



## Compliments, Suggestions, & Complaints Policy (Housing and CAS-2)

<b>Title:</b> Compliments, suggestions, and complaints policy		<b>Reference</b> <b>Version</b>	4.8
<b>Authorised by</b>	Director of Housing	<b>Date authorised</b>	May 2021
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## **Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy**

### **1. Policy Statement**

Nacro are committed to providing an excellent service and welcome feedback from all our Service Users. If you are pleased with our services, please let us know as we will use this information to thank our staff members.

We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. If you are dissatisfied with something we have done or with the level of service you received, we ask you to let us know. We will investigate what has happened and try and put things right. This will also give us the chance to learn and improve our services.

This policy has been written aligned to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. This policy will be made available on Nacro's website, alongside our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

#### **1.1. Who is this policy for?**

This policy is designed to support our Service Users of all housing services, including CAS-2. This policy can also be used by anyone interacting with or impacted by Nacro's housing services.

If a complaint is being made on the complainant's behalf by an advocate e.g., family, friend, advocate, or MP, written or expressed permission may be required from the complainant to allow us to communicate with this person directly.

#### **1.2. Why do we have this policy?**

It helps us to improve service delivery:

- to identify good practice and lessons learnt, recognise areas where improvement may be required and any changes, we may need to make.
- If we do something wrong, we want to learn from it and take action to prevent it from happening again.
- If Nacro has acted in a way that has damaged our relationship with services users, we want to put that right and find a resolution to any issues.

#### **1.3. Compliments**

As well as us needing to know where we can improve, it is useful for us to know what we may be doing right or particularly well. This way we can recognise and celebrate success, identify, and share good practice, ensure standards are maintained and further improved.

#### **1.4. Suggestions**

We welcome any suggestions or ideas about our services. We would like to hear if there is anything, we can do better to improve our services.

## 1.5 Complaints

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, with the standard of Nacro's service, actions, or lack of action that you could reasonably expect of Nacro, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

This could include:

- a. Failure to follow up or notify the Service User about appropriate follow up action following initial contact
- b. Failure or lengthy delay in providing a service or to take an action which Nacro said they could provide or take
- c. Failure to comply with a policy
- d. The inappropriate behaviour of Nacro employees or contractors.

## 1.6. Nacro's approach to resolving complaints:

- We aim to deal with all our complaints in a timely fashion. If there is a delay in our response to you, we will communicate with you about this. When we communicate about any delays, we will share with you the Housing Ombudsman Service details.
- Where additional complaints are raised during the investigation of a complaint, we will incorporate these into the complaint, if they are relevant and we have not issued a response. Where we have issued a response, or it would unreasonably delay the response we will log this as a new complaint.
- If you are requesting a service through the complaint channels, and we have not received this request from you previously, we will process this as a service request rather than a complaint.
- You do not have to use the word 'complaint' for your dissatisfaction to be treated as a complaint. If you express dissatisfaction with the response to a service request, for example, a repair, this will be treated as a complaint. In this circumstance, your service request will continue to be addressed.
- If you make a complaint when responding to anonymous service user surveys, this will not be treated as a complaint, as we will not be able to identify you and respond to the issue. However, all surveys sent out by Nacro will include details of how to make a complaint.
- Once we receive your complaint, we will ensure that we understand what your complaint is about; if we are not clear we will seek further clarification where needed. We will also ensure that we know what resolution you are seeking.
- All complaints will be considered on their individual circumstances. Nacro will accept all complaints unless there is a valid reason not to. An example of a valid reason is that Nacro is not responsible for the issue you are complaining about. If we do not accept a complaint, we will write to you to explain why.

