

Making a complaint

A guide for tenants, co-op members and homeowners



Address: 3 Marshalsea Road
London SE1 1EP

Helpdesk: 0845 450 8545

Email: complaints@cds.coop

We want to know if we've got it wrong!

CDS Co-operatives aims to provide high quality services to our tenants, to members and committees of our client co-operatives and to the owners of flats and houses on the estates we manage.

However, we recognise that sometimes things do go wrong and that when they do, that this may cause distress, inconvenience or even additional expense to service users. If we have not delivered the quality of service that we have agreed to provide, we want to know about it.

This leaflet provides a guide to our complaints policy. It explains what we expect you to do before making a complaint, how to make a complaint and how we will respond to complaints. Please read it before writing your letter or filling in a complaints form. A copy of the full complaints policy can be obtained from the customer services helpdesk or downloaded from our website www.cds.coop.

If you need advice on making a complaint, you can seek assistance from the Citizens Advice Bureau or other agency. You may also be able to ask your local MP or councillor to write on your behalf.

Before you make a complaint

If we have failed to provide an adequate service, we would like you to tell us what you feel we have done wrong and what you would like us to do now to remedy the situation. We will also use your complaint to work out how to prevent the problem occurring again in the future.

However, before you make a formal complaint we do expect that you have a reasonable effort to resolve the problem with the member of staff concerned. This is particularly important if you made your initial request through the helpdesk, but the matter was to be forwarded to another department. If you are not sure who to speak to about a particular problem, you can ask your co-op support officer or the helpdesk.

In particular, if your complaint is about a repair or about the behaviour of neighbours, we would ask you read the information below and make sure that you have discussed the problem with the appropriate person. This will ensure that the problem is dealt with as quickly as possible.

While we would normally expect you to talk to the staff member responsible for resolving the problem, we accept there may be some occasions where this is not possible. If you do not feel able to resolve the issue with the officer concerned, you can either ask to speak to their manager or proceed to make a formal complaint.

Repair issues

If we have failed to complete a repair within the agreed timescale **and** this has resulted in you being without heating or without hot or cold water, CDS will pay compensation as set out in our compensation policy. We will also pay compensation if you have been unable to use a room because it needs some form of repair. You can find details in our leaflet *Compensation - what we will pay for and how to claim*. This leaflet can be obtained from the helpdesk or downloaded from our website.

If you have requested any other sort of repair and are unhappy about the time you have had to wait for the work to start, or you feel that the work has not been done properly, we would ask you to speak to either the helpdesk or the maintenance inspector before making a formal complaint.

Problems with neighbours or antisocial behaviour

CDS does not treat neighbour disputes or reports of antisocial behaviour as complaints, so if you are experiencing nuisance, harassment or have been a victim of crime, there is no need to fill in a complaints form - you can either write to us to tell us what has happened or, if you would like to speak to someone personally, you can call the helpdesk and ask for your co-op support officer (CSO).

Your CSO will record the incident and will be able to advise you what you can do and what action CDS may be able to take. We may also seek to involve the police and the local council.

However, if you have already reported a problem with antisocial behaviour, but you do not feel that CDS has adequately dealt with the situation, you should make a formal complaint - but please allow us enough time to try to tackle the problem before doing so.

The complaints procedure

There are three stages to the complaints procedure. If you are not satisfied with our response, you can ask for your complaint to be considered at a higher stage - however, you may not skip any of the stages. Ultimately, if you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you have the legal right to ask the housing ombudsman service to look into the matter.

- Stage 1** Your complaint will be considered by a departmental manager
- Stage 2** Your complaint will be considered by the executive director
- Stage 3** Your complaint will be considered by the board of management

Complaints should normally be made in writing - preferably on a complaints form (please use version C1 - resident complaints). You can send in your letter or complaint form by post, fax or email.

However, if you want to make your complaint by telephone or in person, we would ask you to speak directly to the housing services manager.

The complaints process is supervised by the housing services manager. If you have any queries about the operation of the procedure or, if you feel you need to keep your complaint strictly confidential, you should telephone the housing services manager or ask for an office appointment.

STAGE ONE

Complaints will be considered by a departmental manager

Complete a complaints form or write to the housing services manager. If you do not use a complaints form, please head your letter "Formal complaint". If you want to make your complaint by telephone, please call the housing services manager. As we may need to contact you for additional information before considering your complaint, it would be helpful if you could provide a daytime telephone number. Make sure you explain why you think the service you have received has not been adequate and tell us what you feel we should do to put matters right. The more detail you provide, the quicker we will be able to respond.



We will acknowledge your complaint within two working days.



The housing services manager will ask the appropriate departmental manager to investigate and to provide you with a response within 10 working days. If your complaint is complex or if there are reasons why it is not possible for us to provide a response straight away, we will write to you to explain the reasons for the delay and to tell you when you will receive a full reply.



You will receive a letter giving our response to your complaint. You must decide whether you feel the response is acceptable or whether you are still dissatisfied and want to take your complaint to stage two.

A few days after giving you our formal response, we will write to you again, asking you to complete a questionnaire telling us how you felt we handled your complaint. We will use this questionnaire to test how well we are handling complaints.

