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| 1. **Context** | Sometimes things don't go as planned, and you might feel dissatisfied with certain aspects of your housing experience. We want to assure you that we take all feedback seriously and are committed to resolving any concerns you may have.  We are committed to providing a high-quality service to residents and others who access our service. We recognise that while most concerns can be resolved quickly and easily, occasionally a formal process is needed. We welcome suggestions and comments from residents, their families and representatives, to help improve the services we provide. Feedback gives us the opportunity to learn about our strengths, understand our weaknesses and is key to ensuring that we consistently meet a high standard of service.  This policy aims to:   * ensure that all complaints are handled promptly, fairly, consistently and confidentially (in line with data protection regulations) * be clear about who is responsible for complaints at each stage, ensuring that designated individuals are not the subject of the complaint and that, as the complaint is escalated, it is dealt with by a more senior member of the Society. * ensure records are kept of all complaints and prompt review of their handling in order to drive improvement * ensure details of complaints are provided to residents and included in our annual report. * ‘put things right’ where a complaint identifies that we have failed to deliver a service to the expected standard.   The Objective of our Complaints procedure is to:  a) have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;  b) take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and  c) act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Housing Ombudsman  This Policy is intended to cover current and prospective residents and their representatives but, with the exclusions below also applies to any stakeholder who wishes to make a complaint about our Society.  Complaints should be made as soon after the event as possible (or came to the attention of the complainant), and ideally within 12 months.  If the complainant expresses a desired outcome that we believe to be unreasonable, we will explain our position at the outset, while continuing to investigate.    Where there is doubt about which policy is applicable, the CEO will make a decision. |
| 1. **What is a complaint?** | The Housing Ombudsman defines a complaint as *“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.”*  We recognise that the word ‘complaint’ does not have to be used in order for it to be treated as such.  Aside from the Exclusions given below, Abbeyfield will treat any ‘expression of dissatisfaction’ as a complaint under this policy to ensure the identified issue is investigated and responded to appropriately. Where necessary, we will ensure individuals are aware that complaints are viewed positively and are welcomed by the organisation as an opportunity to improve.    Your feedback is valuable to us and helps us to continuously improve our services and ensure a positive living experience for all our residents. |
| 1. **What is a “Service Request”?** | Resident may request that something is done to address an issue with the service, but In line with the above definition, it is important to recognise that a request for a service is not a complaint.  A distinction must be made between a service request from a resident (e.g. reporting a repair or an incident of anti-social behaviour) and dissatisfaction with the service received (e.g. complaining that a repair has not been carried out even though it has been reported, or complaining that Abbeyfield has failed to deal adequately with anti-social behaviour reports).  A service request may precede a formal complaint if appropriate action is not taken to resolve the issue for residents as early as possible.  A complaint will be raised when the resident raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request |
| 1. **What is a “concern”?** | While a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about something that has or has not happened, a concern is an expression of anxiety about something which might happen.  A concern may be defined as *“an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”.* Whereas a complaint is more likely to be from an individual receiving our services, or their representative, as a result of dissatisfaction with the services they have received, a concern may be from any stakeholder, including a member of the public. |
| 1. **What is excluded from this policy?** | This policy is intended for residents, prospective residents, and their representatives, who wishes to give a raise a concern, or make a complaint about our services, or any other aspect of Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham service  The following are excluded from the scope of this policy:   * resident complaints about another resident, for example of bullying or harassment, or * complaints about a resident from someone outside the Society. * Staff complaints, which are dealt with in line with our Staff Disciplinary and Grievance Policy * complaints about something for which our Society is not responsible (for example, care a resident receives from an external agency). With permission, we will share such concerns with the relevant organisation, or signpost the complainant to the organisation’s complaints procedure. * complaints already subject to legal proceedings, or relating to an issues likely to be dealt with by our insurers. * Complaints related to safeguarding – We will follow our Safeguarding Adults or Safeguarding Children policies and procedures. In particular, the relevant local authority safeguarding team will be notified and they will take the lead to ensure appropriate investigations are carried out and outcomes are monitored. * Complaints involving the Police or external regulator   If a complaint is considered to be excluded from this policy, then we will explain why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and inform the individual of the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.  If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint. |
| 1. **Exceptions** | In rare circumstances, Abbeyfield reserves the right to deal with a complaint differently (outside the normal complaints handling process) if required. A full record of the reasons why the complaint should be addressed differently will be made and the complainant informed accordingly. The complainant will also be informed of their right to take that decision to the relevant Ombudsman, as applicable. |
| 1. **Time limit** | This policy sets out how complaints are dealt with regarding issues that occurred less than 12 months ago, or the resident became aware of it less than 12 months ago. If the issue occurred more than 12 months ago, but a resident still wants to complain then this will be considered on a case by case basis, investigating it where there are good reasons still to do so.  If there is doubt about how a matter should be addressed, the CEO will make the final decision. |
| 1. **What if you are dissatisfied with something?** | Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham aims to make it easy for residents, and other stakeholders to make a complaint, by offering different channels through which a complaint can be made and by ensuring the procedure for making a complaint is known (including providing a copy of our complaints procedure to all prospective residents and displaying information prominently in our services and on the abbeyfield-bristol.com website).  Where a resident, or their representative, is dissatisfied with any aspect of the service provided by Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham, the first course of action should be to raise the problem directly with the relevant manager or individual concerned.  All staff members are expected to seek to resolve any issue causing dissatisfaction immediately. In many cases, the issue causing dissatisfaction will be resolved and no further action will be required.  However, where the issue cannot be raised or resolved locally, or the local response is deemed unsatisfactory, a formal complaint can be made using the procedure below. |
