



Aim

The Management Committee of The Gingerbread Centre is committed to providing a quality service to the service users we support or anyone who may come in to contact with us. We recognise we may not always get it right therefore we encourage concerns and/or complaints to be raised so that we can improve the service offered. We will take all worries, concerns and/or complaints seriously and investigate carefully. If the complaint is upheld we will make sure that we do our best to fix the problem and stop it from happening again.

We recognise that raising a complaint may be difficult and we will ensure that if any one raises a complaint he or she will not be treated differently as a result. If the person raising a concern or complaint is staying in our supported accommodation or has support in the community it will not result in him or her losing any of our services.

All complaints will be investigated fairly and the complainant will be offered support if needed. A complainant can use an advocate for support if they wish. Investigation of a complaint will be carried out by a manager who is not implicated by the complaint. It should be vigorous, detailed and conscientious, and as widely ranging as necessary to determine the facts and to place them in context.

The object of the procedure is to resolve disputes of anyone who may feel they have a grievance. The Gingerbread Centre endeavours to deliver all its services and projects to the highest possible standard. We wish to use complaints positively to improve our service.

Complaints are essentially about quality and should be welcomed and recognised as part of the process of continuous improvement, which enhances the quality of our service.

The response should have the good name of The Gingerbread Centre behind it and that what the outcome concludes has been approved. With this in mind, the signatory to any response should be at senior level to reflect the need for an authoritative statement.

The investigation of a complaint must be as prompt as possible, consistent with its complexity and the need to be thorough. Deadlines for a response time will be set with the complainant being kept informed of progress. An initial acknowledgement will always be sent.

The management committee of The Gingerbread Centre aims to ensure that The Gingerbread Centre is accountable. Therefore, we will investigate each complaint seriously.

Amended	Wendy Hocking	
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Review due:	Oct 2021	Page 1

STOKE ON TRENT and DISTRICT GINGERBREAD CENTRE Ltd

Complaints Procedure

What is a concern, or a complaint?

For the purpose of this policy and procedure, a complaint is not merely a service request, such as ‘*my next door neighbour is being noisy, can you help*’, OR ‘*the lock on my front door is stiff*’, but a complaint is about lack of response regarding a service request, or a dissatisfaction of the response to their request, it can be further defined as anyone who has ‘expressed dissatisfaction’ about the service provided by The Gingerbread Centre.

If a complaint leads to any suspicion that a criminal offence may have been committed against a child or young person the complaint will be referred to the Safeguarding Referral Team and the police. Similarly if a complaint leads to any suspicion that a criminal offence may have been committed against an adult the complaint may need to be referred to the police.

Who can complain?

The service users who are having support from us or any person or any organisation who is dissatisfied with the service/organisation can use the complaints procedure. A representative can act on the behalf of the service user but consent must be gained and a form signed by the person who is dissatisfied with the service.

How a service user or other representative can let us know if they are dissatisfied with our service or they wish to raise a complaint

There are many ways to advise us ‘I am dissatisfied’, ‘I wish to make a complaint’;

- Telling a member of staff face to face, - *If Stage 1, (see below) it may remain verbal. However if it turns to Stage 2, the staff member writes up the complaint, the complainant checks and agrees what is written and signs the form.*
- By telephone. - *If Stage 1, (see below) it may remain verbal. However if it turns to Stage 2, the staff member writes up the complaint, and sends a copy to the complainant for their agreement.*
- By email or letter.
- On Gingerbread’s complaints form/leaflet.

A complaint that is made against a person in a position of trust concerning abuse of a child will be reported immediately to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) please see the Safeguarding Policy.

Amended	Wendy Hocking	
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Review due:	Oct 2021	Page 2

What will happen once a complaint has been made?

There are four stages to our complaints procedure.

Informal Complaints

Stage 1

Often concerns or complaints can be resolved quickly and easily if they are raised with us early enough. These complaints can often be verbal, or made over the telephone, the staff member on duty will aim to resolve the matter if they can. They will record the complaint and also record the resolution.

This will be dealt with within 3 working days.

Any complaint about a member of staff, must be forwarded to the manager, if the complaint is about the manager, it must be forwarded to the Chief Executive.

If the staff member is unable to deal with the complaint or the person making the complaint is not happy with the resolution offered, the complaint will be logged in writing, if not already done so and it will move to stage 2.

Admin must sent out a formal letter to the complainant, acknowledging the complaint ensuring that the acknowledgement is sent out within 5 working days of the initial complaint.

Formal Complaints

Stage 2

If the staff member on duty is unable to deal with the concern/complaint or the complainant is not happy with the resolution/result from stage 1 it will be passed to the Manager. If the manager is expected to be absent for more than three days the senior project worker will deal with the complaint.

