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| <b>TITLE</b> | <b>THE ABBEYFIELD PIRBRIGHT AND DISTRICT SOCIETY LIMITED<br/>Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Policy</b> |                      |            |
| Owner:       | Executive Committee  | Approval Date:       | April 2026 |
| Approved by: | Ann Bourne, Chair  | Planned Review Date: | April 2027 |

| Version | Purpose/Change     | Author       | Date       |
|---------|--------------------|--------------|------------|
| 1.0     | Creation of Policy | Carol Clarke | March 2025 |
| 2.0     | Update to Policy   | Carol Clarke | April 2026 |

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Abbeyfield Pirbright and District Society Limited (known as Cunningham House) is committed to providing the highest possible quality of service to residents and others who access our services.
- 1.2 We actively encourage complaints and compliments. Feedback – whether positive, negative or neutral – from residents, their friends and family members, and other stakeholders is an opportunity to learn about our strengths and to understand our weaknesses, and is key to ensuring that Cunningham House is consistently meeting the needs of those using our services.
- 1.3 Where an individual is dissatisfied with the level or type of service that they have received from Cunningham House, it is important that they let us know. Cunningham House aims to use any complaints received as an opportunity to learn and improve our services.
- 1.4 Cunningham House complies with the Complaint Handling Code (the Code) issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service. All complaints dealt with under this policy will be dealt with in a manner consistent with the Code and the House will maintain all records as required by the Code.

## 2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of this policy are to:
  - Ensure that all complaints are handled promptly, fairly, consistently and confidentially (in line with data protection regulations)
  - Be clear about who is responsible for complaints at each stage, ensuring that designated individuals are not the subject of the complaint and that, as the complaint is escalated, it is dealt with by a more senior member of Cunningham House. In particular, the Chair will not usually be involved at Stage 1
  - Ensure records are kept of all complaints and prompt review of their handling in order to drive improvement
  - Ensure details of complaints are included in our annual report
  - ‘Put things right’ where a complaint identifies that we have failed to deliver a service to the expected standard

### **3 Scope**

- 3.1 This policy is intended to cover current and prospective residents and their representatives but, with the exclusions below\* also applies to any stakeholder who wishes to make a complaint about Cunningham House. Complaints should be made as soon after the event as possible (or came to the attention of the complainant), and ideally within 12 months.
- 3.2 If the complainant expresses a desired outcome that we believe to be unreasonable, we will explain our position at the outset, while continuing to investigate.
- 3.3 If a complaint is accompanied by inappropriate behaviour, we will seek to manage this behaviour separately in line with the Equality Act 2010.

### **4 Exclusions**

- 4.1 Cunningham House will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do and we will ensure we consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.
- 4.2 The following matters will not be considered as complaints:
  - The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.
  - Matters that have previously been considered under the Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Policy.
  - Resident complaints about another resident, for example of bullying or harassment, or complaints about a resident from someone outside Cunningham House. These are dealt with in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
  - Staff complaints, which are dealt with in line with our Staff Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.
  - Complaints about something for which Cunningham House is not responsible (for example, care a resident receives from an external agency). With permission, we will share such concerns with the relevant organisation, or signpost the complainant to the organisation's complaints procedure.
  - Complaints already subject to legal proceedings, or relating to an issues likely to be dealt with by our insurers.
- 4.3 Where there is doubt about which policy is applicable, the Chair of the Executive Committee will make a decision.
- 4.4 Unless excluded on other grounds, we will accept complaints referred to us within 12 months of issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue. Where there are good reasons to do so, we will also consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside the time limit.

### **5 Unreasonable behaviour**

- 5.1 We understand that residents can get upset and frustrated when things have gone wrong. If Cunningham House feels a complaint is pursued unreasonably, including any actions or behaviours of the resident/representative, these complaints will be reviewed in line with our Residents Code of Conduct.
- 5.2 All complaints will be reviewed on an individual basis.
- 5.3 If any restrictions are put in place, these will proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

- 5.4 We will ensure any restrictions will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly and the complainant updated following the review.
- 5.5 Any restrictions in place will not prevent us from ensuring the complaint can be taken be through the full complaints process.

