

Concerns, complaints and compliments policy – version 12

Date approved for use: 18th October 2023

Scope

- 1.1 This policy is a Dimensions Group policy. This means it applies to all its subsidiaries as listed in **Dimensions Group company information**.
- 1.2 The policy explains how we encourage, respond to, monitor, and act on complaints, concerns and compliments received from the people we support, our tenants, people who live in registered care homes, their representatives, and others.
- 1.3 The policy outlines the procedures we expect colleagues to follow to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and meet the regulatory requirements Dimensions must adhere to.
- 1.4 **This is a must-read policy.**
Registered managers are responsible for ensuring that the people they support, their families and representatives have the confidence and information to raise concerns, make complaints and pay compliments.
Registered Managers **must** keep a record of which responsibilities they have delegated and to whom if they choose to give tasks to other colleagues.
- 1.5 Information is available for people we support, tenants, people who live in registered care homes, their families, and representatives so that they can see how we will respond to their concern, complaint, or compliment. This information is also available in different formats (see paragraphs [4.3](#) and [4.4](#))
- 1.5 You can find the documents, forms and other policies mentioned in this policy on the intranet.
- 1.6 To go straight to the policy content click on the hyperlinked section title below:

Section

[Making it easy to complain](#)

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Policy statement

- 2.1 We define a complaint to be an expression of dissatisfaction:
 - it can be about the standard of service, action or lack of action by Dimensions
 - it can be about anyone acting on behalf of Dimensions
 - a complaint can be about anything that has affected our tenants, people who live in registered care homes or the people we support.
- 2.2 Dimensions is committed to providing a high-quality service to our tenants, people who live in registered care homes, the people we support, their families and representatives. We recognise that feedback of all kinds helps us to learn and improve what we do. We value all the feedback we receive.
- 2.3 We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure the information, in this policy, is accessible to everyone. This includes versions in languages other than English. Where we do not have a requested version, we will do our best to produce a version as quickly as possible.
- 2.4 Dimensions is a member of the Housing Ombudsman's Scheme. Dimensions follows the [Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code \(England\)](#). The statutory code supports landlords, to respond to complaints from tenants, effectively and fairly. We have reflected these principles throughout this policy, easy read information, and other associated documents.
- 2.5 Dimensions supports the principles of the [NHS England 'Ask Listen Do' project](#). The project supports organisations to learn from and improve the experiences of people with a learning disability, autism or both, and their families and carers, when giving feedback, raising a concern or making a complaint. We have reflected the principles throughout this policy, our easy read information, and other associated documents.

- 2.6 Dimensions treats all concerns and complaints seriously and confidentially. Dimensions uses the information to learn from and improve support. We will not withdraw or reduce a person's support because someone makes a complaint or raises a concern. Tenancies will not be at risk if a tenant makes a complaint or raises a concern.
- 2.7 We will consider compensation for Dimensions-owned housing maintenance issues, as per our **Compensation policy**.

The impact of not implementing this policy

- 3.1 Not following this policy may lead to a loss in confidence in the organisation.
- 3.2 Not following this policy may lead to a reputational risk to Dimensions.
- 3.2 Dimensions might also get into trouble with our regulators or other government officials:
- the local authority (LA)
 - in England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
 - in Wales, the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
 - the Charities Commission (CC)
 - the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)
 - the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
 - the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)
 - the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
 - the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)
 - the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

- 3.3 Registered managers may get in trouble with our regulators personally.

Policy content

Making it easy to complain

- 4.1 Anyone affected by the way Dimensions provides support can make a complaint. You can make a complaint or raise a concern:
- in person

- through a team member or colleague
- through an advocate or representative
- by telephone – complaints telephone line: 0300 303 9024
- by letter
- by email to the manager, or to the organisation's complaints email address: complaints@dimensions-uk.org
- You can also make a complaint via our website: <https://www.dimensions-uk.org/contact/making-complaint/>
- using the easy read form.

4.3 We have easy read versions of this policy:

- **What Dimensions does about complaints - Ask Listen Do - easy read policy**
- **What Dimensions does about sharing a compliment - Ask Listen Do - easy read policy**

4.4 We have an animation, British Sign Language, and audio version of the policy. Fact sheets for families are also available. Our **Complaints satisfaction survey** is available in an easy read version.

4.5 The Housing Ombudsman Service (England) can assist tenants with all aspects of their complaint at any stage in the complaints process.

4.6 Dimensions reminds people of how to make a complaint in several ways:

- as part of the biannual newsletters
- the annual satisfaction survey
- Dimensions and Discovery Council meetings
- Regional listening events
- Tenants' meetings
- Everybody Counts groups.

