disrepair cases.
- It is around dissatisfaction with our policies.
- It is a complaint about neighbours – see our separate policy on anti-social behaviour.
- It is a request for a service – this would only become a complaint if our managing agent failed to deal with the request within specified timescales or in accordance with the service offer.
- It is a complaint made in a way that is believed to be unreasonable such as repetitive, vexatious or malicious. In these cases, we'll work with the resident to agree an approach of communication on this issue. This will not affect their right to make a complaint about another service area or issue.

In these cases, we'll let the complainant know why we're unable to consider their concern as a complaint and will give them the option to state their case or bring it to the Ombudsman.

We will never take a blanket approach to excluding complaints or complainants; we will consider each individual and circumstances before making a decision.

Key principles

- Welcome complaints and see them as an opportunity for learning and continuous improvement.
- Be accessible and easy to engage with
- Be fair and objective when reviewing complaints.
- Be committed to diversity and inclusion.
- Respect confidentiality of the complainant
- Treat each resident and individual with empathy and care.
- Give residents every opportunity to explain their point of view and the outcome they are seeking before a decision is reached.
- Manage resident expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.

Objectives

- Have a straightforward and accessible complaints process, with extra support for those who need it to
- The managing agent colleagues and Trustees are effectively trained in customer service and customer resolution.
- Complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly, and sensitively within clear time frames.
- Complainants receive a clear and comprehensive response, an apology when things go wrong and details of how we will, where possible, put this right.
- Complaints are monitored to improve our services.

George Green's Almshouses Complaints Policy

- Complaints are used to build the foundations of and drive our continuous improvement plans.
- Comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and other regulatory and legislative obligations.
- Residents are informed of how to access the GGA complaints policy and have access to GGA's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman code and their details.

Policy actions

- Develop and embed an effective dispute resolution process designed to resolve complaints and how we can put things right when they go wrong.
- Provide full details in an easy-to-understand document of the complaints process and ways to contact us on our website, and regularly communicate with residents of how to make a complaint.
- Create an annual complaints performance and service improvement report. This will be reported to the GGA Trustees and published on our website. The Trustees' response to the report will also be published alongside this.
- Appoint a Trustee to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC'). The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight into the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person will have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.
- Carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code or following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.
- Introduce and embed a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all colleagues.
- Carry out regular root-cause analysis of complaints to identify trends and produce action plans for service improvement and positive changes in service delivery.
- Overall complaints performance, including evidence of learning from mistakes, reported to Trustees and residents in an accessible and appropriate format for the audience.

Desired outcomes

- Residents can access our complaints resolution procedure and performance information easily and are clear on what to expect from us.
- Residents trust that if something goes wrong, we'll put it right and that we are transparent in how we're doing.
- Costs to resolve service failings are centrally tracked and understood.
- Improved satisfaction with complaint handling
- Management agent colleagues and Trustees are trained and have the knowledge to recognise a complaint, adhere to our complaint resolution procedure and deliver a consistently good level of customer service when managing complaints.
- We create a culture whereby we use complaints to learn from cases where we got it wrong.
- Complaints feed into continuous improvement and service reviews

Performance indicators

- Complaints relative to the size of the landlord
- Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales.
- HOS training completed.

George Green's Almshouses Complaints Policy

Key legislation

- Localism Act 2011
- Housing Act 1996
- General Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Ombudsman Scheme
- Consumer standards

Review

This policy will be reviewed every **two** years in line with any updated relevant legislation and consumer regulation, or when there is a business need – to ensure that it continues to meet the stated objectives and take account of good practice developments.

Approved at Board meeting on 8 May 2026

Signed: L. Bal Chair Date: 8/5/2026
Chair