



COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Signature:	
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1. Scope

- 1.1. This policy covers all individuals working within Phoenix Futures, including all staff, agency workers, and volunteers, and is relevant to every team and service across the organisation.
- 1.2. This policy does cover any complaints raised in relation to Data Governance or Data Protection matters, as well as any complaints raised in relation to Safeguarding.
- 1.3. This policy does not cover complaints from current or previous employees. Other avenues for this are listed below:
 - Grievance Process - applies to all employees that want to raise a personal concern, problem or complaint with their working conditions or relationships with colleagues.
 - Whistleblowing Process – applies to all employees that want to report fraud, corruption and other malpractice within the organisation and is for the public interest.
- 1.4. This policy does not cover any event, happening or circumstances which is covered by the Harassment and Nuisance policy.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. People who use our services, their representatives, and members of the public have the right to share their experiences with us - whether by raising concerns, making a complaint, or offering a compliment. We believe that providing a clear and accessible process for giving feedback is an essential part of our responsibilities. It reinforces that the interests and voices of the people who use our services remain at the centre of everything we do.
- 2.2. In the interests of transparency, Phoenix Futures will publish this policy on the website.
- 2.3. We recognise that we may not always be able to meet everyone's needs and expectations, and at times we may fall short of our own high standards. We value all forms of feedback because it helps us understand where things are working well and where improvements are needed.
- 2.4. Complaints are especially important for those who feel something has gone wrong or could be better. They provide an opportunity for explanation, learning, and action to reduce the likelihood of similar issues happening again. Compliments, equally, highlight what we are doing well and help us understand the positive impact of our work.
- 2.5. Feedback of all kinds is integral to our organisation. It gives us an accurate picture of the quality of our services and supports our commitment to continuous improvement, and we recognise that people can share feedback in a variety of ways, including through our organisation-wide online Satisfaction Survey. To ensure clarity and accessibility, we have included information within this survey on how to make a complaint or offer a compliment.

3. Definition

3.1. Our definition of a complaint is: *'an expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response made orally or in writing'*

3.2. A person accessing any of our services does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a person expresses dissatisfaction within one of our services, we will give them the choice to make formal complaint.

3.3. Any complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with this policy.

3.4. Compliments and complaints may come from:

- People who currently use our services;
- People who have used services or visited a service;
- Someone acting on behalf of people who currently or previously used our services;
- Contractors;
- Partnership Organisations;
- Neighbours; or
- Members of the public.

4. Standards of Care and Complaint Legislation

4.1. The quality of the care, support, treatment, and housing services we provide is regulated by external statutory bodies. These standards are monitored and enforced by:

- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) for registered residential treatment services in England
- The Care Inspectorate (CI) for registered residential treatment services in Scotland
- The Housing Ombudsman for our Housing Services in England

4.2. These regulatory bodies set the expectations for safe, effective, compassionate, and high-quality care. Our Complaints Policy forms part of how we demonstrate compliance with these standards. It ensures that anyone receiving our services has a clear and accessible way to raise concerns, provide feedback, or make a complaint about the quality of care and treatment.

4.3. Everyone has the right to offer feedback or make a complaint in line with legislation. This right supports the regulatory standards above and helps ensure we maintain and improve the quality of our services. Relevant legislation and guidance include:

- England: The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009
- Scotland: The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (Regulation 18)

5. Responsibilities

5.1. Everyone within Phoenix Futures has a shared responsibility when it comes to compliments and complaints. All staff, agency workers, and volunteers are expected to respond respectfully and promptly to feedback, to record and report it accurately, and to use it constructively to improve services.

5.2. All employees will:

- Discuss the Compliments and Complaints procedure with every person accessing the service and offer them a physical copy of the Complaints and Compliments leaflet;
- Be familiar with the Compliments and Complaints Policy processes to ensure that people who use our services are informed about the process, feel supported, and that staff, with Managers' support, can address concerns promptly and put things right where something has gone wrong;
- Report any concerns raised directly to a member of staff that constitute a complaint to their line manager, regardless of whether the issue has been resolved at the time it was raised or as soon as practicably possible thereafter; and
- Refer concerns that are not linked to a specific service, or that are general enquiries, to the Quality & Performance Team for advice on the appropriate response.