## **6 Defining a Complaint**

- 6.1 The term complaint is defined here as:
- ‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents’.
  - We recognise that the word complaint does not have to be used in order for it to be treated as such. This policy is intended for residents but also covers an expression of dissatisfaction by any stakeholder affected by the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Cunningham House.
  - Conversely, a request for a service is not in itself a complaint – it is only where the request for service is not dealt with adequately or within a reasonable timescale that it would be become a complaint. In addition an expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a resident’s survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to.
- 6.2 A service request is a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not a complaint. Service requests should be dealt with in accordance with the Residents’ Handbook. Failure to deal appropriately with a service request may lead to the matter being dealt with as a complaint. Service requests will be recorded, tracked and monitored to completion.
- 6.3 A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Cunningham House will not stop our efforts to address the service request if the resident raises a complaint.
- 6.4 Complaints can be made to any member of staff at Cunningham House. This can be done in a number of ways which include:
- In person or via a representative
  - By email [cunninghamhousepirbright@gmail.com](mailto:cunninghamhousepirbright@gmail.com)
  - By telephone at 01483 488751
  - By post, addressed to Cunningham House, School Lane Pirbright, Surrey GU24 0JN
- 6.5 If the complaint relates to the House Manager, complainants may contact The Chair of the House Committee.
- 6.6 A form is included with this policy for complaints to use to record their complaint, if desired.

## **7 Accessibility and awareness**

- 7.1 Complaints will be dealt with in a manner that is consistent with Cunningham House’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and our duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- 7.2 Complaints made by residents may be made by the resident’s carer, family members or a representative of a resident and these will be handled in line with our Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Policy.

- 7.3 If any individual making a complaint wishes us to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate an individual's particular needs, they, or their representative, can contact us by phone, email or in person to discuss what adjustments may be possible.
- 7.4 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, we will make reasonable adjustments for residents where this is deemed appropriate. All reasonable adjustments agreed with residents will be documented, alongside records of any disabilities disclosed by residents. These adjustments are to be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain suitable and effective for the resident's ongoing needs.
- 7.5 The Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Policy will be listed in the Residents Handbook and published on our website. We will consider all requests to provide the Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Policy in other accessible formats.
- 7.6 Residents will have the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting. We will always follow data protection measures when disclosing any information to a third party.
- 7.7 Cunningham House acknowledges that a high volume of complaints must not be seen as negative, as this can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints procedure. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.

## **8 Complaint handling staff**

- 8.1 Cunningham House will prioritise complaint handling and foster a culture of learning from complaints.
- 8.2 Complaints will be investigated by the Complaints Officer at Stage One. The current contact details of the Cunningham House Complaints Officer can be found on our website, on the house noticeboard or by asking in the office.
- 8.3 Complaints will be investigated by the Appeals Officer at Stage Two.
- 8.4 If the Complaints Officer and/or the Appeals Officer are conflicted, or the complaint relates to the Complaints Officer and/or the Appeals Officer, the complaint should be directed to the Chair of the Executive Committee.
- 8.5 All staff will be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling.

## **9 Our complaints process**

- 9.1 Cunningham House aims to make it easy for residents and stakeholders to make a complaint by offering a choice of channels that can be used and ensuring that the Cunningham House policy is publicised by:
  - Providing information on the complaints process in the residents handbook
  - Putting information on the complaints process on the Cunningham House website
- 9.2 At each stage of the Complaints Process we will deal with complaints:
  - On their merits
  - Act independently and have an open mind but may consider reports of previous complaints that relate to the same issue being complained about
  - Give residents the chance to present their case
  - Address conflicts of interest
  - Carefully consider the evidence
  - Keep the details of the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only being disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter

