

Parmiter's Almshouse and Pension



Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Parmiter's Almshouse and Pension Charity is committed to providing an excellent service to Almshouse residents and appointed pensioners residing in Bethnal Green. Complaints are seen as a positive way to improve services for all beneficiaries of the Charity.

2. Objective

- 2.1 Trustees will take all complaints seriously. This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are handled promptly, sensitively and consistently, in line with the approved Data Processing Policy and with regard to confidentiality.
- 2.2 Apologies will be given where appropriate. The Charity will try and minimise any upset caused to the person with the complaint and beneficiaries will not be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint.
- 2.3 A copy of this policy will be placed in the residents' handbook to ensure they know how to make a complaint. A copy will also be posted on our website (<https://www.parmitersalmshouseandpensioncharity.org.uk/>) and be made available upon request.

3. Definition of a Complaint

- 3.1 In line with the definition prescribed by the Housing Ombudsman for England, a complaint is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf' This applies to an individual or a group of pensioners or residents. The word 'complaint' does not have to be used for it to be treated as such.
- 3.2 Those who express dissatisfaction will be given a choice to make a complaint, which can be submitted via a third party or representative
- 3.3 Complaints, including a request from a resident to take action to put something (a service) right, will be acted on by the Charity, keeping a record of these requests and monitoring them regularly. A complaint can be raised if there is dissatisfaction with the response.

3.4 Residents expressing dissatisfaction via a survey will also be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint.

4. Exclusions

4.1 Where the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred 13 months or more ago, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

4.2 Matters that have already been considered under this Policy

4.3 Complaints of a legal matter where a solicitor has been instructed will not be dealt with under this Policy.

4.4 Complaints that are made anonymously, unless sufficient documentary evidence substantiates the complaint, will not be considered.

4.5 If following the receipt of a complaint it's deemed there is a valid reason not to accept it, the Clerk – who is also the Complaints Officer - will write to the complainant providing a clear explanation of why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

5. Confidentiality

5.1 All complaints will be investigated with due regard for confidentiality. The complainant will be made aware that assurances of confidentiality may not be offered if, for example, the complaint relates to matters of financial integrity, where a police investigation may be needed.

5.2 If the complaint relates to a safeguarding matter, it will be dealt with under the Charity's Safeguarding Policy. A copy of this Policy can be provided upon request or can be found on our website (<https://www.parmitersalmshouseandpensioncharity.org.uk/>)

5.3 A copy of the Charity's Privacy Policy can be provided upon request or can be found on our website –www.parmitersalmshouseandpensioncharity.org.uk

6. Basic Principles

6.1 Unless excluded on other grounds - see para. 4 above - the Charity must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of issue occurring or the complainant becoming aware of the issue.

6.2 A complaint can be made either verbally or in writing, to any member of staff or Trustees who will then pass the complaint to the Clerk. See references in 7.3 and 12.2 below if the complaint is about the Clerk.

6.3 If the person making the verbal complaint is not satisfied by the initial response, or if the complaint is more formal, they should be encouraged to put it in writing and to include as much detail as possible especially any relevant dates.

- 6.4 Complaint acknowledgement at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 will be accompanied by complaint definition which sets out the Charity's understanding of the complaint and the outcome the complainant is seeking.
- 6.5 Acknowledgements will also make clear which aspects of the complaint the Charity is or are not responsible for and clarify areas where this is not clear.
- 6.6 All parties will be shown respect and treated fairly, taking account of any reasonable adjustments required to enable the complainant to engage in the process. A written record of the reasonable adjustments and the reason for them, will be kept.
- 6.7 The complainant may nominate someone to represent them or accompany them during the complaints process.
- 6.8 The Clerk will ensure that they investigate the complaint with an open mind, allowing the complainant to have their say, and to consider all relevant information. Any actual or perceived conflict of interest will be managed so that it does not unduly influence the outcome.
- 6.9 To ensure that a complaint can be remedied at the earliest opportunity, including at any stage during the process.
- 6.10 Any unreasonable behaviour from the complainant or their representative will not be tolerated and may result in restrictions in the implementation of the complaints process.

7. Procedure

- 7.1 In the first instance all complaints, whether verbal or written, should be made to the Clerk.
- 7.2 If the complaint is about a Trustee, then it will be referred to the Chair and if the complaint is about the Chair, it will be referred to the Vice-Chair.
- 7.3 If the complaint is about the Clerk, the complainant should be directed to contact their line manager within The Trust Partnership – see contact details in 12.2 below
- 7.4 If the complaint is about the Clerk or a Trustee, they should be informed without unreasonable delay and listened to as part of the process.
- 7.5 The complaint response will be issued when the decision is made and not wait for any outstanding actions to be completed in order to resolve the issue
- 7.6 Records will be kept of all verbal or written complaints, even if the outcome was satisfactorily concluded, to enable any subsequent complaint to be put in context. Where the complainant is an Almshouse resident, the details of the complaint will be kept on their file.
- 7.7 The Chair will be notified by the Clerk of all complaints.