5.3. All Managers/Team Managers will:

- Foster a learning culture that values complaints as opportunities to put things right and improve service delivery;
- Ensure that everyone is aware of the Compliments and Complaints Policy, and that staff understand and follow the procedure, so they are confident and empowered to resolve issues promptly when something has gone wrong;
- Make sure up-to-date Compliments and Complaints leaflets and/or posters are clearly displayed and readily accessible to people who use our services;
- Ensure that any external parties receive the information they require to make a compliment or complaint; and
- Ensure that learning from complaints is used to improve experience of people who use our services, enhance safety, and strengthen service delivery.

5.4. Investigating Managers will:

- Contact the complainant to provide a point of contact for the complaint investigation;
- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right to find a resolution;
- Interview those involved in the matter and review all available evidence to support a thorough investigation of the points raised by the complainant;
- In the event of a complaint that involves safeguarding, take relevant action in line with our Safeguarding Policy;
- Keep detailed notes and documentation of the interviews completed and fully complete the complaint templates provided;
- Provide a full Stage 1 complaint response letter - outlining any learnings identified where applicable;
- Return the completed documentation to the C&C mailbox within the deadlines agreed;
- Update Quality & Performance Team without delay if there is any extension required to the agreed timeframes;
- Contact People and Culture for guidance whenever a complaint investigation concludes that a staff member has engaged in misconduct or similar; and

- Work in cohesion with the Quality & Performance Team to review and make any required changes to the response letter for the final version to be sent to the complainant.

5.5. Appeal Managers will:

- Act as a point of contact for the complainant throughout the appeal investigation;
- Establish what has happened so far and identify all parties involved in the Stage 1 complaint;
- If the appeal concerns the **procedural process**, the Appeal Manager will assess the steps taken by the Stage 1 Investigating Manager and may reinvestigate any relevant points where a flaw in process is identified;
- If the appeal concerns the **outcome**, the Appeal Manager will review the substantive facts provided, which may include additional investigation to ensure a thorough and impartial assessment;
- In the event of a complaint that involves safeguarding, take relevant action in line with our Safeguarding Policy;
- Keep detailed notes and documentation of any additional interviews and fully complete the complaint templates provided;
- Prepare a Stage 2 complaint response letter, including any learnings identified from the review, where applicable;
- Return all completed documentation to the Complaints & Compliments (C&C) mailbox within the agreed deadlines;
- Notify the Quality & Performance Team without delay if an extension to the agreed timeframe is required; and
- Work in collaboration with the Quality & Performance Team to review and make any necessary adjustments to the final response letter before it is sent to the complainant.

6. Complaints Officer

6.1. Phoenix Futures has dedicated Complaints Officers based within the Quality and Performance Team. The Complaints Officers are responsible for:

- Overseeing the end-to-end handling of complaints, ensuring that all complaints are managed in accordance with this policy and resolved at the earliest opportunity; and
- Acting as the primary liaison with the Housing Ombudsman where required, ensuring timely, accurate, and transparent communication where complaints are escalated externally.

6.2 As part of the Complaints Officer role in the Quality & Performance Team, they will:

- Log all compliments and complaints centrally in line with our Data Retention & Confidentiality Policy;
- Provide an initial acknowledgement to the complainant and ensure that the points raised are fully understood and clarified by all parties;
- Provide the complainant with contact details for the Care Inspectorate, Housing Ombudsman, or Care Quality Commission at all stages, where applicable;
- Assign and communicate with a relevant person to handle the complaint investigation or appeal, providing support as required;
- Communicate the complaint points to the assigned Investigation Manager;

- Monitor the progress of the investigation or appeal to ensure it is conducted in a timely manner;
- Inform the complainant of any extensions to the investigation timescales;
- Review completed investigation documents, as well as suggest edits to the response letter to ensure that;
 - The response accurately reflects the findings of the investigation;
 - The language used is clear, professional, and appropriate for the complainant;
 - Any learning points or recommendations from the investigation are correctly captured and communicated;
 - Organisational policies, procedures, and regulatory requirements have been followed;
- Send the response letter to the complainant, recording the outcome of the complaint or appeal;
- Communicate any learning from the investigation or appeal to Service Managers; and
- Include the number of complaints, appeals, outcomes, and learning points in the quarterly trends report, and any other reporting requirements. This report is then shared with the Executive Team, Clinical Governance Committee, and other key stakeholders.