- 9.3 In dealing with complaints we will ensure that:
- Individuals who raise a complaint are listened to and treated with courtesy and empathy
  - Residents will never be disadvantaged as a result of raising a complaint
  - Complaints will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly, and openly
- 9.4 We will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so and will ensure we consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.
- 9.5 If a complaint is not accepted a detailed explanation will be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and their right to take that decision to the Ombudsman (see details below). The Ombudsman may direct the Cunningham House to take on the complaint.
- 9.6 Where a resident or their representative is dissatisfied with any aspect of the service provided by Cunningham House, the first course of action should be to raise the problem directly with the relevant manager or individual concerned. We will try to resolve the issue informally on the day it is raised, and, in most cases, will be able to do so quickly and satisfactorily.
- 9.7 Cunningham House will establish and maintain clear procedures to ensure that complaints can be addressed and resolved at any point within the complaints process. We are committed to providing appropriate remedies, where necessary, at any stage of the process, without the need for escalation, thereby ensuring prompt and effective resolution for residents.
- 9.8 Where an individual is having difficulty in making a complaint, we will make all reasonable adjustments to assist the complainant in registering the complaint. A representative can attend any meeting on a residents behalf.
- 9.9 Where any part of a complaint response is managed by a third party (such as a contractor, managing agent, or independent adjudicator), it will be treated as an integral part of our formal two-stage complaints process. The involvement of a third party will not create a separate or additional complaints process for the resident. All responses, regardless of who prepares them, will be coordinated and issued through our complaints team to ensure consistency, accountability, and compliance with the Code.
- 9.10 At all stages residents should provide contact details, details of the complaint and any suggestions they may have for resolving the complaint. Anonymous complaints will be investigated under the same procedure, however, it is better where contact details are provided so that we can inform the complainant of the outcome of our investigation.
- 9.11 Complaints received via social media will receive a generic response and be passed to The Chair of the House Committee to be addressed through the standard procedure. Where the complaint is made publicly on social media, confidentiality cannot be protected.

## **10 Stage 1 of the complaints process**

- 10.1 We will make a record of the complaint which will include:
- The original complaint and the date it was received
  - All correspondence with the resident
  - All correspondence with other parties
  - Any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys

- 10.2 We will acknowledge the complaint in writing to the complainant within 5 working days of receipt. The acknowledgement will:
- Summarise our understanding of the complaint (The complaint definition);
  - Make clear which aspects of the complaint Cunningham Houe is, and is not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear;
  - Summarise our understanding of what the Complainant is seeking as an outcome;
  - Raise any questions that require clarification from the Complainant; and
  - Set out the next course of action and anticipated timescale.
- 10.3 An investigation will be carried out and a full written response, including any actions planned, will be provided within 10 working days, which may be extended by a further 10 working days, where necessary, subject to agreement with the complainant. If any further extensions are required, we will agree with resident regular intervals to update them on the progress of the complaint. Such explanation will also include the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman. A response will be provided as soon as the answer is know. The complainant will be asked if their complaint is resolved and if they are happy with the way in which it has been dealt.
- 10.4 We will investigate the complaint in an impartial manner permitting all relevant parties to provide information. The resident and any third parties involved in the complaint should be given the opportunity to set out their position before any final decision is made. We may delegate the management and investigation of the complaint to another individual.
- 10.5 If the staff member dealing with the complaint is conflicted, or the complaint relates to that staff member, the complaint should be directed to the house manager whose details are in the Residents' Handbook.
- 10.6 If the complaint involves questions relating to Cunningham House or the resident's legal obligations, we will set out clearly our understanding of the respective legal obligations and may seek legal advice before doing so.
- 10.7 If new issues are raised by the resident during the Stage 1 process, these will be dealt with as part of the process if they are relevant. However, if the issues relate to a different issue and/or are raised after the response has already been issued, the issues will be dealt with as a separate complaint.
- 10.8 A complaint response will be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.
- 10.9 In responding to the complaint, we will confirm in writing:
- The complaint stage;
  - The complaint definition;
  - The decision on the complaint;
  - The reasons for any decisions made;
  - The details of any remedy offered to put things right;
  - Details of any outstanding actions; and
  - Details of how to escalate the matter to Stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the result.