- 7.8 Legal advice from the Charity's solicitors should be taken if required or if in doubt.
- 7.9 The police should be contacted if a crime has, or may have, been committed.
- 7.10 The Charity's Safeguarding Policy should be implemented if relevant.
- 7.11 Following investigation, the complainant will receive a written conclusion and state the reasons for the decision and any remedial actions required.
- 7.12 The detail and resolution of the complaint will be reported by the Clerk at the next Board meeting.

8. Timetable for a Resolution

- 8.1 All complaints will be acknowledged, in writing, within 5 working days. An investigation may take longer than this, but the acknowledgement to the complainant will indicate the next course of action and the anticipated timescale. The Charity aims to investigate all complaints within 10 working days of acknowledgement.
- 8.2 Stage 1 - the Clerk will respond to all complaints, in writing, within 5 working days of the complaint being received and give a reference number to ensure the matter is clearly identified throughout the process. The response will outline the steps to be taken and an anticipated timescale. It will also provide a summary of the complaint definition (see 6.4 above) - what is being investigated - to ensure clarity to the complainant.
- 8.3 The complainant will be kept informed in line with the timetable. The complainant should expect to receive a decision about the complaint by 10 working days from the acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, an explanation will be provided for the delay and the expected date of a decision, which will be not later than 20 working days from the receipt of the original complaint.
- 8.4 Any additional complaints raised during the investigation, will be incorporated. However, if they are not related to the current complaint, then they will be logged as a new complaint.
- 8.5 Stage 2 - if the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the response following a Stage 1 investigation and response, s/he will be offered the opportunity to have the matter considered by the Board of Trustees of the Charity. The Chair, Vice-Chair and the Clerk will set up a complaints panel, to be chaired by the Chair, or another Trustee appointed by him or her. The panel will include three Trustees and the Clerk. If the Clerk, Chair/Vice Chair or a Trustee is the subject of the complaint, then his/her part in the process will be substituted by the Clerk's line manager or another Trustee.
- 8.6 An acknowledgement in writing will be sent to the complainant within 5 working days of receipt of the escalation request.

- 8.7 The panel will usually meet within 20 working days of the Clerk receiving notice from the complainant that s/he wishes to have his/her complaint to be considered by the Board.
- 8.8 The Clerk will prepare a report for the complaints panel containing copies of all relevant documentation. The complainant will be invited to attend in person to present their complaint to the panel. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or supporter if s/he wishes.
- 8.9 The decision of the Complaints Panel will be reported to the complainant in writing within 20 working days. Exceptionally, if there is a need to take more time to respond more fully, the panel via the Clerk should provide an explanation to the complainant containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 20 working days (i.e. a total of 40 working days from the request to escalate) without good reason.
- 8.10 The Chair will ensure that any necessary follow up action is taken as soon as is practically possible. The findings of the Complaints Panel will be final and be reported by the Clerk at the next Board meeting.

9. Putting things right where something has gone wrong

- 9.1 Where something has gone wrong the Charity must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right.
- 9.2 These can include:
- Apologising.
 - Acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
 - Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons.
 - Taking action if there has been delay.
 - Reconsidering or changing a decision.
 - Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum.
 - Providing a financial remedy.
 - Changing policies, procedures or practices.

10. Annual Review

- 10.1 This Policy is based on the Complaint Handling Code issued by the Housing Ombudsman and guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office, and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

11. Information Commissioner's Office

- 11.1 If the complaint is about the way Trustee or its Managing Agent has handled data access requests or personal data, having gone through the Charity's Complaints procedure as stated above, the Stage 2 letter will advise the complainant that if following the receipt of the final response they are still not satisfied, they can refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office.

11.2 The contact details are:

Website:	https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/
Telephone:	0303 133 1113
Email:	icocasework@ico.org.uk
Post:	Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House, Water Lane Wilmslow. Cheshire, SK9 5AF

12. Contact Details for Complaints

12.1 Complaints Officer

Julia Linfoot (Clerk)
c/o The Trust Partnership Limited
6 Trull Farm Buildings
Tetbury
Gloucestershire
GL8 8SQ
Telephone: 01285 841900
Email: info@parmitersalmshouseandpensioncharity.org.uk

12.2 If your complaint concerns the Clerk please contact:

Jill Lawrence
The Trust Partnership Limited
6 Trull Farm Buildings
Tetbury
Gloucestershire
GL8 8SQ
Telephone: 01285 841900
Email: jill.lawrence@thetrustpartnership.com