6.3 The Complaints Officers have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They also have the autonomy to act to resolve disputes jointly, promptly and fairly.

6.4 The Complaints Officers will engage in suitable training in relation to complaint handling.

6.5 The Head of the Quality and Performance Team serves as the Senior Lead responsible for overseeing complaint handling across the organisation and forms part of the line management structure of the Complaints Officers.

7. Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

7.1. The Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to appoint a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) on its governing body. The MRC plays a key role in complaints management by providing assurance to the Board on the effectiveness of the Phoenix Futures' complaint process. This includes taking responsibility for overseeing complaints performance, analysing trends and presenting outcomes.

7.2. For Phoenix Futures, the MRC plays a crucial role in ensuring that we:

- Handle complaints effectively and fairly;
- Learn from complaints to improve our services;
- Maintain transparency and accountability in how complaints are managed; and
- Support a positive complaints culture within the organisation

7.3. You can find details of our current MRC in our latest Complaints Handling Self Assessment here - [Policy and housing report | Phoenix Futures](#)

8. Compliments

8.1. It is important and greatly appreciated when people take the time to share compliments about our services. Receiving positive feedback boosts staff wellbeing, highlights good practice, and helps us recognise what we are doing well.

8.2. Compliments can be made by:

- Email to cac.feedback@phoenixfutures.org.uk
- Writing to [Phoenix Futures, 68 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6DF](#)
- Calling [0207 234 9786](tel:02072349786)
- Or, to staff locally using the compliment form

8.3. If a compliment is made locally, this should be shared with the Quality and Performance Team for documentation. The relevant team or service should also retain a log within their own documentation.

8.4. If a compliment is received through other means (via email, writing or calling), the Quality and Performance Team will be passed on to the person or team it concerns.

8.5. If a compliment is made, regardless of its format, it may be used within staff appraisals or (with consent) used in promotional materials.

Overview of Compliment Form Process



9. Complaints Process

9.1. Phoenix Futures operates a two-stage complaints process to ensure that all complaints are handled efficiently and resolved in a timely manner. This approach allows us to address issues at Stage 1 while additionally providing a formal escalation route if the complainant remains dissatisfied, via the Stage 2 process.

9.2. Complaints can be made to Phoenix Futures by:

- Emailing: cac.feedback@phoenixfutures.org.uk
- Writing to [Phoenix Futures, 68 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6DF](#)
- Calling [020 7234 9786](tel:02072349786)
- Or, to staff locally using the complaints form

9.3. We acknowledge that a single complaint may contain multiple elements or individual points. All points raised will be thoroughly considered and addressed through this process.

9.4. If we are unable to meet the standard timescales, the complainant will be notified at the earliest opportunity. A clear explanation for the delay will be provided, along with revised timescales where possible.

9.5. When an extension is required, the complainant will also be provided with the contact details of relevant regulatory bodies.

9.6. If Phoenix Futures receives a complaint for which we are wholly or partially not responsible, this will be clearly communicated to the complainant. In cases where responsibility is partial, we will clearly outline which aspects of the complaint fall under our responsibility and which do not, and clarify any areas that remain uncertain.

9.7. In a small number of circumstances, complaints may be excluded from the complaints process. A list of acceptable exclusions have been included below:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago;
- Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court; or
- Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.

9.8. Complaints involving Phoenix Futures employees may also be referred to the People & Culture team. P&C may be informed due to the following reasons:

- Ensure they are aware of staff behaviour and any issues raised if applicable;
- Review whether any organisational policies or codes of conduct have been breached and if any additional action is required; or
- In the event of ongoing employee relation matters.

10. Complaints Principles

10.1. We take all complaints seriously and are committed to handling them professionally and effectively. Our complaints handling procedure is guided by six core principles:

i. Focused on people who use our services

We place the complainant at the heart of the complaints process. This means:

- Listening to, respecting, and treating complainants with dignity, in a trauma-informed way, while supporting them throughout the process and helping them feel confident to raise concerns;
- Ensuring investigations and resolutions are proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances; and
- Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality wherever possible and requested.

ii. Easy to find and use

Our complaints procedure is designed to be accessible and understandable to everyone.

