

**Countrywide Corporate Property Services**

**Complaints Policy**

Ownership:	Technical Director
Name of Primary Contact:	Grahame Pritchard
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## Complaints Policy

### 1. Our Policy

We aim to do everything we can to make sure our customers are satisfied with how we deal with complaints.

### 2. Our Approach

We want to be reasonable in all matters and treat parties as we would like to be treated. Our customers expect a good service from us and they expect that we will put things right, if it is our fault, when they go wrong. If things do go wrong we need to be able to put them back into the position had the error or mistake not happened.

We also need to ensure we are Treating Customers Fairly:

#### **This means:**

- Having a consistent, documented approach to handling complaints
- Answering complaints in a fair and timely manner
- Being honest and clear with our customers
- Making it straightforward for customers to complain or submit feedback to us
- Putting things right for the customer
- Learning from what our customers tell us

The expectation of our customers is that we act reasonably and fairly in all that we do.

#### **What is a complaint?**

**Complaint** - any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, from, or on behalf of, a person about the provision of, or failure to provide, a part or all of our service.

**Customer** - an existing or potential client or any source expressing dissatisfaction with Countrywide.

Complaint handling is an important way of ensuring that customers receive the service they expect from us and we need to be able to deliver on our promises and use our values to resolve complaints when we do not get things right.

Complaints can be received either in writing, email or by phone. It is important to remember that a complainant (the person making the complaint) may not just be from a client or their borrower. Complaints can be received from a number of sources, for example potential buyers or neighbours of the property, and it is important we deal with all of them.

### **3. The Scope**

This policy applies to all employees of Countrywide Corporate Property Services Ltd.

### **4. Our Standards**

There are specific rules covering how we must handle complaints.

#### **We aim to resolve a complaint at the first point of contact**

If we are unable to resolve the complaint at first point of contact, the following timetable must be adhered to:

#### **Within 2 business days – Acknowledgement (client and complainant)**

If we are unable to resolve a complaint by the end of the following business day after we have received it, we must write to the complainant with an acknowledgement letter confirming receipt of the complaint and providing the complainant with the name and contact details of the person within CWPCS who is dealing with their complaint. The acknowledgement also advises that we will aim to investigate the complaint and provide a full response within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint.

We must also ensure we make our clients aware of any complaints received by CWPCS relating to the clients' properties. This should be done according to the terms of their SLA with us, which would usually require notification to them within 1-2 business days following receipt of the complaint.

#### **Within 15 business days – Full response or Holding letter**

In the majority of cases, we will be able to resolve the complaint within 15 business days of receiving it and we should always work to respond as quickly as possible. As soon as we have concluded our investigation we will provide a full response to the complainant in writing and update our client if required under their SLA.

If we have not completed our investigation within 15 working days and are unable to provide a full response within this period, we will send a holding letter to the complainant. This letter advises that we are continuing with our investigation and that we will aim to provide a full response within the next 15 working days. We should also update our client if required under our SLA with them.

#### **Within 30 business days – Full response**

As soon as we have concluded our investigation we will provide a full response to the complainant in writing and update our client if required under their SLA.

#### **Further pursuit of the complaint – review and response within 15 business days**

In our initial response letters to complainants, we include information on how they can further pursue their complaint with us if they remain dissatisfied.

If the complainant does inform us that they remain dissatisfied following their receipt of our initial response letter, we will acknowledge in writing their wish to pursue the complaint and confirm that a detached review of the complaint will be

completed by a Director of Countrywide Corporate Services Ltd which will constitute a final response to the complaint. The final response will include details of any offer made and will also inform the complainant how the matter can be referred to the Property Ombudsman Service within 6 months from the date of the final response.

This final response will be sent to the complainant in writing within 15 working days of the receipt of their intention to pursue the complaint.

## **What we need to do when dealing with a complaint**

### **A. Record the life of every complaint**

We must record all complaints at the earliest opportunity to fully and accurately capture:

- When it was received and receipted
- The complaint categorisation
- Who is currently dealing with the complaint
- An update on current position
- Resolution and follow up action
- Any compensation or reimbursement payment made
- Customer feedback and lessons learnt

### **B. Resolve all complaints first time, every time**

- We aim to resolve complaints to our customers complete satisfaction
- Showing a positive attitude to complaint resolution
- Agreeing and meeting realistic timescales for updates and resolution
- Providing regular updates on progress
- The person investigating or managing the complaint has sufficient competence and independence to make a fair and unbiased assessment

## **5. Our Procedures**

The business sets out to handle complaints in a fair and timely way. This includes:

- a) Identifying systemic and emerging issues
- b) Identifying root causes
- c) Prioritising issues
- d) Making changes in service design or processing
- e) Informing clients, customers and staff of improvements