When the complaint is received it will be recorded. A letter will then be sent to the complainant within 5 working days with a copy of the complaints process and explain:

- a) Who will be investigating the complaint?
- b) If there is expected to be a delay i.e. if the complaint is about the conduct of a member of staff the organisations disciplinary procedure may have to be activated.
- c) What progress if any has been made so far with the investigation?

The complainant will receive a response letter within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint, it will state the outcome of the complaint, either;

- If the complaint was fully upheld.
- Partially Upheld.
- Not upheld (not agreed with).

The letter will also include the reasons behind the decision, including;

- What actions have happened to resolve the complaint?
- What actions have happened to prevent similar happening again?

Amended	Wendy Hocking	
Approved:	Oct 2018	
Review due:	Oct 2021	Page 3

A copy of the complaint and resolution response letter will be kept in the complaints file, and the Chief Executive (CE) will be provided with a report, and the complaints log updated.

The complainant has 5 working days to accept the resolution or request it to go to the next stage; Stage 3.

Stage 3

If the team manager is unable to deal with the complaint or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution which has been given in Stage 2 the CE will deal with the complaint.

The CE will either:

- Uphold the resolution or
- Propose a different resolution.

The CE will write to the complainant with 10 working days of receiving the Stage 3 request with a decision and an explanation to how it was reached.

If there is a delay the Chief Executive will keep the complainant informed.

If the complaint is about the conduct of a senior member of staff the Chief Executive will deal with the complaint from the beginning and will notify the complainant and keep them informed.

Chief Executive
Rothesay Court
Furnace Road,
Longton
Stoke on Trent
ST3 4LY

Stage 4

If a resolution is not reached at Stage 3 and the complainant remains dissatisfied they have 5 working days to request it to go to the next stage; Stage 4; the Management Committee.

The management Committee will review the complaint at a committee meeting. The Chief Executive will notify the complainant of the date of the meeting where it will be reviewed.

The Management Committee can:

- Uphold the resolution *or*
- Propose a final resolution.

The complainant will be notified within 5 working days about the decision. If there is a delay the Chair of the Management Committee will notify the complainant in writing.

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive, the Management Committee will deal with the complaint from the beginning.

A copy of the complaint and resolution response letters, including a written report of the resolution and findings of the Management Committee will be kept in the complaints file and the complaints log updated.

Amended	Wendy Hocking	
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Review due:	Oct 2021	Page 4

Reparation or making amends – this can take the form of:

- An apology, in writing or in person, from The Gingerbread Centre representative
- Steps to improve the service or the way we deliver the service that was complained about.
- If a member of staff or volunteer is found to have behaved in a way that breaks the Code of Conduct, the Chief Executive or the Management Committee reserves the right to invoke the Disciplinary Procedure. This will be treated as a separate matter to your complaint and will be kept confidential.

IMPORTANT

If the complainant feels they have been subject to racial discrimination or racist comments they are entitled to seek specialist advice before going any further with the complaint. They can contact:

The police.

A citizen's advice bureau or another local advice service, a complainant aid body or law Centre (look up in your local phone book for addresses and phone numbers).

The nearest 'Commission for Racial Equality' office

Other options for making a complaint

For complaints concerning Rothesay Court should stages 1 – 4 not resolve the complaint:

Sanctuary Housing

Sanctuary House
Chamber Court
Castle Street
Worcester
WR1 3ZQ

For complaints concerning Catherine Court should stages 1 – 4 not resolve the complaint:

Bromford Housing – Landlords

One Exchange Court,
Brabourne Avenue,
Wolverhampton Business Park
Wolverhampton
WV10 6AU

If the complainant has used all the procedures above and is still unhappy he/she may complain to:

High Risk Communities Commissioning
Housing and Customer Services
City of Stoke-on-Trent
Civic Centre,
Glebe Street,
Stoke-on-Trent,
ST4 1RN
Tel 01782 234645

