

## **FEEDBACK POLICY**

### **1 Policy Statement**

- 1.1 At Brighter Futures we believe that any feedback or complaint gives us an opportunity to review our practice and to identify what lessons we may learn to continually improve the services we operate.
- 1.2 If you want to give feedback or complain we will make it as easy as possible for you to do so. You can be accompanied, advised, represented, or supported by a person of your choice at any time. If you would like help on how to find an independent advocate our Head of Governance and Business Assurance will be happy to assist you.
- 1.3 The application of this policy ensures compliance with the Regulatory framework for Social Housing in England, adopted by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) as below:

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- Tenancy involvement and Empowerment standard that states registered providers shall:
  - Provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of this tenants in the delivery of all standards
  - Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple, and accessible that ensures all complaints are resolved promptly, politely, and fairly
  
- The Tenant Standard states that in relation to Allocations and mutual Exchanges, registered providers shall:
  - Have a clear application, decision making and appeals process

#### 1.4 Definitions

##### 1.4.1 For the purposes of this Policy the following definitions will apply:

- Complaint – will be 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, affecting an individual resident or group of residents’.
- Appeal – will be defined as ‘a disagreement with the decision we have made in line with our published policies and procedures’
  - General Appeal – this is an appeal about general service provision where a decision had been made that the customer does not agree with

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- Statutory appeal – this is where the right to appeal is outlined in legislation of regulation.
- Feedback – will be defined as ‘any method whereby customer can express their views on how Brighter Futures delivers its services.

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

1.5.1 Brighter Futures is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourable than another or group of persons and will carry out its duty with positive regard for the following core strands of equality: Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Gender Identify / Gender Expression, Sexual Orientation, Religion and / or Belief, Civil Partnership and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity.

1.5.2 Brighter Futures also recognise that some people experience disadvantage due to their social economic circumstances, employment status, class, assurance, responsibility for dependents, unrelated criminal activities, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.

1.5.2 Brighter Futures will ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the content of current Human Rights Legislation and will endeavour to ensure all staff and others with whom it works, adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).

1.5.3 The policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Compensation Policy

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- Tenancy Policy

## 2 Values in action

2.1 We are passionate about our services and the important role we play in the lives of our customers.

2.2 We empower people to express how they feel about the services they need and to think about how we could improve them.

2.3 We give everyone an opportunity to express an opinion. We respect and listen to them all equally and keep them fully informed of the outcome.

2.4 We will feedback creatively on how we run our services and what we could do to improve them.

2.5 A sustainable service meets the needs of its customers. We recognise that where we cannot meet our customer needs, we have a responsibility to ensure commissioners understand this and how existing unmet needs could be addressed.

## 3 How we manage and use complaints

3.1 With strategic direction from the Board and Executive Leadership Team (ELT), a positive approach is provided for complaints, appeals

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and all forms of customer feedback, with this information being used to deliver consistently excellent customer services.

3.2 Brighter Futures will ensure that it provides complaints, appeals and feedback opportunities that are easy to understand and easy to access for all customers. This will be done by:

- Ensuring customers can provide complaints, appeals and feedback in a variety of ways including over the phone, in person with any BrighterFutures’ staff member, online or in writing and via social media.
- Involving customers in designing and improving all information on complaints, appeals and feedback to ensure it is jargon free and easy to understand.
- Making relevant information available in alternative languages and formats such as large print, on request
- Ensuring customers receive support from Brighter Futures staff, or via working in partnership with community support agencies and advocacy grounds
- Analysing complaints, appeals and feedback information against our known customer profile information and the diversity of the community where Brighter Futures operates
- Resolving complaints to customers’ satisfaction, efficiently and learning from it to improve customer service.

3.3 We will address any dissatisfaction or concern as quickly as possible when it is first raised and ensure appropriate resources are available

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to gather, analyse and act upon complaints, appeals and customer feedback. We will do this by:

- Ensuring staff are trained and regularly assessed in complaints, appeals and feedback handling including being aware of the relevant policies and procedures and taking ownership of the issue with an aim to resolve at the first point of contact.
- Ensuring the association uses complaints, appeals and customer feedback to improve the service delivered to customers.

### 3.4 Monitoring complaints

3.4.1 Brighter Futures will constantly monitor its standards of service and the way it responds to complaints / compliments and feedback. To achieve this, we will:

- Provide information to our managers, customers, and Board to show trends and responses provided and subsequent actions taken to improve the service
- Set targets to benchmark performance against our peers
- Undertake regular reviews of the policy and best practice in dealing with complaints, compliments, and feedback to improve the service to customers
- Publish data including lessons learned so that performance and satisfaction overall is improved.

