

**Complaints and Comments Policy –
'Putting Matters Right'****Version: 2****Approved: Radian Board - December****1.0 Statement of Intent**

- 1.1 Radian is committed to providing a quality service to all of our customers and service users. To achieve this objective we will develop a culture of encouraging, valuing and learning from complaints. Our actions will be designed to provide confidence for our customers and service users that we will listen, learn and take prompt action to put matters right. Radian will therefore develop robust yet straightforward procedures to encourage feedback from our customers and will focus our staff on responding to complaints promptly, helpfully and effectively.
- 1.2 We will encourage use of our complaints process by:
- Funding advocacy support for vulnerable customers
 - Providing translation, large print and audio tape services
 - Encouraging receipt of complaints verbally through our Customer Service Centre and through the use of on-line forms available on our web sites
 - Demonstrating we listen by producing case study examples of learning from complaints that will be reviewed by our customer groups, staff and Boards'
 - Refunding reasonable travel and child care costs of a customer attending a panel hearing
 - Holding panel meetings at times and locations convenient to our customers
- 1.3 Radian positively encourages staff to take a pragmatic customer-focussed approach to resolving complaints and expects that each complaint is investigated fully, that the customer is kept informed of progress and that every complaint is seen as a real opportunity to put into practice our vision: Radian "Where People Flourish". Wherever possible, we will encourage our staff to meet complainants face-to-face as soon as possible in the process to identify what we can do to 'put matters right'.
- 1.4 Recognising that many residents and service users simply require a promised repair undertaken on time or put right, we will during 2010 develop a separate service to address this issue. This scheme will allow customers and service users (or their advocate) to contact Radian's CSC and have their repairs request logged. Radian will then have one week to put these matters right. Where we do not meet the requirements of our scheme which will be developed in consultation with the Radian Residents Committee, compensation will be payable.
- 2.0 **The purpose of this policy is:**
- To provide clarity on our approach for the people who receive our services and for our staff and Board members who will be involved in providing Radian's response
 - To emphasise the importance and value Radian places on responding to complaints quickly, helpfully, thoroughly and fairly

3.0 Definition

3.1 A complaint is where a Radian customer or service user raises a concern about:

- The level of service provided
- The attitude or behaviour of members of our staff or our contractors
- A decision we have made, or
- A decision not made in accordance with the relevant policy

3.2 Our complaints policy will not cover:

- Concerns about what services we provide
- Complaints relating to anti-social behaviour – these will be covered by Radian's separate policy on this issue

3.3 Radian will normally only deal with complaints that are made within six months of the event complained about. However in some cases complaints over six months old may be considered at the discretion of a senior manager.

4.0 Policy

4.1 People who may complain are:

- Service users who receive support services
- Tenants and Shared Owners
- Leaseholders
- Waiting or transfer list applicants
- Anyone who has a contractual agreement with Radian

4.2 Radian reserves the right to refuse to deal with a complaint if it is made unreasonably. If a person has indicated an intention to commence legal action against Radian or a partner organisation, then investigation of the related concerns will not be undertaken under the requirements of this policy (Appendix A).

4.3 An advocate, Ward Councillor or MP can be authorised to pursue a complaint on a person's behalf.

4.4 When we receive a complaint we will investigate it within prescribed timescales. We will investigate each complaint on its own merits and will give the complainant every opportunity to fully explain the reasons for their dissatisfaction and the actions they feel should be taken to put the matter right.

4.5 We will maintain the confidentiality of the person making a complaint. However where there is a safeguarding of vulnerable adults or child protection issue we have a duty of care to fully investigate and follow the appropriate procedure outlined in Section 6 of this Policy.

4.6 We will publish a summary of the complaints process (including large print, audio tape and service user specific versions) so that all customers and service users are aware of the actions that we will take and the timescales within which we will respond.

4.7 We will use complaints and other feedback to continuously improve our service and develop our staff. Wherever we amend our policy or approach as a result of a complaint we will notify complainants of the outcome and thank them for their help.

4.8 We will encourage all complainants at the end of the complaints process to feedback on the process itself and will report outcomes, learning points and statistical performance quarterly to partner Boards' and the HASC.

4.9 If a complainant reaches the end of our complaints process and still wishes to pursue the matter, they may do so by referring it to the Ombudsman Service. Complaints about a service provided by Turnstone can be made to the Care Quality Commission, Supporting People or the Ombudsman at any time during the process.

5.0 Legal and Regulatory Framework

- Legislation relating to the provision of individual services
- The Tenant Services Authority's regulatory framework
- The Care Quality Commission's national minimum standards
- The Care Standards Act
- Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (QAF)

6.0 Links to other Policies

6.1 This policy does not detail the practical advice and assistance that should be provided, nor the actions to be taken by staff when dealing with complaints. Any such advice, action and assistance will be covered in specific procedure documents that should be used in conjunction with this Policy. These are:

- Complaints and Compliments procedure
- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adult Policy and Child Protection procedures
- Right to Repair procedure
- Compensation procedure
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Leaflets and guidelines for customers, service users and key stakeholders.