This means:

- Ensuring our procedure is available in clear, accessible formats, designed to meet the diverse needs of all people who interact with our services;
- Good publication across all services; and
- Clearly outlining the process and specific timeframes for each stage.

iii. Simple and timely

We aim to make complaints handling straightforward and prompt. This means:

- Our complaints procedure has as few stages as possible, with the goal of resolving complaints within 10 or 20 working days, depending on the complaint stage;
- If timescales cannot be met, complainants will be informed of the reasons and provided with a revised response date at the earliest opportunity; and
- The investigation process will be clearly explained to the complainant with a designated point of contact provided.

iv. Thorough, and proportionate

Our investigations and outcomes are comprehensive yet flexible. This means:

- Investigations, actions, and outcomes will be thorough while considering the individual needs of the complainant; and
- If a complaint is upheld, the Investigating Manager will identify necessary improvements required.

v. Objective, Impartial and Fair

All complaints are handled professionally and fairly. This means:

- Investigations are objective, with conclusions based solely on facts and evidence;
- Staff involved in investigating complaints act impartially and independently; and
- Everyone involved in the process is treated fairly and with respect.

vi. Early Resolution and Continuous Improvement

We aim to resolve complaints promptly and use them to improve services:

- The desired outcome is clarified with the complainant at the outset, with early resolution prioritised wherever possible; and
- Complaints data is used to improve service quality, manage risks, monitor performance, identify trends, and share best practice.

11. Stage 1 - Complaint

- 11.1. If a complaint is made locally, this should be shared with the Quality and Performance Team without delay via the C&C inbox.

- 11.2. Once received, the Quality & Performance Team will confirm receipt of the Complaint within 5 working days, as well as make direct contact with the complainant to confirm the complaint detail and share information regarding the complaints process. This contact will be considered the 'acknowledgement'.
- 11.3. All communication with the complainant will include details of the relevant regulators pertaining to the service where the complaint has been raised.
- 11.4. The Quality & Performance Team will assign a Team/Service Manager to handle the investigation at the Stage 1 – this will be known as the 'Investigating Manager'.
- 11.5. If the complaint relates to a member of staff, the Investigating Manager allocated will be more senior to the member of staff the complaint relates to.
- 11.6. The Quality & Performance Team will share full details of the complaint; as well as clarify the investigation points to be considered.
- 11.7. The Investigating Manager will complete a full investigation of the points raised in the complaint, contacting any third parties to arrange to take complaint statements.
- 11.8. The Investigating Manager has 10 working days from acknowledgement to complete the investigation and provide a response letter.
- 11.9. All documentation – including complaint statements and investigation templates – should be shared with the Quality and Performance Team for review.
- 11.10. The Quality & Performance Team will support the Investigating Manager to provide a final written response to the complainant. The Quality & Performance Team will send the final agreed response.
- 11.11. The final written response will include:
 - The complaint stage;
 - The complaint definition;
 - The decision on the complaint and any reasons for this decision;
 - The offered resolution (if applicable);
 - Details on how to appeal;
 - Contact details on how the complainant can get more information regarding the response if required; and
 - Full details of relevant regulators pertaining to the service where the complaint has been raised.

12. Stage 2 – Appeal

- 12.1. If when the complainant has received a Stage 1 response and they continue to be dissatisfied with the outcome, or the investigation process they can request an appeal.
- 12.2. The details on how to appeal will always be included in the Stage 1 response.
- 12.3. To request an appeal the complainant can do so in the following ways:

- Emailing: cac.feedback@phoenixfutures.org.uk
- Writing to [Phoenix Futures, 68 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6DF](#)
- Calling [020 7234 9786](tel:02072349786)

12.4. Phoenix Futures has no requirement within the policy for a person to give a reason for requesting a Stage 2 Appeal. However, we will always seek clarity if we are unsure in the interests of all parties.

12.5. The Quality & Performance Team will confirm receipt of the appeal within 5 working days. If it concerns alleged harassment, it will be sent within 3 working days.