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### 3.5 How to complain

3.5.1 The process below explains the various stages of the complaints process including the ability to appeal.

	Complaints
Stage 1	Complaint acknowledged within 2 working days and customer advised who will be investigating the complaint.
	The investigating officer will contact the complainant to obtain further details
	A full response will be provided within 10 working days (unless the investigation will take longer, if further evidence is required, in which case the customer will be informed of this) A letter will be sent to the customer along with actions / timescale to remedy the complaint if applicable.
	Where a formal complaint has been resolved quickly (i.e., within 3 working days), to the satisfaction of the customer, the case will be closed and a formal letter may not be received if the customer agrees.
Stage 2	If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome of stage 1, they may escalate this to stage 2.
	The complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days with the customer(s) advised who will be investigating.
	This will be a more senior member of staff than in stage 1.
	If agreed between the investigating officer and the customer, or requested by the customer, a meeting may be arranged for the case to be discussed in person at an agreed location.
	Customer can choose to be accompanied if they advise Brighter Futures two days in advance and state in what capacity they are attending.
	After stage 2, a customer will normally receive a reply within 10 working days

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### 3.5.2 Complaints can be submitted in the following ways:

- Via email to [complaints@brighter-futures.org.uk](mailto:complaints@brighter-futures.org.uk)
- In writing to

Head of Governance and Business Assurance

Unit 5, Whittle Court

Town Road

Hanley

Stoke-On-Trent

ST1 2QE

- By phone by ringing 01782 406000

3.5.3 Where Brighter Futures believes complaints are being made in an unacceptable way including persistent, vexatious, or malicious, they may be dealt with outside of formal timescales and dealt with under its unacceptable behaviour policy. This may involve Brighter Futures liaising with external bodies such as the Housing Ombudsman to resolve the complaint. Where this happens, Brighter Futures would write to the complainant advising them of their decision.

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3.5.4 Cases will only be escalated where the substance of the case remains the same as stage 1. If new elements are raised, which would result in a different resolution than would normally have been offered in stage 1, a new complaint will be opened.

3.5.5 Any complaints / appeals that are more than 6 months old will not normally be investigated unless the complainant is able to demonstrate that there are ongoing / unresolved issues.

### **3.6 External complaint and appeals process**

3.6.1 Where the internal complaints process is exhausted, and the customer is not satisfied with the response, they may take their complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman using the contact details below:

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

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

Web: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

3.6.2 The Independent Housing Ombudsman will only review cases:

- That have exhausted Brighter Futures' internal complaint and appeal handling process

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- Are referred by a 'Designated Person' or have the authorisation from the 'Designated Person' to be forwarded directly from the customer
- Where a 'Designated Person' has reviewed a complaint, but it remains unresolved
- Where customers make direct referrals when eight weeks have elapsed from the end of the internal complaints process

3.6.3 Brighter Futures will act upon and fully implement any recommendations or determinations that are made because of cases that have been reviewed by the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

### 3.7 Statutory Appeals

3.7.1 In addition to 'general appeals' there are a number of areas of service delivery where Brighter Futures' customers have a legal right to an internal appeal, known as 'statutory appeals' as below).

3.7.2 All statutory appeals are on a 1 stage process and will be heard via an appeal meeting, at which the customer may choose to make personal representation, submit evidence, and be accompanied by a person of their choice, giving the Association 48 hours' notice in advance of the meeting. All statutory appeals will be heard by a more senior officer than sanctioned the original decision.

3.7.3 Any subsequent changes to this evidence or change of the person accompanying may result in the review being postponed, the evidence not being considered or a refusal to hear the customer(s) representative.

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- 3.7.4 If having requested an internal appeal hearing the customer(s) fail to attend or inform the Association of the reasons why they cannot attend, the reviewing officer may proceed with the hearing in their absence.
- 3.7.5 On a discretionary basis, the Association may choose to postpone a hearing if requested by the customer(s) and there is a justifiable reason for doing so or if the person due to hear the appeal is unavailable for any reason.
- 3.7.6 This may, however, not always be possible if the delay would prevent the Association from taking expedient legal action to remedy a tenancy breach or it would result in hearings being outside the permitted legal framework.
- 3.7.7 If during a hearing an adjournment is requested by either the Association, the customer(s) or their representatives and a further meeting is necessary, the Association will give reasonable notice of the date, time, and venue of the adjourned hearing.
- 3.7.8 When hearing internal statutory appeals, the reviewing officer will assess the following:
- If the legal procedures and notice periods have been adhered to in serving of notices or letters sent to customer(s) advising of actions to be taken
  - It was appropriate in terms of evidence provided
  - The decision will stand up to scrutiny

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### **3.8 Feedback**

- 3.8.1 Brighter Futures will maximise all types of formal and informal customer feedback to drive service improvement.
- 3.8.2 The intelligence gained from of all forms of feedback including performance and satisfaction information is regularly shared with customers. The information is used to identify improvement opportunities and may trigger a service review and remedial actions when there are any dips in performance.
- 3.8.3 Brighter Futures aims to capture all informal interactions which are not complaints, appeals, suggestions, or compliments, whether positive or negative comments about the services it delivers and will use this information to identify issues that are common to several customers and detail the action taken as a result in customer newsletters and on the website.
- 3.8.4 Compliments – Brighter Futures encourages customers to let us know when we have done something well, in addition to areas it needs to improve in. A register of all compliments received is maintained to improve future service delivery.

### **3.9 Suggestions**

- 3.9.1 All customers (internal / external) are encouraged to submit suggestions on how it can change and improve the ways in which it works to deliver better services.

### **3.10 Surveys**

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3.10.1 Surveys are used to gain customer intelligence and assess satisfaction with the ways in which it is delivering services. Brighter Futures has a programme of surveys that is reviewed annually with the tenant led Service Review Groups and includes STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) surveys, on-going in-house surveys, and one-off service-specific surveys.

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