

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Stoll believes that all customers and stakeholders have the right to express their views on how our services are managed; Stoll accepts that this may sometimes come in the form of a complaint.
- 1.2. Stoll is committed to encouraging customers and stakeholders to come forward with any complaints about the services delivered in order to make sure that quality is maintained and enhanced and customers' needs are appropriately met.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. Stoll defines a complaint as, an expression of dissatisfaction caused through our failure to achieve a specified level of service or our failure to satisfactorily resolve an issue that has been previously raised. for which we are responsible.
- 2.2. Complaints can relate to the quality of service or works; standard of accommodation; a product supplied by us; or the behaviour, actions or lack of action by Stoll, our staff or people working on our behalf.
- 2.3. Complaints are dealt with according to the following stages.
 - Stage 1 - a complaint that cannot be resolved immediately and to the complainant's satisfaction.
 - Stage 2 – an appeal against the outcome of a complaint at stage 1 or an appeal against a decision under the Allocations Policy
 - Stage 3 – an appeal against the outcome of a complaint at stage 2 reviewed by a member of the Housing Services Committee.
 - External process for housing complaints only – an appeal to an independent designated person and / or escalation to the Housing Ombudsman.

3. Background

- 3.1. Listed below are the key regulatory standards and statutory Acts that have been acknowledged.
 - Homes & Communities Agency Regulatory Standards - Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017
 - Localism Act 2011
 - Equality Act 2010
- 3.2. Under the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as confidential, including:
 - anything of a personal nature that is not a matter of public record about a customer or stakeholder
 - sensitive organisational information

Officers will ensure that they only involve other agencies and share information with the consent of the resident concerned, unless:

- Stoll is required to by law
- the information is necessary for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

4. Policy

4.1. The objectives of this policy are to:

- resolve complaints quickly and sensitively
- resolve complaints at the first point of contact where ever possible
- manage all complaints in an open and accountable way; keeping the complainant fully informed throughout the process
- provide an independent arbitrator where necessary
- monitor serious complaints at Board level
- use complaints to help us improve our services and reduce the level of complaints in the future

5. Implementation

5.1. To achieve the policy objectives, Stoll will:

- ensure that all customers and stakeholders know how to complain; complaints should be made within 3 months of the issue/incident
- follow the complaints procedure fairly and consistently; whether the complaint is made in person, anonymously or through an advocate
- maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information at all times
- make personal contact with complainants, ideally face to face or by telephone, to understand their complaint, attempt resolution and update them
- acknowledge all complaints in writing within 2 working days
- respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days. Where this is not practically possible, we will give reasons and agree new timescales with the complainant
- review and respond to Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days following receipt of the escalation request or agree new timetables where further investigation is required
- review and respond to Stage 3 complaints within 20 working days following receipt of the escalation request or agree new timetables where further investigation is required
- support vulnerable customers through the complaints process and, where appropriate, refer them to alternative services that may be able to assist
- help access independent advocacy where the complainant lacks capacity to make the complaint or take part in the investigation and outcome
- provide alternative avenues to seek support when the service requested is outside Stoll's remit where appropriate and where possible
- unreasonable or abusive complaints will be dealt with under the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- maintain a named independent designated person to act as arbitrator as required following appeal at Stage 3 and prior to any complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

- ensure best practice is maintained in line with the Housing Ombudsman's complaints process
- monitor and analyse complaints at senior management meetings

5.2. If the complaint covers allegations of discrimination or abuse then the Harassment, Anti-social Behaviour and Safeguarding policies should be referred to.

5.3. If the complaint covers discrimination, then the Equality and Diversity Policy should also be referred to.

5.4. The Board of Trustees will monitor complaints that go to appeal at Stage 3 of the procedure.

6. Equality and diversity

6.1. Stoll is committed to giving our customers, staff and stakeholders the information they need in ways they can understand. It is our intention to produce clear written documents so that they can be understood by as many people as possible. We expect staff to be sensitive to the needs of residents who cannot read, this includes having an awareness of the issues surrounding both illiteracy and dyslexia.

6.2. In the implementation of this policy Stoll will ensure that no-one is treated unfairly on the grounds of race, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, religion and belief.

7. Monitoring

7.1. Gathering feedback from our customers on their experience of our services is important. We use this feedback to improve the service we provide. All complaints received are reported to the Corporate Services Team who monitor the progress and outcomes of the complaints and report to the Senior Management Team at their monthly meetings, where lessons learned can be disseminated through the teams.

8. Policy Review Form

Date of review:	November 2019
Date of next review:	November 2022
Approved by SMT on:	29 October 2019
Approval by Trustee Sub-committee on:	09 November 2019

Version Control			
Version	Type of Change	Date	Revisions from previous issues
01	Review	2016	New policy
02	Review	2019	Revision of complaints stages Updated legal framework Include external process Addition of Trustee monitoring

9. Equality Impact

9.1. Stoll strives to ensure equality of opportunity for all service users and the workforce. As an employer and a provider of housing and support services Stoll aims to ensure that none are placed at a disadvantage as a result of its policies and procedures. All policies and procedures are written to ensure fairness and consistency for all those covered by it regardless of their individuality.