6.2 Whistleblowing Policy

We know that it is never easy to report a concern, particularly one which may relate to abuse but Radian urges staff and Board members to come forward with any concerns at the earliest possible stage. If you suspect that abuse is being committed you should raise your concerns with your manager who will investigate and highlight relevant issues with Social Services. If for some reason you do not feel able to approach your line manager, you should contact a Director, Radian's Chief Executive or a Board member. If you do not feel that either of these routes is possible Radian has a formal procedure, 'Statement on Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing)', which enables you to raise formal concerns outside of the workplace and to be protected in making such a disclosure. This policy can be found on the intranet.

6.3 Confidentiality

Where we are made aware of a risk to a child or vulnerable adult we will refer the information to Social Services to investigate and where appropriate the Police. This is allowed by exceptions to the Data Protection and Human Rights Acts. We will not disclose information to any other organisation or individual. However we will advise any person who has reported a concern to us that the information they have provided will be reported to the relevant agencies.

6.4 Single Equality Scheme

Radian values diversity, and seeks to promote equality of opportunity through a Single Equality Scheme. The scheme makes four key commitments: to assess the diversity of needs, to develop meaningful action plans, to monitor progress against targets and to publish details of progress on an annual basis. This policy supports the single equality scheme by emphasising our commitment to excellent customer service and learning from where we have not achieved this aspiration.

7.0 Responsible Officer

- Group Director of Housing and Customer Services

8.0 Review Details

Approved by (including date of approval)	HASC
Review Cycle	Bi-annual
Date of next review	November 2011

Associated Documents

None

9.0 Appendices

- Appendix A - Refusing Access to the Complaints Process
- Appendix B - Useful Addresses

APPENDIX A**Refusing access to the Complaints Process**

In certain circumstances Radian or its partner organisations reserve the right to refuse a complainant access to the complaints process. Two examples of where this may occur are listed below. If these or other circumstances arise the complainant will be given a full explanation in writing.

1. Legal Action

Access to the complaints process will be suspended if Radian, its partner organisations or the complainant is involved in legal action against the other party and this legal action relates to the complaint made.

'Legal action' will have commenced after a notice has been issued to the Court for action to commence. In these circumstances the complainant will be advised that they will have the opportunity to address their complaint to the Court. Legal action also includes notice of a review by the rent assessment panel or leasehold valuation tribunal. The decision to suspend access to the complaints process will be made by a senior manager (at Area or service manager level) who will notify the complainant in writing. Suspension will be lifted once the legal action is complete.

2. Suspension

Radian reserves the right to suspend a complainant's right to access to the complaint process where their actions prevent investigation of the complaint fully and fairly.

An example may be where a complainant lodges multiple complaints relating to the same issue in a short period of time. By the nature of this correspondence, it is administratively difficult for Radian to respond fairly and fully to the original complaint.

A decision to suspend a complainant will be made by a senior manager (at area or service manager level).

- If suspension is granted, this decision will be notified to the complainant in writing.
- Suspension will be reviewed after 20 working days.
- There is no right of appeal against suspension.
- Officers will report details of the suspension to the Board at the next available meeting

APPENDIX B

Useful Addresses

ORGANISATION	COUNTY	CONTACT DETAILS
Local Government Ombudsman	Berkshire Buckinghamshire Surrey Hampshire	The Local Government Ombudsman PO Box 4771 Coventry CV4 0EH Tel: 0300 061 0614 Lo-Call: 0845 602 1983 Fax: 024 7682 0001 Email: advice@lgo.org.uk Or, text "call back" to 0762 480 4299
Housing Ombudsman	All counties in England	Housing Ombudsman Service 81 Aldwych London WC2B 4HN Tel: 020 7421 3800 Lo-Call: 0845 7125 973 Minicom: 020 7404 7092 Fax: 020 7831 1942 Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Care Quality Commission	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Surrey	The Oast Hermitage Court Hermitage Lane Maidstone ME16 9NT Telephone Number: 01622 724950 Fax Number: 01622 724980
	Hampshire	4th Floor Overline House Blechynden Terrace Southampton SO15 1GW (02380) 821300
Supporting People Teams	Berkshire	Community Care Services PO Box 154 Shute End Wokingham Berkshire RG40 1WN 0118 974 6867

ORGANISATION	COUNTY	CONTACT DETAILS
		Bracknell Forest Borough Council Times Square Market Street Bracknell Berkshire RG12 1JD 01344 351692
		Supporting People Team Slough Borough Council Town Hall Bath Road Slough SL1 3UQ 01753 875904
		Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Town Hall St Ives Road Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 1RF 01628 796270
	Buckinghamshire	Supporting People Team 11th Floor Buckinghamshire County Council Walton Street Aylesbury BUCKS 01296 387182
	Hampshire	Hampshire County Council Capitol House 12-13 Bridge Street Winchester Hampshire SO23 0HL 01962 826016
	Surrey	Elmbridge Borough Council Room 31 Civic Centre Esher Surrey KT10 9SD 01372 474640