Amended	Wendy Hocking	
Approved:	Oct 2018	
Review due:	Oct 2021	Page 5

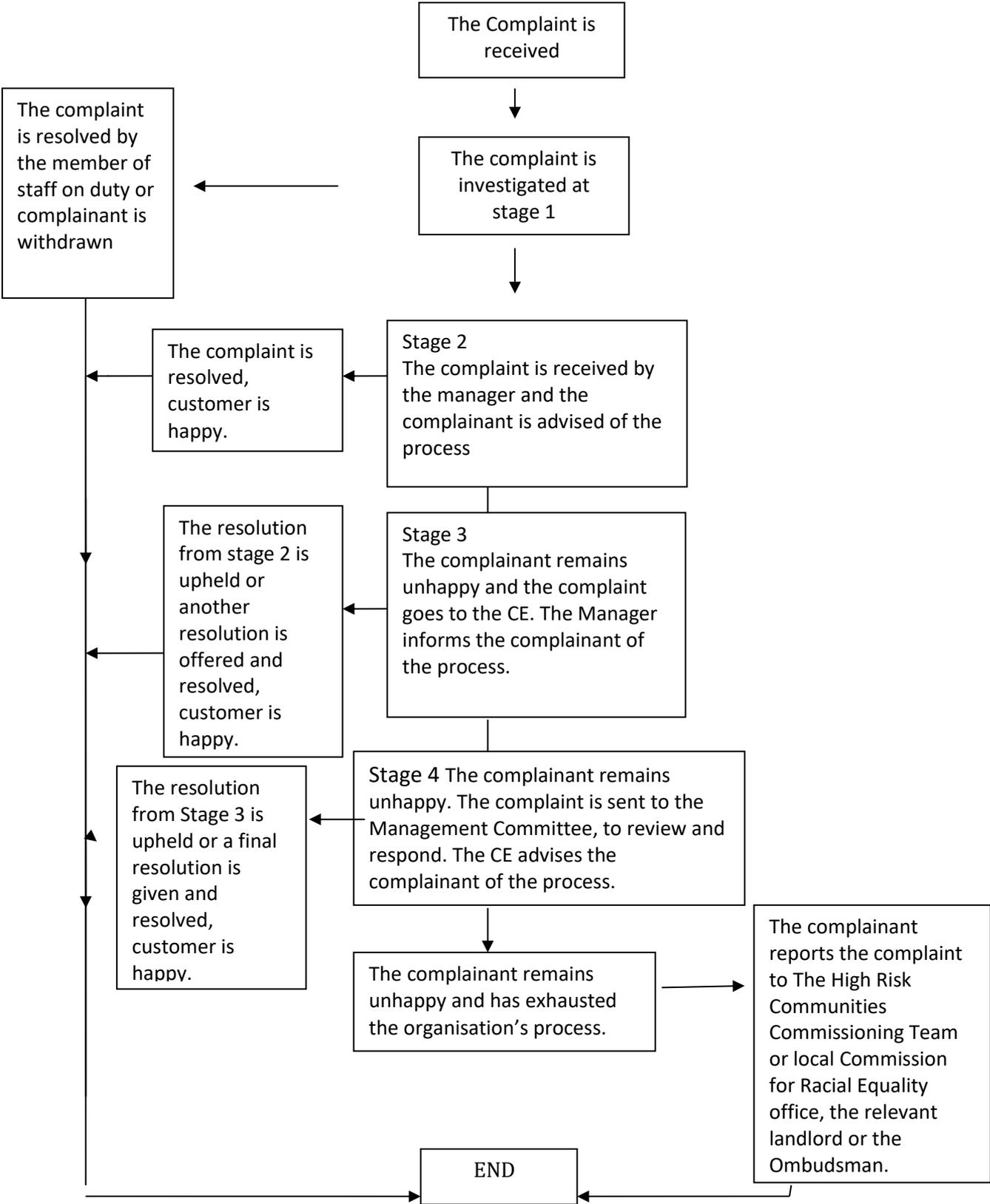
If the complainant remains dissatisfied through all the above stages they may finally contact the Ombudsman at the following address:

Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHO)

Norman House
105-109 The Strand
London
WC2R 0AA

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Review due:	Oct 2021	Page 6

Complaints Procedure Flow Chart



Amended	Wendy Hocking	
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Review due:	Oct 2021	Page 7

QUICK GUIDANCE FOR INVESTIGATING A COMPLAINT

- Each complaint must be thoroughly investigated.
- Complaints are welcomed from any individual associated with Gingerbread, these include, residents, staff, volunteers, visitors, members of the general public and other professionals.
- It is useful to clarify with the complainant, the outcome they are looking for from the complaint and to check that the matter relates directly to Gingerbread.
- If the original timescales cannot be met then a new timescale must be established with the complainant and all interested parties informed.
- The person investigating the complaint will make appointments to interview the complainant and any witnesses if necessary.
- The interviews will be recorded and signed by the interviewee.
- A complainant may be accompanied by an advocate or supporter.
- The person investigating may seek clarification from previous witnesses if contradictory statements are made.
- A flow chart must be included clearly showing the process as it relates to each complaint.
- The Chief Executive must be kept informed of the process of each complaint.
- If the complaint is about the Chief Executive then the Chair of the Board of Trustees will carry out the investigation and complete the procedures.

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