



POLICY

1.29 Dealing with Compliments and Complaints Policy (Housing)

Policy Category	Category 1 – Managers & Deputies, ELT & Trustees Category 2 – All Ops staff, Central Services, Housing
Policy Cross Ref	<i>1.02 Code of Conduct</i> <i>1.23 Safeguarding Policy & Procedure</i> <i>1.28 Whistleblowing Policy</i> <i>4.36 Resident and Client Anti-Social Behaviour</i> <i>5.10 Building Repairs and Maintenance</i> <i>7.03 Confidentiality and Data Protection</i> <i>8.08 Grievance Procedure</i>
Summary of Policy Changes	V9.0 June 2025 – Full policy review to meet Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code requirement. CQC complaints policy separated.
Policy Owner	Director of Housing and Estates
Published Date	July 2025
Expiry Date	July 2028

1.0 Policy Summary

St Anne's Community Services has a purpose to 'make a difference everyday' - providing high quality care and support, to enable people to lead independent and fulfilled lives. St Anne's response to compliments and complaints reflects our values of being Person Centred, Respectful, Open, Understanding and Dedicated.

This policy outlines St Anne's approach to handling feedback, including compliments and complaints from clients, residents, employees, and stakeholders. St Anne's recognises that compliments and complaints provide valuable feedback and allows St Anne's to know when things go right so it can be celebrated and when they go wrong, so St Anne's can put things right and improve. All feedback is used to inform, shape, develop and improve services.

This policy has been developed and reviewed to align fully with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, ensuring a fair, accessible, and effective complaints process for all housing residents.

For the full details of this policy, please read the entire document, not just the summary.

2.0 Scope

St Anne's values all feedback from clients and residents, those close to them, external stakeholders, and anyone else who comes into contact with our services.

St Anne's therefore will positively encourage feedback through a range of methods, both written and verbal and using appropriate technology, interpreters, or other means wherever possible, enabling any person to provide feedback regardless of how, where or when they wish to do so.

St Anne's will put the person providing the feedback at the centre of the process by actively listening to what people say and make them feel confident that their views will be taken seriously, and that their views will be acted on, including through:

- Reassuring those raising concerns or complaints that they will not be victimised or treated unfairly for doing so
- Aiming to respond to concerns and complaints by working with the person to find a resolution and by being open about the action we have taken
- Whenever appropriate, giving an apology
- Ensuring that positive feedback is shared with the relevant staff
- Learn from any feedback given and improve our Services and Departments to meet the needs of our clients, residents, and other stakeholders as a result.

3.0 Main Policy Content

3.1 All Feedback – Compliments and Complaints can be made:

- Via St Anne's website under "Contact"
- By writing to the service
- By talking to, ringing or emailing the manager of the service, central service manager, their line manager or central services and asking for direction to whom may the appropriate person to speak to
- By talking to, ringing or emailing any of the staff of the service which the issue relates to

3.1.1 Information About How to Give a Compliment or raise a Complaint

Information about giving a compliment, making a complaint can be obtained:

- On St Anne's website you can download a copy of this policy, including accessible versions
- By ringing St Anne's on 0113 243 5151: The Team will **only** take all initial details regarding the complaint and will pass the details of the complaint to the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team quality@st-annes.org.uk
- In St Anne's leaflet, 'Tell Us What You Think'

This leaflet summarises how people can give us their feedback. **See Appendix 1**

Every client and resident in our accommodation-based services will receive a copy of this, and have it explained to them on first receiving a service from St Anne's and at regular intervals thereafter.

In all other services this information will be made available through leaflets/posters and in regular correspondence with the client.

Information about how to provide feedback will be made available in appropriate formats and languages or on tape if preferred. The leaflet will also be made available to relatives, friends, and advocates.

St Anne's will work with the individual to ensure they feel listened to and supported throughout the complaint process where a complaint refers to protected characteristics, we will take care to ensure our processes in handling the complaint are sensitive to this factor, this may include for example the choice of investigation office, settings/location of meetings.