4.7 Dimensions treats all complainants the same, even if they are anonymous. If complainants provide contact details, we can provide them with the outcome of our investigation. We can also ask them how well their complaint was handled.

- 4.8 A representative may complain on behalf of a person we support or a tenant if:
- the person has agreed to support from the representative.
 - the person does not have capacity to agree to support but is not able to complain without help.
 - the representative is acting in the person's best interests.

Dimensions will involve the person we support or tenant as much as possible and will not share sensitive information.

- 4.9 If Dimensions is not satisfied that the representative is acting in the person we support or tenant's best interests, the complaint will be escalated to a more senior manager.

- 4.10 Dimensions will support people to appoint an advocate.

Example national advocacy agencies include:

- **The Advocacy People**

<https://www.theadvocacypeople.org.uk/>

Tel: 0330 440 9000

- **PoHWER** – contact details:

<https://www.pohwer.net/>

Tel: 0300 456 2370

- 4.11 Dimensions will support people to get unbiased advice from local Healthwatch or Citizens Advice bureaux.

- 4.12 The Dimensions Quality Officer has oversight of all complaints received by the organisation. The Quality Officer supports colleagues to resolve complaints fairly and efficiently.

The Quality Officer can be contacted by our tenants, people who live in registered care homes, the people we support, their families and colleagues for advice or where the outcome of a complaint is unclear. The Quality Officer can also support impartiality and the conclusion of the complaint.

Dealing with and investigating a complaint

- 5.1 We have two stages in our complaints process:

- Stage 1 – complaint investigation

- Stage 1 includes informing the complainant that the [Housing Ombudsman Service \(England\)](#) can assist tenants with all aspects of their complaint at any stage in the complaints process
- Stage 2 – complaint appeal
 - Stage 2 includes informing the complainant of their right to contact the Housing or Local Government Social Care Ombudsman if they are unhappy with the outcome of their complaint appeal.

Steps taken when receiving a complaint are summarised in the [Dealing with a concern or complaint flowchart](#).

Stage 1 – complaint investigation

- 5.2 We aim to handle concerns and complaints quickly, effectively, and fairly.
- 5.3 Often people feel more comfortable about suggesting improvements rather than complaining formally. Please see the [Concerns](#) section.
- 5.4 If a complainant alerts us to possible abuse, neglect, or any other criminal offence, we will tell the local authority's adult safeguarding team and the police, as appropriate, in line with our safeguarding policy. The safeguarding team/police will decide how to investigate and monitor outcomes.
- 5.5 If a complainant involves more than our organisation in their complaint (Dimensions and a local authority for example), we will work with that organisation to provide a single response to the complainant.
- 5.6 If an apology to the complainant is appropriate, Dimensions will consider if this falls under the HSCA Duty of Candour. See **Duty of candour (being open and honest) policy**.

Stage 2 – complaint appeal

- 5.7 If a complainant is not happy with the outcome of their complaint, they have the right to appeal. The complainant or their representative should do this within 15 working days of being informed of the outcome.
- 5.8 The investigator of an appeal will be senior to the original investigator.

- 5.9 Operations directors, heads of service and their line managers are responsible for appointing investigators, including assigning them on Radar and where appropriate, may request the Quality Assurance Team to investigate.
- 5.10 Ombudsmen can support complainants who are not happy with the appeal outcome. In England, this is the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO).

Note: The LG&SCO will not investigate a complaint until the organisation has concluded their complaint process.

- **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**

Website: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/>

Tel: 0300 061 0614

Complaint appeal page: <https://complaints.lgo.org.uk/>

- 5.11 In Wales, the organisation must inform the complainant they can complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). The PSOW can look into their complaint if the complainant believes they:

- have been treated unfairly.
- received a bad service through some failure on the part of the organisation providing it.
- have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure.

- **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**

Tel: 0300 790 0203

Email: ask@ombudsman.wales

Website: <https://www.ombudsman.wales/>

X (formerly Twitter): @OmbudsmanWales

Address: I Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ.

- 5.12 Complainants may also contact:

- **Care Quality Commission**

Website: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/>

Tel: 0300 061 6161

Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

Address: CQC
Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4PA

or

CQC
2 Redman Place
London
E20 1JQ

- **Care Inspectorate Wales**

Website: <https://www.careinspectorate.wales/>

Tel: 0300 790 0126

Email: CIW@gov.wales

X (formerly Twitter): @care_wales

Address: Welsh Government Office
Sarn Mynach
Llandudno Junction
LL31 9RZ

- the person's local authority
- the person's landlord.

