



COMPLAINTS: OUR POLICY

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 United St Saviour's Charity (USTSC) aims to provide the people and organisations we deal with through our community investment programme, almshouses and commercial properties with the best possible service. However, we recognise that sometimes things go wrong and there may be times when people or an organisation feel that they have not been treated fairly, or where we have failed to provide an acceptable level of service.
- 1.2 USTSC views complaints as an opportunity to learn from our mistakes and to improve the services we provide. Making a complaint will not have a negative effect on the way in which the complainant is treated by the Charity.
- 1.3 If it is found that a mistake has been made by USTSC, we will apologise and do what we can to put things right.
- 1.4 All complaints will be treated as confidential and will be dealt with impartially and objectively. *Please note that the Charity cannot consider anonymous complaints*

2. Definition – what is a complaint?

- 2.1 USTSC defines a complaint as *'an expression of dissatisfaction, about action or lack of action, the standard of a service or a policy'*.
- 2.2 A complaint can be about something that has been done wrongly or badly, including:
 - Failure to follow our procedures
 - Giving inaccurate information
 - Lengthy delays in dealing with matters
 - Unclear or incomplete replies to enquiries
 - The way your application for housing or a grant has been dealt with
- 2.3 A complaint can be about something that USTSC should not have done, including:
 - Discriminating against you
 - The attitude of behaviour of our staff or contractors
 - Breaking appointments without prior notification
- 2.4 A complaint can be about failure to do something that we should have done, including:
 - Taking too long to answer your letters or queries
 - Not returning phone calls
 - Failing to have procedures for dealing with your query
- 2.5 Our complaints procedure cannot deal with
 - Anything that happened over 6 months ago and which you did not report as a problem at the time

- A policy decision which has been properly arrived at
- Anything already considered by a Court or the Independent Housing Ombudsman

3. Making a Formal Complaint

3.1 Who should I complain to?

You should, in the first instance, speak informally with the individual you usually deal with about your concerns e.g. your almshouse scheme manager, or the member of the community investment team. We will always try to resolve your query the first time you report it to us. If you are not satisfied with our response or our efforts to resolve your query, you can ask us to treat the matter as a formal complaint.

3.2 A formal complaint about a particular service, or member of staff, should be made directly to the correct department executive head. If the complaint relates to our almshouses, it should be made to the Head of Housing. If it relates to the community investment programmes, it should be made to the Head of Community Investment. All other complaints, including those about the Head of Housing or Head of Community Investments, should be made directly to the Chief Executive. A complaint about the Chief Executive should be made to the Chair of Trustees.

3.3 There are 3 stages to our formal complaints procedure:

3.4 • **Stage 1 (Department head's response)**

The executive department head responsible for your service will investigate where necessary and respond to you in writing. If you feel the outcome is still unsatisfactory, you will be able to ask the Chief Executive to resolve the matter. We would expect you to do this within 28 days of receiving a Stage 1 response.

• **Stage 2 (Chief Executive's response)**

The Chief Executive will review your complaint and respond to you in writing. If you are still not satisfied, you can refer the complaint to the Chair of the Trustees, c/o USTSC. We would expect you to do this within 3 months from receiving the Stage 2 response.

• **Stage 3 (Trustees response)**

Your complaint will be considered by two of the Trustees and you may be invited to attend a meeting to state your case. You may bring a friend with you, but not a legal representative. Relevant staff may also attend the meeting.

4. Timescales

4.1 All formal complaints will be acknowledged and a letter will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days. The letter will advise them the name of the person who is dealing with the complaint and when they should expect a full response.

4.2 USTSC aims to respond to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints within 15 working days.

4.3 If we need more time to carry out an investigation or to gather further information, we will let you know and advise when we expect to be able to send a full response.

4.4 Timescales for dealing with Stage 3 complaints will depend on the availability of the Trustees, however every effort will be made to arrange a meeting in a timely manner.

5. Ombudsman Service (FOR ALMSHOUSE RESIDENTS ONLY)

5.1 If you are not satisfied after the Charity's Complaints Procedure has been exhausted, you have the right to take the case to the Housing Ombudsman Service. This service is completely independent of USTSC and is free to residents. You must do this within 6 months of Stage 3.

You will have to wait 8 weeks after stage 3 before taking your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. During this 8 week period you can approach a 'designated person' (this is a local councillor or MP) to help resolve the complaint, and the 'designated person' can decide to refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman without waiting 8 weeks.

5.2 You should contact:

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square
London
E14 9GE

Tel: 0300 111 3000

E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

5.3 The Ombudsman would normally expect you to have exhausted the landlord's Complaints Procedure before they start to investigate your case.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 Complaints will be monitored annually and analysed as follows:

- By scheme
- Reason for the complaint
- Protected characteristics (previously known as equality strands)
- Escalation

6.2 Once the complaint has been concluded, the executive department head of the service will undertake a full review of the complaint process and consider what action could be taken to prevent a similar complaint in future.

6.3 Any learning points identified, such as changes to policy and/or procedures, will be formally notified to staff and, where applicable, residents.

Policy adopted January 2018