



**COMPLAINTS &  
RESOLUTIONS  
POLICY**

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# 1. Policy Statement

**1.1** At Eastlight, we aim to give you consistently great customer service. However, we recognise that, from time to time, we can sometimes fail to meet your expectations, so please tell us if you're not happy with the service you receive.

**1.2** When you make a complaint, we want to make sure we listen to you, understand what has gone wrong and what is needed to put it right. This Policy sets out our approach to resolving your complaints and should be read alongside our Compensation Policy.

## **1.3 Principles**

1.3.1 We are committed to providing you with effective and efficient complaint handling, with a focus on talking to you and reaching a resolution.

1.3.2 We learn from what went wrong, so the same issues and complaints do not happen again.

1.3.3 We will be fair, reasonable and consistent in our approach to handling your complaint.

1.3.4 We will always work with you to put things right. If this is not possible, then we aim to find a solution that you find acceptable and fair.

## **1.4 Definition of a 'Complaint'**

1.4.1 We define a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of a service, actions or lack of actions by Eastlight, its staff or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual resident or groups of residents'.

1.4.2 You are not required to use the word 'complaint' for us to handle it like one. As guided by the Housing Ombudsman, we recognise the difference between a 'service request' and a 'complaint'. A 'service request' is a request where you require action to be taken to put something right.

1.4.3 We record, monitor and review service requests regularly, but they are not dealt with under this Policy. A complaint will be raised if you are dissatisfied with our response to your service request.

## **1.5 Exclusions**

1.5.1 In certain circumstances, complaints will not be dealt with under this Policy. These include:

- When legal proceedings have started, specifically where details of a claim (such as a Claim Form and Particulars of Claim) have been filed at court;
- Where insurance claims are outstanding or ongoing;
- When the issue occurred more than 12 months ago (unless there are exceptional circumstances);
- When matters have previously been considered under our Complaints & Resolutions Policy; and
- Where issues raised are considered unreasonable or vexatious (see Unreasonable Behaviour under Section 4).

1.5.2 We will provide a detailed explanation if we don't accept your complaint or decide not to escalate it. You can approach the Housing Ombudsman if you do not agree with our decision (see contact details under Section 3.4).

## 2. Scope

### 2.1 Who can make a complaint?

2.1.1 We accept complaints from any individual with an existing or previous relationship with us as a landlord, or an applicant for a property that is owned and/or managed by Eastlight.

2.1.2 We also accept complaints from representatives of any of the people above where we are satisfied that the representative has the legitimate authority to act on that person's behalf.

### 2.2 How can I make a complaint?

2.2.1 You can make a complaint by letter, telephone, email, online, via social media, or directly to our colleagues in-person. All complaints will follow the same process.

2.2.2 When you raise a complaint to Eastlight on social media, we will request your contact details via private / direct message. Any complaint details not fit for the public domain will be removed from the platform where possible. This may include names of staff, names of customers or customer address details.

2.2.3 You have the right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout the life of your complaint. Although they cannot investigate your complaint whilst it is still going through our internal procedure, they may be able to help us reach a resolution.

2.2.4 We will treat anonymous complaints seriously, and they will be fully investigated.

## 3. Complaint Stages

### 3.1 Process Overview

3.1.1 Eastlight has a two-stage complaints process.

### 3.2 Stage One

3.2.1 Complaints will be logged and acknowledged within five working days of receipt. We will make you aware of your right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service at this point, and throughout the complaint process.

3.2.2 Your complaint will be assigned to one of our Customer Experience Specialists, who will investigate it in an impartial manner, ensuring you receive the necessary support to understand and participate in the complaint procedure. Your Customer Experience Specialist will keep you updated on the progress of your complaint throughout the process.

3.2.3 If you need us to do anything differently to ensure you can participate in the complaint process (for example, receiving letters in large-print, or communication by text-relay), we will make sure these adjustments are in place, and that we adhere to them.

3.2.4 We will respond to your complaint within 10 working days of it being logged. If we need more time to respond, we will provide you with a clear written explanation; this won't be longer than a further 10 working days without good reason.

3.2.5 As soon as we have an answer to your complaint, we will send you the details of our response. Where possible, we will discuss this with you first. You will be kept informed as we take the actions needed to address the issues you raised in your complaint.

### 3.3 Stage Two

3.3.1 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, we will escalate it to Stage Two. If possible, we will try to reach a resolution without the need for escalation, and you may raise any new issues as a separate complaint.

