

## **Buckingham Almshouses and Welfare Charity**

### **Complaints Policy**

The aim of the policy is to ensure that the complaints process is flexible and responsive to the needs of individual complaints. The policy seeks to ensure that:

- residents who complain are listened to and treated with courtesy and empathy
- residents will never be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint
- complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly and openly
- apologies are given as appropriate
- complaints handling will comply with confidentiality and data protection policies

Complaints may be made by residents, their carers and families or a representative of a resident. Buckingham Almshouses and Welfare Charity (BAWC) will not be able to deal with an issue through the complaints process if:

- a complaint relates to a legal matter that is already being dealt with by a solicitor
- the complainant is anonymous, unless there is sufficient documentary evidence to substantiate the complaint.

Residents should be encouraged to raise minor complaints informally in the first instance, preferably verbally, as this can lead to better understanding and very often to a quick resolution of the issue.

If the complaint cannot be solved quickly or if the complaint is more serious, it should be made in writing. A written complaint should include sufficient detail to enable the charity to investigate.

Complaints should be made to the Clerk in the first instance, who will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 7 working days. This acknowledgement will indicate the next course of action and the anticipated timescale. The charity will seek to resolve the complaint as a matter of urgency.

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome they have 7 working days to submit a written appeal, and the appeal will be dealt with by an appropriate Trustee committee who will convene a special meeting within 7 working days of the appeal being submitted.

**This policy has been approved for issue by the board of Trustees of Buckingham Almshouses and Welfare Charity.**

Signature:.....

Name:.....

Date:.....

**Adopted by vote of the Board of Trustees 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

## Complaints and Grievance Procedure

The following procedure is followed if any almshouse resident, welfare beneficiary, allotment holder or other individual who comes into direct contact with the charity wishes to raise a complaint in connection with their occupation of the Charity's property or about services provided by the Charity or conduct of the Charity's officers or Trustees:

1. Minor matters, such as small maintenance items, should be referred to the Clerk when they arise. These matters should be attended to without delay.
2. If the Clerk is unable to resolve minor matters, or if there is a persistent problem with pets, loud noise or matters affecting health and safety, the resident / service user should refer this to the Clerk or Chairman in writing. The complaint will be logged by the Clerk, who will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 7 working days. This acknowledgement will indicate the next course of action and the anticipated timescale.
3. If the complaint is about an officer of the Charity, other residents / service users or a serious breach of health and safety regulations, the resident / service user should put the complaint in writing to the Chairman at the outset, with a formal request for it to be considered by the Trustees. The complaint will be heard by the Trustees; by either the People Committee or the Governance and Compliance Committee, depending upon the nature of the complaint. The complainant is entitled to attend when the complaint is being heard by the appointed Trustee committee and may be accompanied by a friend, advocate or professional advisor.
4. The Trustees will write promptly to the complainant to advise of the action taken to resolve the complaint or difficulty.
5. If the complaint is not resolved by the relevant Committee, it will be referred to a further group of three Trustees, none of whom has previously been involved in consideration of the complaint. The complainant is entitled to attend when the complaint is being heard by these appointed Trustees and may be accompanied by a friend, advocate or professional advisor. Again, the Trustees will write promptly to the complainant to advise of the action taken to resolve the complaint or difficulty.
6. If a complaint is pursued unreasonably or where a resident's actions or behaviours are deemed to be unreasonable, BAWC reserves the right to close the complaint. A complainant who displays threatening or abusive behaviour or language (whether verbal or written), that causes officers or Trustees to feel threatened, abused and/or continues to contact the Charity with unreasonable demands during/following a complaint investigation, may have their appointment set aside.
7. In cases where Trustees consider a complaint is being unreasonable and overly persistent and decide to bring the complaint to an end, they will inform the complainant of their reasons.
8. The Trustees' decision is final, however

If a housing-related complaint is not resolved at the end of the Charity's complaints procedure, the Charity has no obligation to consider it further however a resident may choose to refer the matter to the Ombudsman:

- They can either refer the matter to a 'designated person' or wait eight weeks and then refer the matter directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service whose address is 81 Aldwych, London WC2BR 4HN (tel: 030 111 3000, email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)).
- Designated persons were introduced by the Government to improve the chance of complaints about housing being resolved locally. A 'designated person' can be an MP or a local councillor.

If the unresolved complaint does not involve housing, the complainant may choose to refer it to the appropriate governing body, such as the Charity Commission.

## Document Control

<b>Name of Policy:</b>	Complaints Policy and Procedure
<b>Version</b>	1.0
<b>Purpose of the Policy:</b>	To ensure that an appropriate response is made to all complaints and that a standard procedure is followed in handling such complaints.
<b>Policy applies to:</b>	All beneficiaries and other contacts of the Charity
<b>Approved by:</b>	BAWC Compliance and Governance Committee
<b>Responsible for its updating:</b>	BAWC Compliance and Governance Committee
<b>Final approval by:</b>	BAWC Board of Trustees
<b>Date of approval:</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
<b>Policy first issued:</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
<b>Proposed date of review:</b>	September 2019