- We aim to manage all complaints in an open and transparent way. Our goal is to find a resolution and rebuild any breakdown in relationship between Nacro and you, the complainant.
- We want to make sure that you can raise your complaint in a way that meets your communication preferences and needs, so we will listen to how best you would like us to communicate with you and make every attempt to adjust to meet your needs. We will always try to meet any reasonable requests you have regarding how we communicate with you in different form (verbal/written) and the frequency of contact during your complaint. We will ensure that where you may have difficulty in being able to express or represent your views, we will connect you to an advocate.
- We will always be clear about which stage you are at in our complaints process, whether you can escalate, how you can escalate and how long this will take. We will always include details of how you can contact the Housing Ombudsman or The Children's commissioner.
- As part of our investigation into a complaint we will give you, and if applicable any staff member who is subject of the complaint, a fair chance to set out your/their position and comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.
- When handling complaints, we will ensure that we:
  - Investigate each complaint based on the information provided
  - act independently and have an open mind
  - take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
  - consider all information and evidence carefully.
  - If a third party responds to the complaint, you will only go through one, two stage process, rather than two processes.
  - keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.
- If you request to escalate your complaint, we will always arrange a conversation with you to understand what areas you remain dissatisfied with and what actions you are looking for to resolve the complaint.
- If things have gone wrong, we will always aim to put it right.
- It is important that we learn from any identified mistakes or service failures and take steps to improve. Where this occurs, we will aim to let you know what learning or changes we have made.
- Anyone making a complaint can expect to have the same level of service from Nacro during and after the outcome of their complaint regardless of the outcome.
- While we may need to consult our colleagues on the issues raised in your complaint, your information is still protected by the GDPR, and we will only share information where we have a legal basis too. Please see our privacy notice on our website for more information.

### **1.7. What this policy does not deal with**

This policy is not suitable for the following issues

- a. A policy decision by Nacro that has been properly arrived at (for example, a decision to provide services in an area of the country, or a decision on environmental issues, or the supply and use of free Wi-Fi provided to our service users)

- b. Where a complaint is made more than 12 months after the matter has come to the Tenant's attention
- c. A matter already fully considered through relevant stages of the complaints process described below, or by the courts or another legal process.
- d. A matter directly linked to legal, or enforcement proceedings already started by the Tenant or Nacro
- e. An initial request for service, e.g., a repair which Nacro has not yet had an opportunity to put right or an issue which Nacro is aware of and is acting within its service standards to address.
- f. A claim for damages which should be handled as an insurance claim.
- g. Anti-social behaviour. Complaints about anti-social behaviour are handled in a different way, unless your complaint relates to how Nacro has managed previous complaints of anti-social behaviour.

## **2. Diversity Implications and adjustments**

2.1. Nacro advocates equality by committing to combat unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

2.2. All service users, of any tenure, working with Nacro or recent ex-service users of Nacro services have the right to complain. This includes applicants for housing or any of Nacro services.

2.3. Nacro will offer support to service users who wish to complain, to ensure that young people and adult service users who may have difficulty in being able to represent themselves or their views, can freely and in confidence raise issues with support and representation by advocates. e.g., supporting a service user reading or writing or referring them to an advocacy service.

2.4. Nacro will make further reasonable adjustments to support any service user with a disability to complain. We ask that Service Users explain what adjustments they're looking for. We will always consider making reasonable adjustments for a Service User if we asked to do so.

2.5. Nacro acknowledge some of our Service User's will have faced discrimination in the past. This may impact on their willingness to make a complaint and their trust in the process that they will be treated fairly. Complainants can use the dedicated complaints form or Have Your Say leaflet if they do not wish to complain to staff at the service.

## **3. How do I contact Nacro?**

If you wish to make a suggestion or give a compliment on the service you have received from Nacro, then you can do so by using our 'Have your say' leaflet, speak to any Nacro member of staff or follow the [Have-Your-Say-form](#) on our website ([www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk)) to tell us what you think.

If you wish to raise a complaint, you can:

Speak to any staff member,

Call 0300 123 1889

Complete the [complaints form](#) on our website,

Email [Complaints@nacro.org.uk](mailto:Complaints@nacro.org.uk)

#### 4. Confidentiality

Nacro will ensure that any information provided to us will only be kept in line with our retention policy and follow the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

Nacro will not normally share your information with any external organisation without your consent. There may be certain circumstances where we would need to share your information for example:

- Where we are required to do so by law, for safeguarding purposes or if there is a risk of harm or emergency situations.
- Where we are contractually obliged to share some information about complaints we receive with the local authority or government department who have commissioned Nacro to deliver the service. The information we are often required to share includes the nature of the complaints we receive, the number of complaints and how we resolved them. This is so they can monitor the quality of the services we provide. When we provide this information, we do it anonymously.

You can see our Privacy Statement [here](#). If you have any questions about this, please email [company.secretary@nacro.org.uk](mailto:company.secretary@nacro.org.uk).

#### 5. Making a complaint

A complaint can be made by:

- a. Speak to any staff member,
- b. Call 0300 123 1889
- c. Complete the [complaints form](#) on our website,
- d. Email [Complaints@nacro.org.uk](mailto:Complaints@nacro.org.uk)

We will need to know the following:

- a. What service you are unhappy with
- b. What you have done so far to deal with the problem for example, have you discussed this matter with your key worker
- c. What would you like to happen next or what outcome are you seeking?