5.13 The Housing Ombudsman Service (England) can support tenants with their complaint. The Housing Ombudsman Service (England) can help Dimensions tenants if they are not happy at any stage of the complaint process and with the complaint outcome:

- **Housing Ombudsman Service**

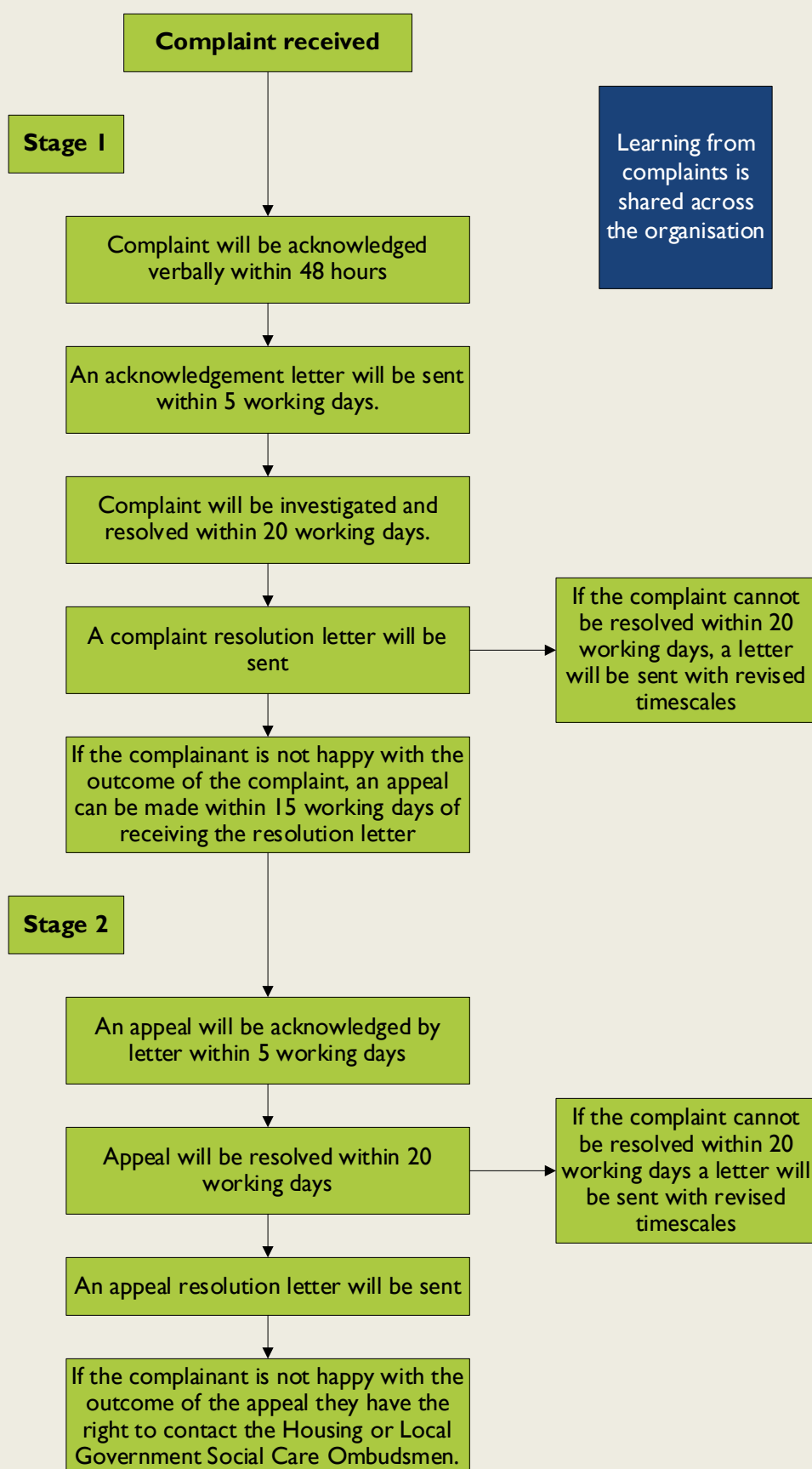
Website: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Address: PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Dealing with a concern or complaint flowchart



Reasons why we might not investigate a complaint

A complaint has already been investigated and resolved

- 6.1 Where a complaint has been investigated and resolved, we will signpost the complainant to the Housing or Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Time limits

- 6.2 Complainants should complain as soon as possible.

The Group Director of Quality, Governance and Lived Experience will decide whether to investigate complaints outside of a twelve months' time frame and inform the complainant of the outcome.