12.6. A more senior manager to the Investigating Manager at the Stage 1 process will be allocated to investigate the Stage 2 – this will be known as the ‘Appeal Manager’.

12.7. The complainant will receive an answer within 20 working days for a Stage 2 appeal. This is 14 working days response timeframe for an alleged case of harassment.

12.8. If the appeal concerns the procedural process, the Appeal Manager will assess the steps taken by the Stage 1 Investigating Manager and may reinvestigate any relevant points where a flaw in process is identified.

12.9. If the appeal concerns the outcome, the Appeal Manager will review the substantive facts provided, which may include additional investigation to ensure a thorough and impartial assessment

12.10. Following the appeal investigation, a decision will be made to uphold or reject the appeal.

12.11. The Quality & Performance Team will support the Investigating Manager to provide a final written response to the complainant. The Quality & Performance Team will send the final agreed response.

12.12. The final written response will include:

- The complaint stage;
- The complaint definition;
- The decision on the complaint and any reasons for this decision;
- The offered resolution (if applicable);
- Confirmation that this response marks the end of the Phoenix Futures complaints process;
- Contact details on how the complainant can get more information regarding the response if required.;
- Full details of relevant regulators pertaining to the service where the complaint has been raised; and
- For housing, details on how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service.

12.13. All appeals will be communicated to the Chief Executive and the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), through the quarterly trends report produced by the Quality & Performance Team.

13. Withdrawing a complaint

- 13.1. At any stage an individual may wish to withdraw a complaint they have made. This must be made in writing to the Quality and Performance Team who will inform the relevant manager to either continue or stop the investigation.
- 13.2. If the complainant does not respond to requests for confirmation or clarification regarding the complaint process, reasonable efforts should be made by relevant staff to contact them again before any decision is made to close the complaint.
- 13.3. In certain circumstances, the organisation may decide to continue with the investigation even if the complainant has withdrawn or there are no further responses, in the interest of service quality, learning, and continuous improvement.
- 13.4. The decision re continuation of the investigation in this scenario, will be made in consultation with both the Investigating Manager, Senior Management (if applicable) and the Quality and Performance Tea

Overview of 2-Stage Complaint Process



Complaint

Stage 1
(10 working days to respond)

This can be extended a further 10 working days with a full explanation given.

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the response or resolution to this stage, they can proceed to **Stage 2 Appeal**.



Appeal

Stage 2 Appeal
(20 working days to respond)

This can be extended for a further 20 days with a full explanation given.

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the response or resolution from the Appeal Stage they can contact:

*Care Quality Commission
Care Inspectorate
Housing Ombudsman*

14. Contact with Complainant

- 14.1. The complainant is at the heart of the complaints process, and good, regular communication should be maintained at all times. This includes:
- **Acknowledging feedback:** Thank the complainant for their feedback and make clear that complaints are viewed as opportunities to improve services. Ensure the complainant is not treated differently during or after the complaint;
 - **Clear and accessible communication:** Use language that is easy to understand and communicate in a manner appropriate to the complainant and their circumstances;
 - **Person-centred approach:** Respond flexibly rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach. Consider the severity, sensitivity, and other relevant factors of the issue being reported;
 - **Valuing the complainant:** Ensure they feel listened to and respected by demonstrating a caring attitude and a genuine attempt to understand the issue;
 - **Encouraging solutions:** Invite the complainant to suggest actions they feel might resolve the problem, fostering a solution-focused approach; and
 - **Confidentiality and anonymity:** Offer, where possible, the choice to keep complaint details anonymous and confidential.
- 14.2. Phoenix Futures must give complainants the opportunity to have a representative handle their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting or interaction.
- 14.3. Where the complainant may struggle to understand the process or articulate their concerns - due to communication needs, vulnerabilities, or other - reasonable adjustments should be offered to ensure fair access to the complaints process.
- 14.4. If additional complaint points are raised during the investigation, related issues should be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if it has not yet been issued. If the Stage 1 response has already been issued, or the new issues are unrelated or would cause unreasonable delay, they must be logged as a new complaint.
- 14.5. If complainants may provide new information after the investigation has started, the Investigating Manager should assess whether this information is genuinely new and relevant and decide on a case-by-case basis whether it should be included in the existing complaint.
- 14.6. Phoenix Futures does not accept audio or video recordings as evidence in investigation or resolution of complaints. This element of the policy is in place to uphold the privacy, dignity, and confidentiality of all parties, and to ensure compliance with relevant data protection and consent legislation. Accepting such recordings could compromise the integrity and fairness of the complaints process. Complainants are therefore requested to provide written statements or other appropriate documentary evidence to support their complaint.
- 14.7. Where the complainant may struggle to understand the process or articulate their concerns - due to communication needs, vulnerabilities, or other circumstances - reasonable adjustments should be offered to ensure fair access to the complaints process.