Depending on the area in which St Anne's is operating, services may need to notify their Local Authority complaints department or contract compliance team of the nature of the complaint and the response and should act accordingly.

3.1.2 Staff Issues

St Anne's Grievance Procedure exists for current and former staff to raise a concern or complaint to do with their employment, including their treatment by other St Anne's staff. This Compliments, Complaints and Concerns Policy is therefore not applicable for that purpose.

3.2 Maintaining records

Every service regulated by the CQC will keep a quality file that will include these sections:

- Compliments
- Concerns
- Complaints
- Other Feedback (for example from the annual stakeholder survey)

3.3 Compliments

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction about the standard of service we provide. Compliments are always welcome.

Receiving a Compliment Verbally, in writing, or via the website or social media

- Forward the compliment to the relevant service manager/department. Written/social media feedback should be scanned/forwarded.
- If a verbal compliment is received, ask the person if they would write or email it to the manager of the service, so we can keep a clear and formal record of it. In addition, the person receiving the verbal compliment should make a contemporaneous note and send it to their manager explaining that it was verbal and this is their best recollection?
- Website feedback will go directly to QCI Team and be forwarded within 2 days to the relevant service manager /department manager
- The service manager/department manager should respond to and share the feedback with relevant staff/team departments.

3.4 Safeguarding

Any compliment or complaint raised that relates to a safeguarding issue or suspected safeguarding issue, must be dealt with immediately following the guidance in the St Anne's Safeguarding Adults Policy.

The complainant must be reassured that we will do everything to ensure that the person involved is safe, in line with St Anne's Safeguarding Adults Policy. When providing the resolution letter, we will also confirm that all personal data handled during the complaint investigation has been processed in accordance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation.

3.5 Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident/client/stakeholder or group of resident/clients/stakeholders.

3.5.1 Request for service compared to a complaint

A request for service is when a resident asks for something to be fixed, maintained, or provided, usually for the first time.

Examples:

- Reporting a leaking tap
- Requesting a repair for a broken heater
- Asking for a home visit

A service request is about something that needs to be done, not necessarily something that went wrong.

A complaint is when a resident is unhappy with how something was handled, especially if a service was delayed, done poorly, or not done at all.

Examples:

- A repair was reported but not completed
- A staff member was rude or unhelpful
- Promises were made but not followed through

A complaint is about expressing dissatisfaction with the service or experience.

3.5.2 Time Limit on a Complaint

Most complaints must be made no later than 12 months after:

- The date the event occurred or, if later,
- The date the event came to the notice of the complainant.

If those timescales have elapsed, a letter will be sent by the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team to explain why the complaint will not be investigated.

The time limit will not apply if St Anne's is satisfied that:

The complainant can give a good reason for not making the complaint within that time period, and despite the delay, it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly. Management of all complaints will be coordinated by the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team (QCIT) to ensure consistency, fairness and a timely response.

For all complaints St Anne's will:

- Acknowledge the complaint – in writing or by email.
- Ask an appropriate person to carry out an investigation.
- Treat the complaint in confidence.
- Keep the complainant informed of progress.
- Resolve the complaint within a clear timescale appropriate to the level or complexity of the complaint received.

3.5.3 Raising a Complaint

Anyone can make a complaint.

- All staff should take the following steps when receiving a complaint:
- Contact their line manager/out of hours on call emergency line if they consider anyone is at immediate risk.
- Find out if the person feels able to talk to you, would prefer to talk to another member of staff, needs an advocate or an independent interpreter.
- Confirm the details of the complainant, the actual complaint and the desired outcome (resolution).
- Note that the person making the complaint does not have to put anything in writing but should be supported to do so if they wish.
- St Anne's Administration Team will only take all initial details regarding the complaint and will pass the details of the complaint to the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team quality@st-annes.org.uk
- Complete the first part of the Incident Reporting System Feedback Module – 'Complaint'.