- 6.3 Should they wish to; a complainant must appeal the outcome of their complaint within 15 working days.

Unreasonable complainant behaviour

- 6.4 Unreasonable complaints hinder our consideration of their, and other people's complaints.

Examples of unreasonable complainant behaviour are:

- submission of repeat complaints, after the complaint process has been completed
- refusal to accept the outcome
- introduction of irrelevant new information
- the expectation that the new information will be investigated
- raising large numbers of detailed, unrelated questions and expecting answers.

The Group Director of Quality, Governance and Lived Experience will decide whether to investigate unreasonable complaints and will inform the complainant of the outcome.

- 6.5 Dimensions will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour from complainants. Examples of unacceptable behaviours include:
- abusive and offensive language

- threats
- deceit

Dimensions will act if it occurs. The action will be taken to protect colleagues and the integrity of our processes in line with the violence and aggression at work policy.

Malicious complaints are treated as unreasonable behaviour.

- 6.6 If a complainant's behaviour is unreasonable Dimensions will ask them to change it.

If the behaviour continues, we will restrict their contact with us.

If the behaviour threatens the safety and welfare of our colleagues, we may report it to the police. We may also consider taking legal action.

Legal proceedings

- 6.7 If a complaint is part of a legal action, Dimensions will continue to resolve the complaint.

This is unless there are legal reasons not to do so. For example, if the investigation or outcome of the complaint might prejudice the legal proceedings.

- 6.8 The decision whether not to investigate will be made by the Group Director of Quality, Governance and Lived Experience, who will also inform the complainant of the outcome.

Recording and monitoring

- 7.1 Dimensions records concerns, complaints, and compliments on the organisations complaint management system.

Dimensions has to show, to statutory bodies, how we have handled complaints.

Dimensions values feedback and will to use it to:

- get things right in the future if we have not done so already
- become more person centred
- be more open and accountable

- act fairly and proportionately
- seek continuous improvement.

7.3 Information held about concerns, complaints, and compliments will be held and processed in line with the principles of the Data Protection legislation. Please see the [Data protection statement](#) for more information.

Concerns

8.1 Often people feel more comfortable about suggesting improvements rather than complaining formally.

Dimensions welcomes concerns from anyone who wishes to raise one.

8.2 Concerns will be investigated, and the person raising the concern will be told what action was taken. Please note that:

- if the same concern is raised more than once it will be treated as a complaint
- the recording of concerns is not a regulatory requirement
- that Dimensions records concerns to make sure action is being taken
- and Dimensions considers the learning this feedback provides.

Compliments

9.1 The recording of compliments is not a regulatory requirement.

9.2 Our regulators do take compliments into consideration when making judgments about our services. It is important that we are able to evidence them.

9.3 Dimensions considers the learning this feedback provides.

Relevant legislation, guidance and related policies.

Legislation

- 10.1 The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) Regulations 2015
- 10.2 The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014

- 10.3 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009
- 10.4 Data Protection Act 2018
- 10.5 General Data Protection Regulations (UK-GDPR)
- 10.6 Equality Act 2010

Guidance

- 11.1 *Guidance for providers on meeting the regulations* (Care Quality Commission, 2015)
- 11.2 *National Minimum Standards for Domiciliary Care Agencies in Wales* (The Welsh Assembly Government, 2004)
- 11.3 *The Regulatory Standards for Social Housing in England: Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard* Regulator of Social Housing
- 11.4 *My expectations for raising concerns and complaints* (Local Government Ombudsman; Healthwatch; Parliamentary Health Ombudsman, England 2014)
- 11.5 [Complaints about charities guidance \(CC47\)](#) (The Charity Commission – GOV.UK)
- 11.6 [Quality Matters](#) - Acting on compliments, feedback and complaints about adult social care – a good practice guide for adult social care practitioners
- 11.7 [NHS England – Ask Listen Do](#) - The Ask Listen Do project is aimed at supporting organisations to learn from and improve the experiences of people with a learning disability, autism or both, their families and carers when giving feedback, raising a concern or making a complaint.
- 11.8 [Reasonable adjustments for people with a learning disability](#) (GOV.UK)
- 11.9 [The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#) provides mandatory practice for landlords on fair and effective complaint handling

Group policies

- 12.1 Accessible Information Standard
- 12.2 Data handling and protection
- 12.3 Accident and incident reporting
- 12.4 Confidentiality
- 12.5 Disciplinary
- 12.6 Grievance