15. Contact with Parties Involved

15.1. When investigating a complaint, it may be necessary to contact other individuals who have relevant information - this may include staff members, people who use our services, witnesses, or external professionals - the following principles must be applied:

- Explain the purpose of contact by informing the individual that you are gathering information as part of a complaint investigation;
- Ask only questions relevant to the themes of the complaint, without disclosing unnecessary detail;
- Do not share personal information about the complainant unless where disclosure is necessary and proportionate to the complaint investigation;
- Act fairly towards staff. Staff members must be informed if a complaint has been made about them and, where appropriate, given the opportunity to respond fully and provide their account;
- When requesting statements or interviews, consider operational demands, annual leave, sickness, and staffing levels. Agree reasonable timeframes that do not compromise service delivery or place undue pressure on individuals;
- Ensure people who use services feel safe and supported during discussions. They must not feel pressured to participate and should be offered the option of a trusted staff member being present if needed;
- Be sensitive to the potential impact on others. Avoid creating unnecessary anxiety or conflict within the service and ensure interactions are managed calmly and professionally; and
- Avoid discussing potential outcomes with any party until the investigation is complete and an official response has been approved through the Quality & Performance Team.

16. Third Party Handlers

16.1. In the unlikely event that a complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g., a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, the following principles apply:

- The third-party investigation or response must form part of the two-stage complaints process set out in this policy;
- Complainants must not be required to go through separate or duplicate complaints processes outside of the policy;
- Third parties must adhere to the same standards, timelines, and reporting requirements as outlined in this policy; and
- The final response, regardless of third-party involvement, remains an organisational response and must be reviewed by the Quality & Performance Team and/or relevant Senior Management before being issued to the complainant.

17. Anonymous and Third-Party Complaints

17.1. Phoenix Futures recognises that individuals may wish to raise concerns without revealing their identity. Therefore, anonymous complaints will be accepted and given due consideration.

- 17.2. Where sufficient information is provided, an investigation will be undertaken in accordance with this policy. If the details are insufficient to proceed, the organisation may decide not to take further action; however, the rationale for that decision will be documented.
- 17.3. Every effort will be made to protect the identity of the complainant should it later become known.
- 17.4. Phoenix Futures accepts complaints submitted on behalf of another individual or group, such as by a representative, union, advocate, or family member.
- 17.5. Consent from the affected individual will normally be sought before progressing the complaint unless there is a serious safeguarding matter or when the individual is unable to provide consent. While receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged to the third party, details or outcomes may not be shared due to confidentiality requirements.

18. Complaints Resolution

- 18.1. At each stage of the complaint's procedure, it is important to consider opportunities for resolving the complaint. Providing fair, proportionate, and timely remedies is a key component of effective complaint handling.
- 18.2. Complaints should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity and may be concluded at any stage of the process where an appropriate and satisfactory remedy can be identified.
- 18.3. The individual responsible for handling the complaint will aim to offer a resolution within the required timeframes and will issue a formal written response, including any resolution provided, to the complainant via the Quality & Performance Team.
- 18.4. Where appropriate, one or more of the following remedies may be offered verbally and confirmed in writing:
- An explanation that provides additional clarity or detail;
 - Assurance that the matter will be (or has been) thoroughly investigated in line with Phoenix Futures policies;
 - An apology and acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently or better; or
 - Remedial actions implemented as soon as possible, which may include:
 - Reviewing or changing a decision regarding the service provided to the complainant;
 - Revising published information;
 - Amending procedures, policies, or guidance to prevent recurrence;
 - Providing staff training, supervision, or other corrective measures;
 - Or, any combination of the above.
- 18.5. Any remedy offered must clearly set out what actions will be taken and by when and should be agreed with the complainant where appropriate.