## **Rescue Customer Loyalty**

- We reimburse customers who have suffered a financial loss as a result of our error, fairly and quickly
- We compensate customers who have suffered distress or inconvenience, fairly and quickly.
- We identify any systemic issues involving our systems, processes and policies and implement improvement plans to resolve them.
- We advise clients of improvements made as a result of their complaint

## **6. Making the Policy Work**

### **Business areas have responsibility for ensuring:**

- Documented complaints handling procedures are accessible to staff covering:-
  - Receiving complaints
  - Responding to complaints
- Their business areas have responsibility for carrying out regular audits, supervision and reviews to ensure:
  - The system is being implemented effectively
  - Staff competency is attained and maintained
- Their business area carry out senior management reviews to consider audit outcomes, changes in processes and policies and implement changes as appropriate
- Their business areas liaise with other business areas and third parties to resolve process issues impacting on achieving the requirements of the Countrywide Complaints Policy

### **Executive Complaints Team have responsibility for:**

- The control and ongoing review of this Complaints Policy, and overseeing its implementation across all areas of our business.
- Implementing the Complaints Policy in their dealings with all complaints.
- Arbitrating between other parts of our business and Countrywide Group where necessary.

Process	R (Responsible)	A (Accountable)	C (Consulted)	I (Informed)
Develop Complaints Policy	Senior Management Team	Technical Director	Managing Director	CWCPS Board
Implementing Policy	Senior Management Team	Technical Director	Managing Director	CWCPS Board All Staff
Following the Policy	All Staff	Technical Director	Managing Director	CWCPS Board All staff
Monitoring of Compliance	Senior Management Team	Technical Director	Managing Director	CWCPS Board
Auditing of policy	Senior Management Team	Technical Director	Managing Director	CWCPS Board

## Reimbursement, Refund and Ex-Gratia Payments

Payment Types	Definitions
Reimbursement	Reimbursement of costs incurred by the customer as a result of our error.
Refunds*	Refund of an amount incorrectly invoiced to the customer to return the customer to the position they would have been in had the error not occurred.
Ex-Gratia	A payment to acknowledge the distress, inconvenience or embarrassment suffered by the customer.

\*Refunds can be made by a member of staff within their mandate to fix an error however any reimbursement or ex-gratia payment is subject to a sign off process.

## Complaint Handling Procedure

This procedure applies to all staff and sets out the actions required to investigate and respond to all complaints and identifies those responsible for managing the complaint. All written complaints must immediately be referred to a Line Manager or escalated to a Client Service Manager or Director in their absence.

Action	By Who	Target Timeline
Notify your Line Manager of the complaint and make a file note of any verbal complaint where resolution cannot be made by telephone	All	Day of receipt
Log details of the complaint on the online complaints system, AgencyPro, and obtain the unique complaint reference number to include in all correspondence with the complainant.	Line Manager	Day of receipt
Undertake a review of the complaint with the Line Manager or CSM if line manager not available	All	Within 1 business day of receipt
Advise client of complaint where escalation is required	Line Manager	Within 1 business day of receipt
Issue acknowledgement to complainant, including our reference number and name and contact details of the individual handling the complaint	Line Manager	Within 2 business days of receipt
Investigate complaint	Line Manager	Endeavour within 14 business days of receipt
<b>IF INVESTIGATION COMPLETE WITHIN 14 BUSINESS DAYS:</b> Draft the written response and review with Client Service Manager or a Director and obtain authorisation to issue	Line Manager/ CSM	Within 14 business days of receipt
Issue response with copy to a Director and fully update the online complaints system	Line Manager/ CSM	Within 15 business days of receipt
<b>IF INVESTIGATION NOT COMPLETE WITHIN 14 BUSINESS DAYS:</b> Where further investigation is required issue a holding letter confirming a formal response will be made once the complaint has been fully investigated and in any event within a further 15 business days	Line Manager	On 15 <sup>th</sup> business day after receipt
Draft the written response and review with Client Service Manager or a Director and obtain authorisation to issue	Line Manager/ CSM	Within 29 business days from receipt
Issue response with copy to a Director and fully update the online complaints system	Line Manager/ CSM	Within 30 business days from receipt
<b>IF COMPLAINANT WISHES TO PURSUE THE COMPLAINT FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF OUR RESPONSE:</b> Complaint file is reviewed by a CWCPD Director and final response issued to the complainant providing details of the	Directors	Within 15 working days from receipt of the complainant wishing to pursue the

Property Ombudsman Scheme		complaint
Line Manager reviews unresolved complaints, reviews processes and agrees improvements with Department Head and / or Director. If a complaint is unresolved but there has no communication for 3 months the complaint should be closed down.	Line Manager/ CSM	Monthly
Review trends and notify Technical Director	Department Head	Quarterly
Summary report for Board review	Technical Director	Annual

ALL STAFF TO PLEASE ENSURE A COPY OF THIS IS FILED IN YOUR WORK PROCEDURE FILE