- 12.7 Whistleblowing (speaking up)
- 12.8 Anti-social behaviour and harassment
- 12.9 Building maintenance
- 12.10 Compensation
- 12.11 Eviction
- 12.12 Rent and charge setting
- 12.13 Tenant involvement and empowerment
- 12.14 On call
- 12.15 Safeguarding
- 12.16 Duty of candour (being open and honest)
- 12.17 Equality, diversity and inclusion
- 12.18 What Dimensions does about complaints – easy read policy
- 12.19 What Dimensions does about sharing a compliment – easy read policy
- 12.20 Concerns, complaints and compliments policy – BSL version

Related procedures, decision flowcharts, forms and so on

- 13.1 You can find the following supporting documents on the intranet:
 - Making a complaint or speaking out - easy read
 - Making a complaint or speaking out - audio version
 - Complaints and Compliments Animation (How to make a complaint)
 - What to do if you are unhappy with your home Ask Listen Do easy read
 - Looking after your information when you make a Complaint or Compliment easy read
 - Facts for Families - How to make a Complaint
 - Facts for Families – Sharing a Compliment
 - Complaints satisfaction survey

Equality statement

- 14.1 This policy promotes equality, diversity, and human rights by directing Dimensions colleagues to treat complaints and concerns from our tenants, people who live in registered care homes, the people we support and their representatives in exactly the same courteous and helpful way whatever the person's race, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.

- 14.2 Also, by analysing the diversity of complainants where we can, we will identify any pattern revealing issues of inequality and seek to address these proactively. Dimensions only collects equality and diversity information from the **Complaints satisfaction survey**. We will address any inequality we identify from this information.
- 14.3 We promote equality, diversity, and human rights by treating all people equally and fairly whatever their:
- age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- 14.4 Complaints relating to discrimination of people with protected characteristics might be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. Please see the **Equality, diversity and inclusion policy** for more details about this.
- 14.5 The equality impact analysis (EIA) is available on request by emailing the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Data protection statement

- 15.1 This policy involves handling personal data. When we carry out any procedures this policy describes, we also think about what our Data handling and protection policy says.
- 15.2 Our Data handling and protection policy is our promise to handle personal data correctly under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (UK-GDPR). It tells you how to keep that promise. It balances everyone's rights to data privacy with the work we do.
- 15.3 Information held about complaints will be held and processed by Dimensions in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK-GDPR.

Statistical reports will be produced to monitor trends, but individuals will not be identified in these reports.

- 15.4 For information on how we handle personal and sensitive data, please refer to our group privacy notices. This is available also in an easy read format. A copy can be sent, on request.

Review

- 16.1 We will review this policy three years from its original publication. But if changes in legislation, regulation or best practice mean we need to, we will review sooner.
- 16.2 If the changes are big, we will equality impact analyse (EIA) the policy again and send out to consultation in line with our Policy development and consultation policy.
- 16.3 For smaller changes, we will update this same version. We will record this in the Version control section below.

Glossary

- 17.1 Not all these words appear in this policy. But you may find other people use them when talking about complaints.

Term	Definition
Mental capacity (sometimes shortened to capacity)	This is a person's ability to make a particular decision at a particular time.
Best interests decision	This is a decision made on behalf of a person who is unable to make the decision for themselves because they lack the mental capacity to do so.
Complainant	The person who is making the complaint
Complaint investigator	A person who carries out a formal review of information.
Representative	A person chosen to speak or act for another person
Advocate	A person who speaks for another person

Term	Definition
Complaint management system (CMS)	Our online process for recording and monitoring complaints and compliments.
Complaint outcome	This is the result of the investigation. Upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.
Complaint appeal	A request for the complaint outcome to be looked at again.
Prejudice	Cause harm to
Satisfaction survey	A set of questions asking about the person's experience of something.
Ombudsman	An official appointed to investigate a person's complaint against a company or organisation.
Vexatious complaints	A complaint made without merit and with the intention of causing inconvenience, harassment, or expense to others. (It's our policy not to use this word. We will not label a complainant as vexatious.)
Whistleblow	Raising a concern that is in the public interest, usually about wrongdoing in the workplace.

People and groups involved in writing and approving this policy

Policy owner:	Rhoda Iranloye, Group Director of Regulatory Assurance
Policy author/reviewer:	Sarah McEvansoneya, Quality Officer
People and groups consulted:	Diversity Matters; National Colleague Forum Policy Subgroup; Housing Dept.

Version control

Version number	Approved date:	Communication date:	Summary of minor changes
12	18 th October 2023	18 th October 2023	Reviewed and updated to latest Group policy standards and language.

			Policy simplified in line with Group plain English guidelines. Updated flowchart. Glossary updated.
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Next review due: October 2026