

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy (Grant Applications)

Compliments and Comments

We welcome all feedback from our beneficiaries regarding their experience of our grant application process. If you are pleased with our services, please let us know. You can contact us by telephone 01923 263128 or 07879 991830, by e-mail glendabarnard@btbs.org or in writing; either by letter or using our Compliments, Comments and Complaints Form. We can use this information to thank staff members and, with your permission, may use your comments in our promotional literature, to let others know how proud we are of our housing provision.

Complaints

We also recognise that sometimes things go wrong. If you are dissatisfied with something we have done or not done, or the level of service you received, we want to know so that we can put things right. This also gives us a chance to learn and improve our services.

What is a complaint?

You do not have to use the word “complaint” for your correspondence to be treated as such. We take any expression of dissatisfaction seriously and will answer your concerns fully, and, if appropriate, investigate them further. The following are some examples of complaints:

- you have waited an unacceptably long time for your grant application to be processed
- you have been treated unfairly in some way
- you are unhappy with the conduct of a member of staff (such complaints will not be handled by the member of staff concerned, but by their line manager or the Chair of the Grants & Housing Committee as appropriate).

Exclusions

We will not consider complaints under the following circumstances:

- the complaint has not been raised within six months of the issue(s) occurring
- the complaint has been fully considered already
- the complaint is being pursued in an unreasonable manner (e.g., not following due process or presented in a disrespectful, personalised or aggressive manner)

Our Process

Informal Stage

We will always try to resolve issues with you early and informally during your first contact. To raise a complaint informally you should contact Glenda Barnard, the Operations Manager by phone, e-mail or in person. She will discuss the matter with you, seek clarification if she is unclear about anything, and try to resolve the problem within an agreed time frame or explain why this cannot be done. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this approach and you want to make a formal complaint, we have a two-stage process.

Stage One

You can raise a formal complaint by contacting the Operations Manager (Glenda Barnard) by phone, in person, by e-mail or in writing (by letter or using our Compliments, Comments and Complaints Form). The complaint will be handled by the Operations Manager and any decisions made overseen by the Chief Executive (Vic Perry) before being reported back to you.

You can expect us to:

- try to resolve the problem the first time you contact us.
- respond to your complaint in full within ten working days, or let you know when we will respond if we need more time to investigate.
- apologise and say how we will put things right if we have done something wrong.
- explain our reasons clearly if we cannot deliver your desired outcomes

Stage Two

If you are not satisfied with our response to a formal complaint, please tell us. We will ask you to complete the relevant sections of our Compliments, Complaints and Comments Form and this will be submitted to our Grants & Housing Committee, together with all correspondence relating to the history of the complaint, so that they can consider your case from an impartial yet informed perspective. The decision of this committee will be final.

You can expect us to:

- review how the complaint was handled at stage one and decide if the decisions we made were in line with our policies, fair and reasonable
- provide a full response within 20 working days, or let you know when we will respond if we need more time to investigate
- apologise and say how we will put things right if we have done something wrong
- explain our reasons clearly if we cannot deliver your desired outcome

Our Guiding Principles

We want our complaints handling process to be based on open and constructive dialogue between staff and beneficiaries in order to resolve issues quickly and effectively. Our policy is therefore built on the following guiding principles:

Accessibility

- beneficiaries can make complaints in the way they find easiest: by phone, by e-mail or in writing (by letter or using our Compliments, Comments and Complaints Form)
- where beneficiaries find it difficult to write letters or complete forms for stage two complaints, and have no one to help them, they can arrange to dictate their complaint to a member of staff or, alternatively, we can make a telephone appointment for them to speak to the Chair of the Grants & Housing Committee to explain their complaint.
- sometimes a resident may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint on his or her own. We will accept complaints from third parties providing the resident has given their written consent for that person to act on their behalf. This person may be a relative, friend, carer or representative from an organisation such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and this should be agreed by the charity.

Fairness

- we value diversity and will treat all beneficiaries with fairness and respect
- we are committed to helping beneficiaries access the complaints handling process in a way that suits individual needs
- we will apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010
- we will take measures to address any actual or perceived conflicts of interest during the complaints process

Professionalism

- we will use clear, plain language when dealing with your complaint
- we will deal with your complaints in a timely manner (10 days for a stage one complaint and 20 days for a stage two complaint) or we will let you know if we need more time to investigate the matter
- the complaints handling process will be confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter or reach a judgement
- we will be clear from the outset if your desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic so as not to raise your expectations

Learning and Improvement

- we will look beyond the circumstances of individual complaints and consider whether anything needs to be “put right” in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all beneficiaries
- we will identify any themes or trends raised by beneficiaries’ complaints that suggest systematic issues or areas for improvement and take appropriate action as required
- we will proactively use learning from complaints to revise policies and procedures, to train staff and to improve communication and record-keeping

How can you help?

You can do your bit to make the complaints procedure a positive and constructive process by:

- being polite and respectful in your dealings with staff
- being clear and factual when submitting your complaint and not basing complaints on generalisations or hearsay
- having a genuine willingness to resolve issues, particularly where a degree of compromise may be necessary to bring about a solution acceptable to both parties
- being open to seeing the “bigger picture” and understanding if your desired outcome may cause unfairness to other beneficiaries, or isn’t operationally possible for the Charity
- being co-operative in our attempts to put things right (e.g., providing information requested and clarifying, with good grace, anything that staff do not understand

Persistent or vexatious complainants

In the unlikely eventuality that we receive unreasonably persistent or vexatious complaints from a beneficiary we will let the complainant know that we consider this to be unreasonable. If it persists, we will then refer the issue to the Grants & Housing Committee who will investigate the matter independently and may, depending on their findings, write to the complainant, requesting that they stop such behaviour. Where the complainant ignores this request, staff will cease responding to any correspondence received.

The process at a glance