All complaints will be logged on the complaints records system by the investigating manager.

### **5.1.1. Stage 1**

Complaints will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt of the complaint. A copy, or a link to our complaints policy, will be sent to the complainant by the relevant Investigating Manager, who will be dealing with your complaint. The Investigating Manager, who is likely to be the Service Lead responsible for your service, will fully investigate your complaint.

You will receive a written response from the Investigating Manager within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint. Once we have an answer to your complaint, we will respond to you as soon as possible. This will also include details about stage two of the process, should you not be satisfied that your complaint has been fully responded to. If your complaint is going to take longer than 10 days to resolve, the Investigating Manager will write to you to explain the delay and advise you of when you can expect to receive a detailed reply. If this happens, you will also be sent details of the Housing Ombudsman Service.

If you are not satisfied with the response that you receive or feel that your problem has not been resolved, you can request for your complaint to be considered at Stage 2. You will need to do this within 5 working days of receiving a response to your complaint. In this situation, we will arrange to speak to you, to understand what parts of the complaint response you are dissatisfied with and what actions you are looking for to resolve the issue.

### **5.1.2. Stage 2**

If we agree to review your Stage 1 complaint response your complaint will be referred to either an Area Manager or the Head of Service. An acknowledgement letter will be sent to you within five working days of receipt of the Stage 2 complaint.

You will receive a written response within 20 working days unless your complaint is going to take longer than this to resolve, in which case, we will write to you to explain the delay and advise you of when you can expect to receive a detailed reply. Our aim is to not delay your response by any longer than 20 working days. This means you should expect a response within 40 working day, even if we are delayed.

## **6. Compensation**

We recognise that there are times when we may fail to meet the high standards we have set. In these situations, we will aim to put things right. At times this may involve paying compensation. Any remedy offered by Nacro will reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to you. We will always ensure that our considerations in this process are fair and transparent.

When awarding compensation, we will refer to the Nacro Compensation Policy to look at what the claim relates to and consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, the time and trouble you have been put to as well as any distress and inconvenience caused to you.

## **7. Taking matters further**

If you remain unhappy with the way we have handled your complaint upon completion of Stage 2, you may contact the Housing Ombudsman Service or the PRS scheme if you are in Wales. We will support you to make this contact if required.

## **Housing Ombudsman Service**

PO Box 152  
Liverpool  
L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000 (lines are open Monday to Friday from 9:15am to 5:15pm except public holidays)

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

You can find more information about the Housing Ombudsman Service and what it can help with on its website: <http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

## **PRS scheme – (Wales Services only)**

Contact the PRS scheme

0333 321 9418 [info@theprs.co.uk](mailto:info@theprs.co.uk)

[www.theprs.co.uk](http://www.theprs.co.uk)

**The Children's Commissioner's Officer** Young people can contact The Children's Commissioner's Officer. Her job is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people. The Children's Commissioner can be contacted as follows:

By phone: 0800 528 0731

By email: [advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

Children & Young People can also contact their Independent Reviewing Officer and Ofsted

## **8. Handling complaints better**

We frequently ask for feedback on our complaint handling process. If you are sent a feedback questionnaire, we'd really appreciate it if you could take a couple of minutes to respond.

## **9. Different approaches to responding to complaints**

### **9.1 Regular complaint meetings**

When responding to repeated complaints the staff member responding may decide to hold a regular meeting, for example, monthly, to record all the complaints and respond to them in a timely way. This may allow the person responding to the complaints the opportunity to respond to frequent complaints and allow the complainant a regular opportunity to provide Nacro with feedback.

### **9.2 Representation and multi-agency approach**

In situations where we are unable to discuss your complaint directly with you, we will consider if there is someone else who could represent you in handling your complaint. This could be a family member, friend, or a support worker from another service. Where there are other



agencies working with you, Nacro will consider if a multi-agency approach is necessary in managing your complaint effectively.

## **10. Unreasonable complaints and unacceptable behaviour**

We understand that when things go wrong this can be a distressing and upsetting time. This may lead to some people behaving in a way that is out of character.

Where the behaviour or actions involve abuse to staff, Nacro will take action to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff who have a right to do their job without fear of being abused or harassed.

Equally we will ensure any allegations or complaints against staff will be taken seriously and investigated properly, in line with our safeguarding and HR processes.

This section of the policy sets out how we will approach situations of unacceptable behaviours. It applies to all areas of our work and to all methods of contact including telephone, face-to-face, letters, e-mails, and social media.

