

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Introduction

This Complaints and Appeals Procedure is designed to ensure that The Bond Board has a fair, transparent and effective way of resolving complaints received from all Bond Board stakeholders including, service users, landlords, job applicants and any other Bond Board stakeholders, such as other organisations. For employee/volunteer complaints, please refer to the Grievance Procedure.

Complaints may include (but are not limited to) issues arising from:

- Eligibility for Bond Board services
- Withdrawing Bond Board services to service users and other stakeholders
- Refusing Bond Guarantee Payments
- Not shortlisting or offering employment to a job applicant during the recruitment process
- Treating a stakeholder without dignity and respect or in a way which discriminates, abuses or harasses them.
- Failing to adhere to Bond Board policies and procedures

This procedure will enable any Bond Board stakeholder to express dissatisfaction or highlight failings of the organisation. This will enable The Bond Board to address the complaint and to improve the service as appropriate.

This procedure is designed to be user friendly. Recording of complaints is essential to ensure that good suggestions and important issues do not get lost. This procedure will enable The Bond Board to monitor its work and take any remedial action that may be required.

Throughout this procedure complainants will be treated with respect and dignity in accordance with The Bond Board's Equal Opportunities Policy, Diversity Policy and Dignity at Work Policy. Where the complaint refers to an issue covered by a Bond Board Policy or Procedure (for example the Bond Claims Procedure or Recruitment Policy), the complaint will be investigated with reference to the relevant policy or procedure in place. Where a complaint refers to an issue covered by law, for example, the Equality Act 2010 or the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, the relevant law will be considered and applied.

The Procedure

Any Bond Board stakeholder can make a complaint about The Bond Board either in person, by telephone, by letter, via our website under the 'Contact Us' section ('Feedback Form'), or by filling in a feedback form. Feedback forms are available on request from The Bond Board. The complainant will be encouraged to put their complaint in writing where possible. Complainants needing support putting their complaints into writing should be referred to the Citizens Advice Bureau or any other appropriate service for support.

At each stage, individuals dealing with the complaint will record details of conversations and meetings and will keep copies of correspondence.

Where a Stakeholder provides feedback to the Bond Board which they have not specified as a 'complaint', but which suggests the service fell short of its standards, the Chief Officer (or Chair of Trustees where the feedback is about the Chief Officer) can decide to treat the feedback as a formal complaint and will contact the Stakeholder within 14 working days, as per the procedure below.

Stage one-complaint:

The complaint will initially be looked at by a member of staff. If the complaint is about them or another member of staff, then the complaint will be referred to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or to a nominated trustee from our Board of Trustees (if the complaint is about the Chief Officer).

All complaints will be acknowledged as having been received within fourteen working days. This will be in writing from the person investigating the complaint. A copy of this procedure will be enclosed.

The nominated person will investigate the complaint. This may involve interviewing the complainant and/or any member of staff concerned. The Senior Manager will investigate the complaint if the complaint is specifically about a member of staff, or the nominated Trustee from our Board of Trustees will investigate if it is about the Chief Officer.

A written response will be sent. The response will indicate whether the complaint was upheld and what, if any, remedial action The Bond Board will take as a result. The letter will also outline a means of requesting further consideration of the member of staff, Senior Manager or the Trustee's decision (see below).

Stage two-reconsideration:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint they can ask for it to be considered again. The complainant needs to inform the initial person who

investigated the complaint of their wish to have the complaint reconsidered in writing, by telephone or in person. The complainant should specify the reasons they are dissatisfied with the first stage investigation and/or response. Requests for further consideration of the initial decision should be made within 14 working days of the date of the decision letter.

The initial person who investigated the complaint will refer all stage two complaints to the Chief Officer or a nominated trustee from our Board of Trustees, if the complaint is about the Chief Officer. If a nominated trustee was involved in the original decision, the matter will be dealt with by a different member of the Board of Trustees.

The person dealing with the appeal will acknowledge receipt of the request for reconsideration within fourteen working days. This person will investigate the complaint. This will involve reviewing the relevant paperwork to date and may involve interviewing the complainant or any members of staff concerned.

A written response will be sent. The response will indicate whether the complaint has been upheld and what, if any, remedial action The Bond Board will take as a result. The response will also outline a means of appealing against the decision (see below).

Stage three-appeal:

A final appeal to a Trustee from The Board of Trustees is available if requested within 14 working days of the date of the stage two decision letter. If a Trustee was involved in the earlier stages of the complaint, then the Chair or Vice-Chair of The Board of Trustees will handle the stage three appeal. The complainant needs to inform the Chief Officer or the Trustee who investigated their stage two reconsideration, of their wish to appeal the decision, in writing, by telephone or in person. The complainant should specify the reasons they are dissatisfied with the second stage investigation and/or response. Any such request will be acknowledged within fourteen working days. If the Chair or Vice Chair or any members of the Board of Trustees have been previously involved in the complaint, they will not be involved at this stage.

A Trustee or Chair or Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees will investigate the appeal. This will involve reviewing the relevant paperwork to date and may involve interviewing the complainant or any member of staff concerned.

The final appeal will take place provided the request for appeal was made within 14 working days of the date of the stage two decision letter.

The complainant will be notified of the decision of the Trustee or Chair or Vice Chair Board of Trustees in writing. This decision is final and not open to further internal processes.

Recording and Monitoring Complaints

At all stages of the Complaints Procedure the person or people dealing with the complaint will keep written records. This will include written notes of conversations, minutes of meetings and copies of all relevant correspondence. The complainant will be encouraged to submit their complaint in writing where possible.

All complaint records will be held centrally, except complaints concerning service users, which will be recorded on the Lamplight case management system. The Board of Trustees will be advised annually of all complaints made and of their outcomes.

All complaints will be dealt with in line with the Confidentiality Policy.

PRS Redress Scheme

The Property Redress Scheme (PRS) gives customers (consumers) peace of mind that a complaint can be resolved by an independent third party who have experience in dealing with consumer complaints.

A 'consumer' is a person who uses the services provided by the property agent or property professional. (Letting agent consumers will be both landlords and tenants. Property management agent consumers will generally be the freeholder, head leaseholder or residents' management company).

The member will first be given an opportunity to resolve the complaint directly. If unresolved, the PRS will then offer a negotiated resolution service. And, if needed, will make a formal decision on the complaint.

When making a decision the PRS will consider any terms of business agreed by both parties, all relevant laws and, where appropriate, any code of practice the member has agreed to. The person making the complaint must show that a formal written complaint was sent to the member within 12 months of the incident relating to the complaint occurring. And also that the person making the complaint allowed the member a minimum of 8 weeks to investigate the complaint and respond.

Once the member has provided a final response, which person making the complaint remains unsatisfied with or no response was provided, a complaint can be raised with the PRS within 12 months of the dated the formal letter of complaint was sent to the member. This process is clearly set out in their 'How to make a complaint' guide: <https://www.theprs.co.uk/>