Complaints received via St Anne's Website are automatically directed to the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team.

Complaints received by letter (scanned) or email must immediately be sent – by email - to the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team quality@st-annes.org.uk

3.5.4 Acknowledgement

A member of the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team will contact the relevant person:

Complaints regarding Operational Services – the relevant Area Manager.

Complaints regarding Central Services – the relevant Department Head.

Complaints regarding Housing issues – the relevant Housing Manager.

An acknowledgement letter will be sent out by the Quality & Continuous Improvement Lead within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.

3.5.5 The Investigation

When conducting any complaints investigation St Anne's will establish the facts in a systematic way:

- Collecting and assessing evidence
- Conducting interviews
- Referring to client records and documents and taking expert advice as required.

Once the evidence has been gathered, it will be assessed in order to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of each complaint.

If the complaint involves very serious allegations or it is felt that an external independent investigation is needed, this will be decided by the Head of Quality and Continuous Improvement. If the investigation into a complaint results in action under St Anne's disciplinary procedures, then:

- The complaints process will be continued to its conclusion, as set out in the process above.
- In the response letter, the complainant will be informed that their complaint has led to disciplinary action (but not the details due to the GDPR and Data Protection legislation)

3.6 Timeframes

3.6.1 Stage 1

An acknowledgement letter will be sent within 3 working days, this will include details of the person appointed to conduct the investigation. St Anne's will outline their understanding of the complaint and the resident's desired outcome. If details are unclear, St Anne's will ask for clarification and inform the resident if their desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.

The investigating officer will investigate and respond to stage one complaints within 10 working days of acknowledging the complaint. This process includes evaluating the issue, determining the necessary resolution, and identifying any urgent actions required.

St Anne's will inform residents of their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman and keep them updated on the investigation's progress.

Holding Response in More Complex Situations

If, because of the complexity of the complaint or the matter it concerns, it has been impossible to complete the investigation within the 10 days of acknowledging the initial complaint, then the appointed investigator must agree the extension with the complainant and send a holding letter.

A holding letter will be sent by the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team, in liaison with the appointed investigator. This will set out:

- An explanation of why the investigation is taking more than 10 days A realistic revised timescale not exceeding a further 10 days by which it is expected to have completed the investigation fully.
- An offer to meet to discuss the progress so far.

3.6.2 Stage 2 - Appeals Investigation by the Chief Executive or Director of Housing and Estates

Stage 2 is the final step in our complaints process. If a complaint isn't resolved at stage 1, a Director or the Chief Executive will review it upon request. St Anne's aims to understand why the customer is still dissatisfied and what they expect.

If St Anne's can't escalate the complaint, the resident will be informed in writing and explain their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

St Anne's will acknowledge stage 2 complaints within three working days and review the complaint and our stage 1 response. A response with St Anne's actions will be sent within 20 working days. If more time is needed, an explanation of the delay and a new timeline will be provided, not exceeding an additional 20 working days. St Anne's will confirm the extension in writing and keep the resident updated.

The response will address all points raised and provide clear reasons for any decisions. It will also explain how to refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman if the customer remains dissatisfied

3.7 Ombudsman or External Regulators

The Chief Executive's formal response must state that if the complainant is still not satisfied, they can appeal to an appropriate external body, which could include:

- Local Service Commissioners, where the complaint regards a Local Authority funded service.
- The Local ICB, where the complaint regards a health funded service.
- The Care Quality Commission, where the complaint regards a registered service.
- The Local Government Ombudsman, for all support and care related complaints (including those made by someone who is self-funded).

- The Housing Ombudsman, where the complaint regards a housing issue (**See Appendix 2**).

As part of the organisational response to a complaint, if the findings of investigations warrant doing so, the written response must include a sincere expression of sorrow or regret for the incident or issue giving rise to the complaint.

This apology must be clear and unambiguous and may be given verbally in addition to the written apology within the resolution letter.

