



Complaints Policy

Introduction

This policy outlines the approach taken by Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) when dealing with complaints, compliments and suggestions. A complaint is defined as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction with a service or failure to carry out an agreed service, to meet agreed timescales or to meet the standards promised.”

We recognise that there will be occasions when the level of service provided falls below the expected level, if mistakes have been made or customers have experienced severe inconvenience or financial loss compensation awards may be provided.

Scope

This applies to all customers who live in our properties or receive services provided by us. This includes tenants, leaseholders, shared owners, key workers, Care and Support and former tenants or someone who is affected by our service provision. Compensation payments may be made to those who are not customers or former customers but this will only be in exceptional circumstances.

Approach

We are committed to using customer feedback to improve services and focus on the needs and expectations of customers. Our key aims are to:

- Contact the customer, acknowledge their complaint and provide a named contact
- Make sure information regarding escalation is readily available
- Inform customers of their right to complain to the regulators if they believe their complaint has not been resolved
- Investigate and where possible resolve customer complaints complying with our policies and general good practice
- Learn from complaints we have received
- Record and analyse all complaints
- Work cross functionally to involve colleagues with the right skills to resolve complaints

We will try to resolve any concerns about our services as soon as they have been raised, if we are unable to do this we will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days. All acknowledgments will include a contact name and number. Contact will be made at a minimum of every 2 weeks to keep the customer informed of actions being taken to resolve their complaint.

If a customer believes their complaint has not been resolved they have the right to request for their complaint to be escalated or refer to the regulator.



Compensation

When making compensation payments we will:

- Explain how discretionary payments may be awarded
- Make sure payments are fair and reasonable
- Be fair, showing equality, transparency and value for money
- Meet the expectations of any regulatory bodies to which we are accountable
- Learn from compensation requests to improve our service

Compensation will be paid against any arrears owed to MTVH by the customer. Any monies outstanding after arrears have been paid will be forwarded to the customer. Monetary awards will be paid by bank transfer or cheque, although smaller awards up to the value of £30 can be offered in gift vouchers.

Statutory Compensation

Where a customer has suffered home loss and disturbance due to compulsory purchase or redevelopment, we will pay compensation as required by law. There are qualifying conditions and as the Home Loss payments can change, compensation will be in line with the Decant Policy, this includes any right to compensation for home improvements made.

Discretionary Compensation

MTVH may decide to offer discretionary compensation payments in recognition of the amount of inconvenience caused to a customer, this can be as a standalone payment or in addition to statutory compensation. Compensation will include but is not limited to: -

- Failure to meet our published service standards by MTVH colleagues or contractors/ representative
- Unreasonable delays to published service standards or repairs appointments not kept or previously communicated to customers
- Failure to act in a fair and reasonable manner
- Damage to a customer's property which have been caused by a direct action or inaction of MTVH, or one its contractors

Non Payment of Compensation

MTVH will not consider compensation when:

- All statutory and contractual obligations have been fulfilled
- Loss or damage is caused by a third party not contracted to MTVH i.e. A family member of the customer or neighbour
- Access was unable to be gained to carry out a repair by a MTVH colleague/ contractor, or service failure is due to extreme weather conditions i.e. flooding
- Customers home contents are lost stolen or damaged through no fault of MTVH (customers are encouraged to have home insurance)
- MTVH do not have contractual responsibilities for repairs
- An incident has not been reported in a reasonable timescale
- Any loss or damage is due to unauthorised alterations to the property



Compliments and Suggestions

Compliments and suggestions will be acknowledged within 48hrs.

Legal/Regulatory Context

The over-riding legislation for complaints and compensation payments is:-

Land Compensation Act 1973 Home Loss Payments section 29(1)

Equality and Diversity

In the implementation of this policy, MTVH will not discriminate against any colleague or customer on grounds of their race, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, marital status, disability, age, religion or class.

Confidentiality

This policy is written in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act. Complaints of a sensitive nature will be treated with discretion. Personal information will not be divulged without permission. (For more information please refer to our Privacy Policy).

Review Process

This Policy & associated Procedures will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if legislation, regulatory changes or operational need require an earlier review. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off before being clearly communicated to customers and colleagues.