3.3.2 Requests for escalation to Stage Two must be received within three months of the Stage One response being issued.

3.3.3 We will acknowledge, define and log your Stage Two complaint within five working days of receiving it.

- 3.3.4 An Eastlight staff member, who has not previously been involved with the complaint, will carry out an independent review. This is to ensure the individual can provide an impartial view.
- 3.3.5 We will respond to the Stage Two complaint within 20 working days of it being acknowledged. If we need more time to respond to you, we will provide a clear written explanation; this won't be longer than a further 20 working days without good reason.
- 3.3.6 There may be occasions where Eastlight will not escalate your complaint to Stage Two, for reasons such as:
- The complaint involves a claim for payments which are contrary to our Compensation Policy;
  - The previous resolution is in line with our policies and procedures;
  - You have started legal proceedings to address the issues raised; or
  - Your intended outcome is beyond Eastlight's duty or remit.
- 3.3.7 If this is the case, we will write to you with a full explanation as to why your complaint has not been escalated to Stage Two.

### **3.4 Referring a Complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service**

- 3.4.1 You can refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point during the complaints process. If your complaint remains unresolved after Stage Two, you can also contact them to request a review. Their contact details are as follows:

Housing Ombudsman Service  
PO Box 1484  
Unit D Preston  
PR2 0ET  
0300 111 3000  
[info@housing-ombudsman.org](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org)  
[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

- 3.4.2 The Housing Ombudsman will only review complaints if you are an applicant for housing or a customer, leaseholder or licensee of one of Eastlight's homes.

## 4. Unreasonable Behaviour

### 4.1 Definition of 'Unreasonable Behaviour'

4.1.1 We aim to provide a fair service, and we will work with you to provide a resolution to your complaint as quickly and effectively as possible. In some cases, the excessive frequency of contact or unreasonableness from some customers, can inhibit our ability to properly consider their issues and those relating to other customers.

4.1.2 Examples of unreasonable behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Threatening behaviour;
- Intimidation;
- Making repeated and unsubstantiated complaints; and
- Contacting any of the Eastlight team via their personal social media accounts.

### 4.2 Sanctions for Unreasonable Behaviour

4.2.1 Where we consider a customer is behaving unreasonably, action may be taken to limit the amount of contact the customer has with us. This may include the following:

- Limiting the customer to only contact Eastlight in writing;
- Limiting the customer to only contact a named team member;
- Limiting the frequency or timing of contact; and
- Responding only to new issues or complaints (all correspondence will be reviewed).

4.2.2 These sanctions will only be applied in exceptional circumstances. The customer will be advised in writing that we are considering these actions if their behaviour does not change.

4.2.3 The customer will be advised in writing that the sanction has been applied and the reasons why explained. The customer can request an appeal of the sanction within 10 working days of receiving this letter. Appeals do not have to be submitted in writing.

4.2.4 Appeals against sanctions will be reviewed by a Director or an Executive Director.

4.2.5 All sanctions will be reviewed by Eastlight after six months, and the customer will be notified in writing regarding the outcome of the review.

## 5. Fairness in Complaint Handling

### 5.1 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 5.1.1 We make a commitment to enable you to raise any concerns and make a complaint, by making reasonable adjustments and providing whatever support is necessary for you to do so. When recording a complaint, our process includes asking you if you require any adjustments, documenting these as part of the complaint handling process and ensuring they are always adhered to.
- 5.1.2 Any individual or group about whom a complaint is made will never investigate the complaint. The investigation will be carried out by a team member not involved in the original issue.
- 5.1.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for this Policy was conducted, and no impacts have been identified.

### 5.2 Confidentiality

- 5.2.1 All complaints will be considered confidential between you, Eastlight team members and all partner organisations.
- 5.2.2 We acknowledge that you may wish to raise concerns in confidence or may wish to have your name and address details withheld on occasions. We will respect your confidentiality wherever possible, and we will advise you in cases where this would not be possible.
- 5.2.3 When a confidential complaint relates to an Eastlight team member, they will be notified that a complaint has been made against them, but they will not be given your details.

### 5.3 Statutory & Regulatory Requirements

- 5.3.1 The Housing Ombudsman expects Eastlight to act within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and carry out a regular self-assessment against this Code.
- 5.3.2 In line with the Housing Ombudsman Code, we will publish a self-assessment on our website and will review the assessment as appropriate.

### 5.4 Use of Discretion

- 5.4.1 Eastlight reserves the right to exercise discretion and deal with complaints outside of this Policy, where individual circumstances merit it. In these circumstances, we will ensure that the discretion is applied fairly and appropriately.



## 6. Monitoring

### 6.1 Continuous Learning

- 6.1.1 All timescales within this Policy will be monitored by our Customer Experience Team.
- 6.1.2 Key performance indicators, including the number of complaints received and the outcomes reached, will be reported to our Customer Influence Committee quarterly.
- 6.1.3 Eastlight’s senior management will regularly review complaints performance to identify any systemic issues, serious risks or areas for improvement to our services and internal processes.
- 6.1.4 All complaints will be logged and stored on our Feedback Manager IT system.

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