## **11 Stage 2 of the complaints process**

- 11.1 If the resident is not satisfied with the response at Stage 1, they can escalate their complaint to Stage 2. This can be done in writing by email, via telephone call or in person. The person dealing with the complaint at stage 2 will not be the same person that responded at stage 1.
- 11.2 The resident does not need to provide reasons for requesting the complaint to be escalated.
- 11.3 We will make a record of the complaint escalation which will include:
- The date it was received
  - All correspondence with the resident
  - All correspondence with other parties
- 11.4 Upon receipt of the escalation request we will acknowledge the complaint at Stage 2 within 5 working days of receipt and will:
- Summarise our understanding of the complaint (the complaint definition);
  - Summarise our understanding of what the resident is seeking as an outcome;
  - Raise any questions that require clarification from the resident; but acknowledge that reasons do not need to be given for the complaint to be escalated to stage 2;
  - Set out the next course of action and anticipated timescale.
- 11.5 We will provide a full written response within 20 working days from the request to escalate. Where this is not possible, an explanation will be given and an agreement reached to extend the response period by no more than a further 10 working days. If any further extensions are required, we will agree with resident regular intervals to update them on the progress of the complaint. Such explanation will also include the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.
- 11.6 A complaint response will be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. This will be the final response. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.
- 11.7 In responding to the stage 2 complaint, we will confirm in writing:
- The complaint stage;
  - The complaint definition;
  - The decision on the complaint;
  - The reasons for any decisions made;
  - The details of any remedy offered to put things right;
  - Details of any outstanding actions; and
  - Details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman will be provided if the resident is not satisfied with the response.
- 11.8 The complainant and all staff involved in the complaint will be informed that the response following Stage 2 concludes Cunningham House's internal complaints procedure.

## **12 After conclusion of our complaints process**

- 12.1 Cunningham House is registered with the Ombudsman Service – Housing. The complainant can be referred to:
- The Housing Ombudsman Service PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET
  - Telephone 0300 1113000
  - Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

- 12.2 A complainant is required to wait eight weeks following conclusion of Cunningham House's complaints process before taking the complaint to the Ombudsman directly. They may choose to refer the complaint to a 'Designated Person' (such as their MP or local councillor) during this time to help them resolve the complaint or refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman on their behalf.
- 12.3 Cunningham House will co-operate with the Ombudsman during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting final decision, which will be binding.

### **13 Putting things right**

- 13.1 Where we have failed to deliver a service to the expected standard we will seek to resolve the complaint and to 'put things right'. This may include:
- Apologising;
  - Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
  - Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
  - Taking action if there has been delay;
  - Reconsidering or changing a decision;
  - Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
  - Providing a financial remedy;
  - Changing policies, procedures, or practices.
- 13.2 Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.
- 13.3 The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate.
- 13.4 Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.
- 13.5 We will take account of the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.

### **14 Reporting on Complaints**

- 14.1 The Executive Committee will have access to full records of any complaints received at Cunningham House. A self-assessment to review the volume, outcomes, complainant satisfaction and compliance with timeframes will be undertaken on an annual basis.
- 14.2 Legislation requires that details of the number, content and results of complaints received are to be shared with residents and published in the Annual Report.

### **15 Scrutiny and oversight**

- 15.1 Cunningham House has a senior lead person who is accountable for our complaint handling. This person will assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.
- 15.2 The Chair of the House Committee has lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is known as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

## **16 Annual Review**

- 16.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 16.2 Cunningham House will carry out an annual self-assessment in accordance with the Code.
- 16.3 The Executive Committee will consider any findings or recommendations of the annual self-assessment and the annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

## **17 Housing Ombudsman Service**

17.1 The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

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| Telephone: | 0300 111 3000  |
| Email:     | <a href="mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk">info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk</a> |
| Website:   | <a href="http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk">www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk</a>   |
| Address    | Housing Ombudsman Service<br>PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET               |

## **18 Linked Policies**

18.1 The following policies are referred to in this document:

- Staff Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Residents Code of Conduct
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Compensation and Remedies Policy

| <b>THE ABBEYFIELD PIRBRIGHT AND DISTRICT SOCIETY LIMITED</b>   |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Complaints Form</b>   |              |
| Please fill in this form and send it to the House Manager  |              |
| <b>Name</b>  |              |
| <b>Address for reply</b>   |              |
| <b>Phone number</b>  |              |
| <b>Address of your home</b> (if different from above)  |              |
| In the space below, please tell us about the service or event you are commenting on or complaining about, when the incident happened, who was involved and so on. Please provide as much information as possible to help us consider all of the facts and respond quickly. |              |
|  |              |
| <b>Signed:</b>   | <b>Date:</b> |

If you would like us to send a copy of this form to someone else who may be able to help sort out your complaint, please provide their contact details.