If a complaint has been upheld, it is good practice to offer both a verbal and written apology.

3.8 Unreasonably Persistent Complaints

Having completed the formal complaints procedures above, a complainant may be identified as unreasonably persistent due to the behaviours they display. These may include:

- Behaviours/actions which are disproportionate, harassing or repetitious.
- Seeking unrealistic outcomes relative to the issue being raised and stating that their intention is to persist until that outcome is achieved.
- Repeatedly making the same complaint with minor differences but not accepting the outcome of any investigation into their complaints.

Complainants who are deemed to be 'persistent' should still be dealt with fairly and properly whilst ensuring other clients, other residents or staff are not adversely affected. Further guidance on dealing with persistent complaints is available from St Anne's Head of Corporate Governance.

3.9 Legal Action by a Person Who Has Made a Complaint

If, at any point during the complaints process the person who has made a complaint states that they have sought, or commenced legal action in regard to their complaint the details should be passed to the Head of Corporate Governance and where appropriate the insurance brokers, as decided by the CEO and or the Head of Corporate Governance.

If during the investigation the person who has made a complaint decides to take legal action the complaints process may be halted to determine whether continuing with the complaint could prejudice the outcome of legal action.

The decision to discontinue the complaints process lies with the Director with responsibility for the area that the complaint is about, once all of the information has been made available and legal action has commenced.

3.10 Anonymous Complaints

All anonymous complaints received by St Anne's will be investigated if there is enough information to carry out such an investigation following procedures outlined within the St Anne's Whistleblowing Policy.

3.11 Confidentiality

All complainants will be dealt with in line with St Anne's Confidentiality Policy, the Data Protection Act and Caldicott Principles.

3.12 Administration of Complaints

A register will be kept by the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team of all complaints, setting out:

- Each complaint received
- The subject matter and outcome(s)
- Details of the reasons for delay where an investigation took longer than the agreed response period agreed, and
- The date the report of the outcome of the investigation (the response letter) was sent to the complainant.

The Incident Reporting System Feedback Module – complaint record will be updated as appropriate at each stage.

Complaints will be collated by the Quality & Continuous Improvement Team for the monitoring and analysis of trends or patterns, identifying areas of improvement across the organisation and to ensure learning has been implemented at a local level from the original complaint.

3.13 Reporting Complaints

The Quality & Continuous Improvement Team will prepare a report regarding all complaints, together with their outcome and any recommendations for changes to practice resulting from learning derived from the process every two months.

Recommendations to changes in practice and lessons learnt will be presented to the Quality & People Committee within their standard board cycle.

4.0 Effects

The expected outcomes of this policy being in place include:

- **Enhanced Communication and Trust:** By actively encouraging feedback and ensuring that it is taken seriously, St Anne's fosters a culture of openness and trust. Clients, residents, and stakeholders feel more confident that their views will be heard and acted upon, which can lead to stronger relationships and increased satisfaction.
- **Increased accountability and transparency:** Outlined through clear processes for handling complaints and compliments, this includes timely responses, keeping complainants informed, and providing clear reasons for decisions.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** By adhering to the policy, St Anne's ensures compliance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements, such as those set

by the Care Quality Commission and the Housing Ombudsman. This helps to avoid potential legal issues and enhances the organisation's reputation.

- **Staff development and positive morale:** Positive feedback is shared with relevant staff, which can boost morale and motivation. Additionally, handling complaints effectively and learning from them can lead to professional development opportunities for staff.

5.0 Appendix

- **Appendix 1 Compliments, Complaints and Concerns leaflet - 1.29**
[Appendix 1 - Compliments, Complaints & Concerns Easy Read.PDF](#)
- **Appendix 2 Housing Ombudsman Complaints Procedure. 1.29 Appendix**
[2 - The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2020.PDF](#)
- **Stage 1 and Stage 2 response letter templates are available on the intranet.**