### **10.1 What do we consider to be unreasonable complaint and unacceptable behaviour?**

We understand that you may be distressed and upset by the circumstances leading up to you contacting us about a complaint and that these situations may lead to you behaving in a manner that is out of character. If this behaviour becomes aggressive and abusive towards Nacro staff, or unreasonably demanding or persistent and impacts the level of service that can be offered to other service users or creates distress or concerns for our staff, we will consider this to be unacceptable.

We will look at each situation individually to assess if the behaviour is unacceptable, however, Nacro will not tolerate violence against staff or others using the service. This includes behaviours or language that maybe be offensive, discriminatory or cause staff to be afraid, threatened or abused.

#### **Nacro considers the following as unacceptable language:**

- Offensive or derogatory
- Discriminatory, including racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic
- Untruthful allegations

#### **Nacro considers the following as unacceptable behaviours:**

##### Unreasonable demands

- requesting large volumes of information,
- asking for responses within a short space of time,
- refusing to speak to an individual or insisting on speaking with another, when this is not possible

##### Unreasonable persistence

- refusing to accept the answer that has been provided,
- continuing to raise the same subject matter without providing any new evidence,

- continuously adding to or changing the subject matter of the complaint and raising unrelated concerns

Verbal abuse, aggression, violence

- actual physical or verbal abuse
- derogatory remarks, rudeness,
- inflammatory allegations
- threats of violence
- harassment e.g., contacting staff using personal details / social media, publishing personal information

Unmanageable contact

- Excessive frequency of contact
- High volume of correspondence received referencing the same concerns
- repeated telephone calls, e.g., several calls in a day or an hour
- unnecessarily or excessive copying individuals into emails

The impact of staff dealing with this level of demand or behaviours would be that it takes up an excessive amount of time which may delay your original complaint from being dealt with quickly or effect service delivery to others.

### **10.2.2 How will we manage unacceptable behaviour?**

Nacro will always tell you if we consider your behaviour as unacceptable. We will ask you to adjust your behaviour to maintain our employee's right to do their job without fear of abuse. We will encourage mediation or advocacy through third parties to try and improve the situation.

If this is not successful, Nacro will write to you to explain how your behaviour is unacceptable and ask you to behave differently. This communication will detail where Nacro believes that your behaviour has been considered unacceptable and provide detail on what steps may be taken if the behaviour continues.

### **10.3 Actions Nacro may take**

Nacro will consider taking the following action where behaviour has continued to be unacceptable:

- provide a single point of contact within Nacro
- limit contact to a single form i.e., to writing, email or telephone only
- limiting contact to certain times or to a limited number of times per week or month
- declining to give any further consideration to an issue unless any additional evidence or information is provided
- Issue warnings for behaviour
- in extreme cases, such as physical violence or harassment towards an employee, actions could include involving the police or taking legal action.

Where it is decided that formal action must be taken to manage interactions with a complainant's, we will inform them of the decision in writing. The decision will be made by the Area Manager and a note will be placed on our records to this effect.

Any restriction's placed due to unacceptable behaviour will be appropriate to the needs of the individual and will demonstrate regard for the provision of the Equality Act 2010.

## 10.4 Right to Appeal

Where you or your representatives do not agree with the decision by Nacro to put in place restrictions on how you engage with the complaints policy, you will have the right to appeal. This can be done by contacting the Area Manager.

Any restrictions placed on you due to unacceptable behaviours will be subject to a review and you will be notified of the timeframe and conditions at the beginning.

Consideration will be given to lift the restrictions where behaviour has improved at the point of review. If it has not improved, an explanation will be provided as to why the restrictions will remain in force for a further period pending the next agreed review date.

### Policy History

Revision	Date	Changes Made
4.0	12/03/2019	Published
4.1	22/10/2020	Redrafted in response to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
4.2	31/3/2021	Director review
4.3	13/04/21	Redrafted to 3 stage process
2.0	04/05/2021	Updated website links
4.4	17/01/2022	Added Section 7 to 9 Updated Section 4 Updated Section 5.2.3
4.5	26/07/22	Section 5.2.3 updated reference to BASS with CAS-2
4.6	23/09/2022	Redrafted in response to self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
4.7	29/08/2023	Include detail on the Children's Commissioner
4.8	04/03/2024	Include the phone number as a new way to make complaints
4.8	04/03/2024	Remove stage 3 of the process, in line with the new Housing Ombudsman Complain Handling Code