



COMPLAINTS PANEL - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

These Terms of Reference (TOR) set out the role, rights and responsibilities of the Torus Complaints Panel. The Complaints Panel was established to provide a specialist focus on complaints across the landlord tenant services Torus provide to ensure sector leading service is delivered to customers.

Complaints provide Torus with feedback about services that are provided and listening to customer feedback and taking appropriate action will help Torus to continuously improve. Complaints are an important measure of the organisations performance.

The purpose of the Complaints Panel is to drive change across Torus and raise standards for tenants. The Panel will achieve this by undertaking quality checks on all aspects of complaint handling and performance, analysing and understanding themes for complaints and spotlighting areas for further investigation. The Panel will ensure learning from complaints drives improvements for all tenants.

All information provided to the Complaints Panel in an anonymised format. The role of the Panel will not be to deal with individual complaints.

Role of the Panel

The role of the Panel will be:

- To ensure that Torus is following best practice as set out within the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, including their dispute resolution principles and there is a positive complaint handling culture developing through continuous listening, learning and improvement.
- To meet the requirements of the Housing Regulator's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standards that states that Landlords should:

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“have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly”.

- To have an overview of Torus quarterly performance and challenge emerging themes and performance trends in complaint performance and tenant satisfaction with complaint handling and outcome
- To report quarterly to the Landlord Operations Committee (LOC) the following:
 - Their view that the mechanisms are in place to identify and deal with the root cause of complaints and escalate any gaps / weaknesses
 - To review and provide feedback on a random sample of anonymised customer complaint journeys
 - To review learning from complaints and any Ombudsman determinations to review evidence that the learning has been put into practice, embedded within the organisation that demonstrate positive outcomes for tenants
- To oversee the implementation of agreed improvements via an action plan that the Panel monitor and sign off
- To co-create the Annual Ombudsman Complaint Handling self-assessment with Tenant Voice colleagues
- To keep up to date with wider sector trends and ensure learning from the Housing Ombudsman Annual Complaints review and their determinations publicised on their website
- To consider complaint processes against complaint handling procedures and make any recommendations for improvement
- Identifying areas for Tenant Inspectors and Mystery Shoppers (TIMS) when required
- Influencing future Scrutiny Panel reviews for a particular service area (when required)
- Reporting any findings back that are relevant to other groups of Panels eg Repairs & maintenance Panel, Green Initiatives Forum etc
- To provide a lived experience viewpoint on decision making when required
- Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion considerations are paramount when taking into account all aspects of complaint resolution
- Contribute to the Tenant Annual report and the Complaints Policy review every two years

Membership

The Complaints Panel will comprise of a maximum of 6 tenants selected and recruited based on their skills. The Chair will be a Torus tenant representative if possible and if this is not possible, a Torus Tenant Voice team member. The Chair will receive additional appropriate training supported by the Tenant Voice Team and will be responsible for agreeing the meeting agendas, identifying any training needs and proposing discussion items.

The profile of the Panel should, where possible, reflect the tenant base of Torus and represent the 3 heartlands.

Membership will be for 3 years but can be extended. Where a member leaves the Panel before the end of the term, a recruitment process will be undertaken. All terms are subject to an annual review.

Membership of the Complaints Panel is only open to those who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Current tenants of Torus; or
- Current customers of Torus, ie, are currently in receipt of, and pay for, regular or periodic ongoing services from Torus, eg, leaseholder, or share owners

Exclusions apply to the following groups: whom may not be eligible to apply:

- Members of staff within Torus; or
- Customers in material or serious breach of their tenancy or lease agreements
- Anyone under 18

Other considerations:

- All vacancies are publicised, and anyone who is interested and eligible can express an interest
- New members to the Complaints Panel will be appointed through a selection process
- New members of the Panel will participate in complaint and resolution training when required
- Customers with a live complaint within the Torus complaints process will be asked to declare an interest until the complaint has been fully resolved
- Members will be expected to act as individuals and not represent any interested group, area or political party
- New and continuing membership will be subject to an annual appraisal and personal development process, which will take account of attendance, contribution to reviews and how members work as part of a team
- Any member who is in breach of their tenancy conditions or becomes involved in any activity which brings the name of the Repairs and Maintenance Panel and/or Torus into disrepute will be suspended, pending investigation, and may be asked to resign
- If a group member wishes to resign, they should inform the Tenant Voice team in writing or by e-mail
- All members must sign the code of conduct and confidentiality agreement. Any Group member who breaches the code of conduct will be asked to leave the Panel

Meetings

The Group will meet no more than 6 times a year, additional meetings may be set to cover training and development.

Torus will provide reasonable travel expenses and electronic equipment in order for members to participate in meetings.

- Members of the Complaints Panel should make every effort to attend meetings. If a member is unable to attend, apologies should be sent to the Tenant Voice team in advance of the meeting to avoid unnecessary costs
 - Any member missing a meeting without giving prior apologies may be contacted by the chair and/or a representative from the Tenant Voice Team
 - If a Complaints Panel member fails to attend three meetings in any rolling 12-month period without giving prior apologies, it will be assumed they no longer wish to be a member of the Panel and their membership will be terminated
 - Torus recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances preventing a Panel member from attending training and/or meetings eg ill health. Such circumstances will be discussed confidentially and an agreement regarding involvement will be reached by both parties
 - An attendance register is to be kept for all meetings (to include apologies and authorised absences) and Torus will provide support to ensure the effective running and smooth administration of the Panel
 - The Tenant Voice Team will support the Panel to obtain data, reports etc from internal teams in a timely manner to support the complaints function
 - The quorum of the Group will be 3 members plus the Chair
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Safeguards

Members must:

- Adopt and abide by the code of conduct; and
 - Attend appropriate training
 - Uphold Torus' high standards of conduct and probity by adhering to the code of conduct and respecting confidentiality of information; and
 - Remain objective and not bring personal issues into their work with the Complaints Panel
 - Complaints Panel members must not disclose confidential information to anyone else outside the group. Members who breach confidentiality will be removed from the Panel
 - The Complaints Panel shall conduct an annual review of its work and effectiveness, with the support of a Tenant Voice team member. This annual review will include a review of the terms of reference.
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