- 18.6. If any remedy offered (such as an apology) involves action or input from another individual, that action must be approved by the person concerned before being communicated to the complainant to ensure accuracy, appropriateness, and professional considerations.
- 18.7. A response must be provided to the complainant when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed.
- 18.8. The final response to a complaint is an organisational response, not just the perspective of the individual investigating the complaint. Therefore, all draft responses must be reviewed by the Quality & Performance Team and, in some cases, Senior Management. Amendments may be required to ensure the response is accurate, fair, and consistent with organisational policy and tone.
- 18.9. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion by the Service Manager and/or Head of Operations.

19. Handling Complaints from CQC or CI, or Similar Regulatory Bodies

- 19.1. The principles of complaint handling outlined in this policy remain applicable; however, timescales and procedural requirements may differ when managing complaints from regulatory bodies.
- 19.2. The relevant Manager must ensure that complaints received through the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Care Inspectorate (CI), or similar processes are managed promptly, transparently, and in accordance with all regulatory requirements.
- 19.3. Notification of the complaint must be made to the relevant Senior Manager(s) and/or Head of Operations, as well as the Quality & Performance Team. Additional notification should be made to the Head of People & Culture if the complaint involves staff misconduct.
- 19.4. The relevant manager will conduct a thorough and impartial investigation, collecting all relevant statements and evidence in line with regulatory requirements. This includes:
- Maintaining accurate records of all investigation steps and findings;
 - Preparing a formal response to the regulatory body, outlining investigation findings and any actions taken;
 - Ensuring compliance with relevant timelines and response requirements;
 - Communicating any required corrective measures, such as policy updates, staff training, or disciplinary actions, to the relevant departments (e.g., People & Culture, Quality & Performance);
 - Maintaining a complete record of the complaint, investigation process, findings, and outcomes;
 - Reporting outcomes to senior management and regulatory bodies as required; and
 - Ensuring ongoing concerns are addressed and that any staff performance or behavioural issues are managed in accordance with organisational policy.

20. Seeking Continuous Improvement

- 20.1. Effective complaint handling ensures that all feedback and lessons learned are used to improve services and enhance performance. Insights from complaints should be communicated back to services to support ongoing development.
- 20.2. Where appropriate, wider learnings and improvements from complaints will be shared with stakeholders and relevant communities on a case-by-case basis. Communication tools, such as “*You Said, We Did,*” will be used to provide transparency and demonstrate how feedback and complaints contribute to service improvements and our commitment to co-production.
- 20.3. For our housing services – Where Phoenix Futures are the landlord – an annual self-assessment of complaints will be published on our website, summarising complaint types and handling performance. This report will also be shared with the Board of Trustees for review, with their response also published online.

21. Vexatious and Serial Complaints

- 21.1. A very small number of people may make complaints that are vexatious, in that they persist unreasonably with their complaints, or make complaints without a genuine intention to resolve a problem. This may involve making serial complaints about different issues or repeatedly complaining about the same or similar matters.
- 21.2. Vexatious complaints are recognised as ‘*unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation’s consideration of their, or other people’s, complaints*’.
- 21.3. Vexatious Complaints may put a strain on our limited capacity to appropriately consider and respond to complaints, and to provide a quality services.
- 21.4. It is important to distinguish between people who make several complaints because they genuinely believe things have gone wrong, and people who make vexatious complaints. Complainants may be frustrated and aggrieved, and it is therefore important to consider the merits of the case rather than their attitude.
- 21.5. Vexatious complaints may take the format of email, call or post or in service interactions. Below are a few examples of complaints which may be considered vexatious complaints – this is not an exhaustive list:
 - The complainant refuses to co-operate with the procedure, yet they wish the complaint to be resolved;
 - There are insufficient grounds for the complaint and/or this is made only to annoy;

- The complaint is about issues outside the power of the organisation;
- There is unreasonable amount of contacts with us – repeated letters, telephone calls, emails, or other electronic communication;
- There are persistent and unreasonable demands of staff and/or the complaints process (e.g., asking for immediate responses);
- Attempts to complain about the staff member who is dealing with the complaint; dictating who they will/will not discuss with; 2
- Attempts to harass, abuse and/or intimidate staff members who are dealing with the complaint; using foul, inappropriate, or threatening language;
- There are changes to the substance or basis of the complaint without reasonable justification, whilst the complaint is being addressed; or
- The complainant refuses to accept the outcome of the complaint process after this was concluded, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome and/or denying that an adequate response has been given.