| 1. **How to make a Complaint** | There are three ways you can take the matter further:  1. You can put your complaint in writing directly to the House Manager.  2. You can ask a member of staff or a volunteer to write down your  complaint and give it to you for approval. This can then be passed to the House Manager.  3. You can speak to any member staff and tell them you want to make a complaint.  If your complaint is about the House Manager, you can complain directly to the Central Office and a senior manager will handle your complaint. You can complain about the House Manager by:   1. Calling the office on 01179736997 2. Sending the complaint in writing to Central Office, 43-49 Westbury Rd,Westbury on Trym, Henleaze BS9 3AU 3. Emailing Central Office on [e-mail@abbeyfield-bristol.co.uk](mailto:e-mail@abbeyfield-bristol.co.uk)   If an individual has difficulty in making a complaint using one of the options listed above, Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham will make all reasonable adjustments necessary to enable them to raise their complaint.  All complaints received and subsequently investigated will be recorded fully in the Complaints Log and a copy of relevant documentation kept.  The procedure then follows two stages. |
| 1. **Stage 1: Investigation by the Complaints Officer** | When the Manager receives your complaint, they will acknowledge it **within 5 working days of it being received**, setting out what they understand your complaint to be and what outcome they understand you are requesting “the complaint definition”  The Manager will then send you a full written response to your complaint **within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged**. This will give you the answer to the complaint and set out any outstanding actions that will be undertaken promptly.  If the complaint is complicated, the Manager may decide that they need an extension to these timescales, and they will explain the reasons for this to you.  The written response will include:   * the complaint stage * the complaint definition * the decision on the complaint * the reasons for any decisions made * the details of any remedy offered to put things right * details of any outstanding actions * details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response   Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related, and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint. |
| 1. **Stage 2: Escalation Request** | If you feel that all or part of the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction at stage 1 you have 5 days from receiving the written response to ask to escalate the complaint. You can do this in verbally or in writing to the Manager who investigated the complaint.  You are not required to explain your reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration, but you are welcome to give more detail if you wish. As part of the review, we will try to understand why you remain unhappy with the initial response.  The Stage 2 review of your complaint will be undertaken by a more Senior staff member (e.g. Operations Lead or CEO) than the stage 1 Complaints Manager    We will issue a final response to your complaint **within 20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged, and this will include:   1. the complaint stage 2. the complaint definition 3. the decision on the complaint 4. the reasons for any decisions made 5. the details of any remedy offered to put things right 6. details of any outstanding actions 7. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied   If the complaint is complicated, the Stage 2 Manager may decide that they need an extension to these timescales, and they will explain the reasons for this to you. |
| 1. **Managing Expectations and Behaviour** | Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham Society will investigate complaints in an independent, impartial and fair way. However, in the event that a complainant’s desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic, Abbeyfield will seek to explain the reasoning to the individual at the outset, while continuing with a full investigation of the issues.  Abbeyfield believes that all complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected and we will treat all complaints in the same way. If a complaint is accompanied by inappropriate behaviour (e.g. aggressive or abusive) from the complainant, Abbeyfield will seek to manage this behaviour separately in line with our Antisocial Behaviour Policy.  Actions to manage a complainant’s behaviour may include warning the individual about their behaviour and requesting modifications, appointing a specific point of contact, or communicating only in writing. Any restrictions due to unacceptable behaviour will be agreed with the Chief Executive Officer, be proportionate and in line with the Equality Act 2010.  Where a complainant continues to pursue a case after having exhausted our internal complaints procedure and without presenting any new information, Abbeyfield will inform the individual that the complaint will not be investigated further and advise that they take the issue to the Ombudsman, as appropriate. |
| 1. **Responsibilities** | The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for  all complaints received at the organisation. They will direct all complaints received to the appropriate manager for investigation. Each manager is responsible for addressing complaints within their area of  responsibility, unless there is a conflict of interest in which  case another senior manager would investigate the issues  raised.  The Chair of the Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham Society’s Board is the  trustee with lead responsibility for complaints within the organisation. |
| 1. **Putting things right** | Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions already taken, or that we intend to take, to put things right. 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   Any remedy offered will reflect the impact on you as a result of any fault identified.  The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with you where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.  We take guidance form the Housing Ombudsman when deciding appropriate remedies. |
| 1. **Appeal to the independent Housing Ombudsman** | If you are still not satisfied with our response, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to investigate your complaint. The Ombudsman is an independent complaints ‘referee’ and the service is free.  For more information, please go to :  <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/>  The Ombudsman will investigate your complaint as long as you have already followed our complaints procedure. |
| 1. **Independent Housing Ombudsmancontact details** | **Address:** Housing Ombudsman, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ  **Phone:** 0300 111 3000  **E-mail:** info@housing‑[ombudsman.org.uk](http://ombudsman.org.uk)  **Website:** www.housing‑[ombudsman.org.uk](http://ombudsman.org.uk) |
| 1. **Homes England Regulatory Framework** | As a social housing provider, Abbeyfield is subject to the guidance issued by Homes England. Further information can be found here:  <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-framework-requirements> |
| 1. **Other formats** | If you would like this policy in another language or format, please speak to the House Manager. |
| 1. **Further information** | If there is anything in this information you don’t understand or if you have any questions or comments about how the complaints procedure works, the House Manager or the Chief Executive Officer will be happy to answer your questions. |
| 1. **How can we improve?** | We welcome your comments and suggestions about improving our complaints service. After we have looked at your complaint, we will write to you to find out whether you are happy with the way we have dealt with it. |