

READING ALMSHOUSE CHARITY

COMPLAINTS' POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The priority of the Reading Almshouse Charity's Trustees is to ensure the safety and happiness of their residents. However, occasionally, residents may have concerns about an issue considered to be important for which reassurances and/or remedial actions are sought.

Trustees can only resolve difficulties and improve the service offered if they are aware of any issues. It is important, in building upon the trust between Trustees and residents, that residents are encouraged to speak up when things go wrong without fear of prejudice or recrimination. It is equally important that the individual acts solely in his/her own interest and does not act as a self-appointed spokesman or spokeswoman allegedly on behalf of some or all of the other residents.

Policy Aims

The aim of the policy is to ensure that the complaints' process is clear and accessible to residents and their carers/family members/representatives in the event that a concern or complaint is raised. The policy seeks to ensure that:

- residents who raise concerns or make a complaint are listened to and treated with courtesy and empathy
- residents will never be disadvantaged as a result of raising a concern or making a complaint
- complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly and openly
- apologies are given as appropriate
- complaints' handling will comply with confidentiality and data protection policies

Concerns may be raised or written complaints may be made by residents, their carers and families or a representative of a resident.

The Reading Almshouse Charity will not be able to deal with an issue through the complaints' process if:

- a complaint relates to a legal matter that is already being dealt with by a solicitor
- the complainant is anonymous, unless there is sufficient documentary evidence to substantiate the complaint.

Residents or their carers, families or representatives are encouraged to raise any concerns informally in the first instance with the Almshouse Manager, preferably verbally, as this can lead to better understanding and very often to a quick resolution of the issue.

If the resident or their representative feels unable to raise the concern with the Almshouse Manager, or the concern is about the Almshouse Manager, then the resident should inform the Clerk to Trustees, initially by email at kate@readingalmshouses.org.uk to request a call back, to discuss their concern with the aim of resolving the issue quickly.

If the concern cannot be resolved quickly in an informal manner with the Almshouse Manager (or Clerk, where relevant) or if the concern is more serious in nature, it should be made in writing as a formal complaint. A template complaints' form is attached for this purpose.

Complaints' Procedure

A complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action. A written complaint must include sufficient detail to enable the charity to fully investigate the matter. The complainant must also explain what action/response would correct their issue and what outcome they are hoping to achieve.

Written complaints must be placed in a sealed envelope, marked Strictly Private and Confidential and addressed to the Clerk to Trustees, Penton House, 58 Longships Way, Reading, RG2 0GP. Alternatively, complaints can be emailed to the Clerk to Trustees, kate@readingalmshouses.org.uk, marked Strictly Private and Confidential in the subject line. The Clerk to Trustees will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 working days. This acknowledgement will indicate the next course of action and the anticipated timescale. The charity will seek to resolve the complaint as a matter of urgency. The Clerk will have the discretion to involve trustees on the Staff and Resident Liaison Committee as required.

If the complaint is about the Clerk to Trustees then the complaint must be placed in a sealed envelope, marked Strictly Private and Confidential and addressed to the Chair of Trustees, c/o Penton House, 58 Longships Way, Reading, RG2 0GP. The Chair of Trustees (or another nominated Trustee if unavailable) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 working days. The acknowledgement will indicate the next course of action and the anticipated timescale. The charity will seek to resolve the complaint as a matter of urgency.

Appeals

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint they have 7 working days to submit a written appeal, in a sealed envelope marked Strictly Private and Confidential and addressed to the Chair of Trustees, c/o Penton House, 58 Longships Way, Reading, RG2 0GP. The appeal will be dealt with by the Chair of Trustees (or another nominated trustee) who will convene a meeting of a Trustee Complaints' Panel (comprising three trustees who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint) within 10 working days of the appeal being submitted. The complainant will, if he/she wishes to exercise that right, be entitled to attend when the complaint is being discussed, accompanied by a friend or professional advisor.

The Chair of Trustees will respond in writing to the complainant within 7 working days advising of the action taken to resolve the complaint.

As the Charity is not a registered housing provider the decision of the trustees will be final.

Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

If a complaint is pursued unreasonably or where a resident's actions or behaviours are deemed to be unreasonable, the Reading Almshouse Charity reserves the right to close the complaint. A complainant who displays threatening or abusive behaviour or language (whether verbal or written), that causes staff or trustees to feel threatened, abused and/or continues to contact the charity with unreasonable demands during/following a complaint investigation, may have their appointment set aside.

In cases where Trustees consider a complaint is being unreasonable and overly persistent and decide to bring the complaint to an end, they will inform the complainant of their reasons.

This policy has been approved for issue by the board of trustees of the Reading Almshouse Charity

28 APRIL 2020

READING ALMSHOUSE CHARITY

FORMAL COMPLAINT

Name of Complainant:

Address:

Email: **Telephone:**

Date (of submission of complaint).....

Details of complaint - including sufficient details of events, dates and times, if relevant, to enable the Charity to investigate the complaint:

Putting things right - what action/response will correct the issue and what outcome are you hoping to achieve:

Signed:

Date:

*This form must be placed in a sealed envelope, marked **Strictly Private and Confidential** and addressed to the Clerk to Trustees, Penton House, 58 Longships Way, Reading, RG2 0GP. Alternatively, it can be emailed to the Clerk to Trustees, kate@readingalmshouses.org.uk, marked **Strictly Private and Confidential** in the subject line*