STAGE TWO

Complaints will be considered by the executive director

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the departmental manager, you can begin stage two of the complaints procedure by writing to the society's executive director.

Please head your letter "Stage 2 complaint" and explain why you feel that the response you received at stage one was not satisfactory and tell us what you feel we should do to put matters right.



We will acknowledge your complaint within two working days.



The executive director will investigate and decide whether or not the first response you received was adequate and appropriate.

If it is not possible for the executive director to fully consider the matter within 10 working days, we will write to you to explain the reason for the delay and to tell you when you will receive a full reply.



You will receive a letter from the executive director confirming whether or not s/he has upheld the original decision. You must decide whether you feel the executive director's response is acceptable or whether you are still dissatisfied and want to take the matter further.

A few days later we will write to you again, asking you to complete a questionnaire telling us how you felt we handled your complaint.

STAGE THREE

Complaints will be considered by the board of management

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the executive director, you can begin stage three of the complaints procedure by writing to the chair of the board of management. You should send your letter to our office address and we will then forward it to the chair.

Please head your letter "Stage three complaint" and explain to the chair why you feel that the response you received at stage two was not satisfactory and say what you feel the board should do to put matters right.



We will acknowledge your complaint within two working days.



The board of management will form a panel, either made up of three members of the board or three members of the board's housing services sub-committee. The panel will meet within 21 days to consider the complaint.

We will write to you to tell you when the panel will meet. If you cannot make the time we have arranged, please let us know straight away.

You may attend the meeting to put your case in person. If you feel you need support or advice, you can bring a relative, friend or advisor with you.



After the meeting, the panel will reach its decision. We will write to you within 14 days to tell you the outcome.

The panel's decision is final. You must decide whether you feel the board's decision is acceptable or whether you are still dissatisfied and want to take the matter to the housing ombudsman service.

A few days later we will write to you again, asking you to complete a questionnaire telling us how you felt we handled your complaint.

THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

The housing ombudsman service is empowered to investigate and issue judgements in response to complaints from residents about registered social landlords.

If you have exhausted the complaints process and remain dissatisfied, you can write to the ombudsman explaining why you feel that CDS has not satisfactorily addressed your complaint. It will help the ombudsman to decide how to proceed if you supply copies of your letters of complaint or complaints forms and also copies of our responses. We can provide you with copies of these documents on request.

It is important that you note that the ombudsman will only consider your complaint if you have been through **all three stages** of CDS Co-operatives complaints procedure.

CDS undertakes to co-operate fully with any investigation carried out by the ombudsman in response to a complaint made by a resident and also to implement any reasonable recommendations the ombudsman may make.



You can write to the ombudsman at:

The Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

Alternatively, you can contact the ombudsman by telephone, fax or email.

Telephone: 020 7421 3800
Locall: 0845 7125 973
Minicom: 020 7404 7092
Fax: 0207 7831 1942

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.ihos.org.uk

Notes:

1. This leaflet is intended to provide residents, including CDS tenants, members of independent housing co-operatives and homeowners, with guidance on our complaints procedure and accompanies **complaints form C1**.
2. Anyone who is not a resident of a home managed by CDS and wishing to make a complaint should ask for a copy of leaflet CL2 (*Making a complaint - a guide for neighbours, contractors and others*) and complete **complaints form C2**.
3. Co-op management committees wishing to make a complaint should ask for a copy of our leaflet CL3 (*Making a complaint - a guide for co-operative management committees*) and complete **complaints form C3**.

Complaints form (C1)

This form should only be used by tenants of CDS Co-operatives and by members of independent housing co-ops and homeowners living on estates managed by CDS.

If you do not live in a property managed by CDS, please use complaints form C2.

Co-op committees wishing to make a complaint should use complaints form C3.



You do not have to fill in a complaint form to make a complaint, but it will make is easier for us to investigate and respond to your complaint if you do.

Name: **Signed:**

Address:

.....

Postcode: **Telephone:** Home:

Mobile:

Date:

- Q1.** Please tell us whether you are...
- A tenant of CDS Co-operatives
 - A member of independent housing co-operative
 - A homeowner
 - Making a complaint on behalf of a resident

- Q2.** Please tell us which of our services your complaint is about.
- Arrears control (*rents and service charges*)
 - Estate management or estate services
 - Financial services (*inc cheque payments*)
 - Lettings and transfers
 - Repairs and maintenance
 - Tenancy management (*inc antisocial behaviour*)
 - Other (*please say*)

- Q3.** Please tell us why you feel that the service you received was inadequate.
The more information you can give us now, the quicker we will be able to respond.
If you need more space to explain your complaint fully, please continue on a separate sheet.

Appendix 2 - Complaints form C1 (Residents)

Q4. Please tell us how you think the service could have been improved.

Q5. Please tell us what you feel we should do now to put things right.

Q6 To which of these groups do you consider you belong? *Tick one box only ✓*

White	British	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
	European	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>
	White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other mixed background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian or Asian British	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Asian background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black or Black British	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	African	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Any other Black background	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Other (<i>please tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Don't want to say		<input type="checkbox"/>		

Please post this form to:

Maria McCarron
 Housing services manager
 CDS Co-operatives
 FREEPOST SW140
 London SE1 1BP