Marylebone Project Policy and Procedures

External complaints

Date Created: August 2024	*Created by: Sue Way*
Sign Off Date: August 2024	*Signed off by: Marylebone Management Team*
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Name of Policy:	External complaints Policy and Procedure
Version	2024 Version 1 September 2025 Version 2
Written:	August 2024
Author:	Senior Management Team
Agreed by:	Senior Management Team
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Latest Amendments made:	August 2024: • Initial production of Procedure in current format. September 2025: • Reviewed content for accuracy.
Review Period:	1 yearly

Purpose

This policy sets out how the Marylebone Project manages complaints received from external individuals, including neighbours, visitors, contractors, partner agencies, and members of the public. It ensures a fair, transparent, and accessible process that complies with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and supports accurate Housing Ombudsman annual complaints returns.

Scope and Principles

This policy applies to complaints raised by:

- Individuals who are **not** residents of the hostel.
- Neighbours or community members.

- Visitors or contractors.
- Partner agencies or professionals.

This policy does **not** cover:

- Complaints from residents (covered by the Residents' Complaints Policy).
- Staff grievances or safeguarding concerns.
- Incidents requiring emergency intervention (handled via risk or critical incident procedures).

We will ensure that complaints are:

- **Acknowledged promptly** and responded to within required timescales.
- **Handled fairly**, respectfully, and without discrimination.
- **Investigated thoroughly** by staff/managers not previously involved.
- **Considered opportunities for learning** and service improvement.
- **Recorded accurately** for Housing Ombudsman annual reporting.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is:

"An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the hostel or its staff, which requires a response."
Examples include:

- Concerns about conduct or behaviour of staff or contractors.
- Issues relating to noise, anti-social behaviour, or environmental impact.
- Dissatisfaction with communication or decisions made by the organisation.

Accessibility

Complaints may be submitted:

- In writing (email or letter)
- Verbally (in person or by phone)
- Through a representative or advocate

We will make reasonable adjustments for individuals who need assistance in making a complaint.

Recording and Reporting

To meet Housing Ombudsman annual returns requirements, the Marylebone Project will record:

- Number of external complaints at each stage
- Response times and whether deadlines were met
- Complaint themes (e.g., noise, staff conduct, communication)
- Outcomes and any service improvements
- Learning actions and review completion dates

Records will be maintained securely and retained for a minimum of 3 years.

Learning from complaints

The Marylebone Project will:

- Identify trends and root causes of complaints.
- Report learning to senior leadership and the Marylebone Project Board (governing body).
- Implement service improvements.
- Monitor progress through quarterly governance reporting.

Learning outcomes will be included in Housing Ombudsman annual complaints returns.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be handled confidentially, and information will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation. Where a complaint concerns a resident, safeguarding and confidentiality rules will apply.

Escalation beyond the Project and Organisation

As the complaint concerns a non-resident, the Housing Ombudsman may not investigate directly. However, external complainants may escalate concerns to:

- Church Army, as the parent organization of the Marylebone Project
- The Housing Ombudsman (where applicable)
- Local Authority teams (e.g., environmental health, safeguarding)
- The police (in cases of criminal activity)
- Professional bodies (for contractor or agency conduct)

Complainants will be informed of appropriate escalation routes.

Procedure and stages of the complaints process

Stage 1 – Formal Complaint Response

Complaints will be received by the Service Assistant, who will then determine who the compliant is allocated to. This can be a member of staff or a member of the Management Team depending on the nature of the complaint, which unit/team the complaint refers to and the severity of the complaint.

- Acknowledgement letter sent within **5 working days**.
- Complaint investigated by allocated investigation officer
- Full written response letter sent within **14 working days**.
- If an extension is required (complex cases), an explanation will be provided and a revised deadline set, not exceeding an additional 10 working days.

Stage 2 – Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a Stage 2 review.

- A senior manager not involved in Stage 1 will conduct the review.
- A response will be issued within **10 working days**.
- Extensions may be used where necessary, in line with Housing Ombudsman guidance.

Stage 3 – Final stage

If the problem has still not been resolved, within 28 days of the stage 2 response being sent, the complaint is moved to the final stage of this process (**stage three**). Stage three involves a case review by the Homeless Projects Manager and is an appeal

against the response received at stage two, and is the final stage of the formal process.

The Homeless Projects Manager will send a written response within 28 days.

Escalation beyond the organization

As the complaint concerns a non-resident, the Housing Ombudsman may not investigate directly. However, if the complainant is still unhappy with how the complaint has been addressed, they can contact the following **external agencies and individuals**: -

- The Chair of Marylebone Project Board,
  Church Army
  Wilson Carlile Centre, 50 Cavendish Street, Sheffield, S3 7RZ
  Tel: 0300 123 2113;
  www.churcharmy.org

- Local Authority teams (e.g., environmental health, safeguarding)
- The police (in cases of criminal activity)
- Professional bodies (for contractor or agency conduct)
- The Housing Ombudsman (where applicable)

Complainants will be informed of appropriate escalation routes.

Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation or Housing Ombudsman requirements change. Review outcomes will be reported to the Marylebone Project Board (governing body) at the first available Board meeting following the review.