21.6. Even if someone has made vexatious complaints in the past, it cannot be assumed that the next one is also vexatious. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits, and a decision will be made as to whether it is a valid complaint.

21.7. Where a complainant submits multiple or recurring complaints, the same member of staff should, where possible, handle each complaint to ensure consistency and effective management of resources.

22. Imposing Restrictions and Exclusions

22.1. In certain circumstances, complaints may not be considered or escalated. Any decision to exclude or restrict a complaint must be fair, reasonable, and proportionate.

22.2. If Phoenix Futures decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the complainant, setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.

22.3. Should the Ombudsman determine that an exclusion was unfairly applied, Phoenix Futures, must accept the complaint.

22.4. If a complaint is deemed to be vexatious, the individual designated to investigate the complaint will consult with both the Quality & Performance Team and Senior Manager.

22.5. The complainant will then be contacted in writing, explaining why their behaviour is causing concern, as well as asking for this to cease. At this point, Phoenix Futures will explain the steps they will take if this behaviour continues.

22.6. If the disruptive behaviour continues, the complainant will be issued a letter clearly stating the measures that have been put in place. This will explain the following:

- Reason for this decision;
- What the restrictions entail;
- Duration of restrictions; and
- The complainant's right to contact the relevant regulatory bodies about the fact that their complaint has been treated as vexatious.

- 22.7. Restrictions will be appropriate and proportionate to the vexatious behaviour, and will need to be agreed and tailored based on the individual circumstances of the complainant. It may involve:
- Requiring the complainant from making contact by telephone except through a third party (e.g., solicitor or advocate);
 - Requiring contact to take place with one named staff member only;
 - If face to face contact is to take place, requiring the presence of an appropriate witness;
 - Requiring telephone calls to take place on specified days/ times; or
 - Informing the complainant that Phoenix Futures will not reply or acknowledge any further contact from them on the topic of the on-going complaint. If this was to happen, a designated member of staff will then read future correspondence.
- 22.8. If any complainant's behaviour is extreme or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, the matter may be reported to the police and legal action may be taken. If this is the case, the complainant may not be given prior warning of that action.
- 22.9. Phoenix will retain adequate records containing details of the case and actions taken in the event of any exclusion or restrictions imposed. This will include detail on who the complainant is; detail on any restriction, including duration, or any reasons for exclusion.
- 22.10. If required, managers should consult relevant policies regarding managing behaviour. This may include reviewing the Move On & Resettlement Support Policy, Ending of Licence Agreement Policy, Anti-Social Behaviour, Harassment and Hate Crime Policy, as well as the Ban and Exclusion Policy.

23. Supporting Documentation

- 23.1. We recognise that managing complaints can place demands on staff, both in terms of resources and sometimes emotional impact. To support staff throughout the complaints process, a set of documents has been provided as part of this policy. These documents are intended to assist staff in managing complaints efficiently, consistently, and in line with policy requirements:
- **Appendix A – Complaint Investigation Template:** Provides a structured framework to record investigation details and procedure.
 - **Appendix B – Complaints Process for Investigators:** Offers guidance for all managers conducting investigations, ensuring compliance with the complaints process.
 - **Appendix C – Complaint Statement:** A template for recording complainant statements, supporting a thorough and accurate investigation.
- 23.2. In addition to these appendices, two further guides have been provided to specifically support the preparation of response letters. The response letter concludes each stage of the complaints process and is therefore of vital importance. These documents are designed to help staff produce clear, consistent, and professional responses that fully address the issues raised by the complainant:
- **Guide to Writing Stage 1 complaint response letter**
 - **Guide to Writing Stage 2 appeal response letter**

23.3. For any support, guidance, queries, or questions regarding the complaints process or use of these documents, staff should contact the Quality & Performance Team.