

Complaints and Concerns Policy

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Approved Date: 22.07.25

Issue Date: 04.08.25

1. Our Complaints and Concerns policy: What is it all about?

- 1.1 We aim to deliver a good quality service and positive customer experience. If we don't meet our service standards, we'll:
- Apologise
 - Take responsibility
 - Acknowledge your expectations
 - Put things right when they're in our control within reasonable timescales
 - Keep you informed
 - Listen to you to improve what we do.
- 1.2 This policy sets out a consistent and fair approach to responding to complaints from customers and it aims to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity.

2. What are the principles of this policy?

- 2.1 We will:
- Deal with concerns and complaints in a fair, open, and honest way, taking your views seriously and always treating you with respect.
 - Resolve issues as early and informally as possible, putting things right quickly where we can and learning from what has happened.
 - Make it easy for you to raise your concerns, giving help and sharing information in a way that meets your needs.
 - Look into complaints carefully and fairly, keeping you updated and explaining the results clearly.
 - Use what we learn from complaints to make our services better and fix any issues in how we work.
 - Let you know what changes we've made because of the feedback from complaints.

3. Who can make a complaint?

- 3.1 Anyone can let us know if they are unhappy with the services we, or people working for us (like contractors), provide. This includes people living in our homes or using our services.
- 3.2 If you'd like, you can ask someone you trust to speak for you when making a complaint. This person is called an 'advocate'. It could be a friend, family member, or someone from a group like Citizens Advice Bureau. Just let us know if you'd like someone to help represent you or join you in any meetings with us.
- 3.3 We promise to treat everyone fairly and with respect, no matter their age, disability, gender, race, religion, or who they love. Making a complaint will not change how we treat you in the future.
- 3.4 We ask that everyone treats us politely and work with us when making a complaint. If someone acts in a way that is not okay, we will use a different policy to deal with it.
- 3.5 You can share concerns with us without giving your name. But if you stay anonymous, we might not be able to reply to you or take certain actions. Even if we don't know who you are, we'll still look into your feedback and see if we can make improvements. However, we won't record it as an official complaint under our rules.

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4. What is a complaint?

- 4.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern that is communicated face-to-face, via telephone, text, email, letter or social media. It can be about our actions, inaction, or standard of service and always requires a response.
- 4.2 You don't need to use the word "complaint" for it to count as one. Any message where you say you're unhappy or dissatisfied will be treated as a complaint and handled through our process.

5. What can you complain about?

- 5.1 You can tell us if you're unhappy with our service or something we've done (or not done), as long as it's within 6 months of the problem happening or when you first noticed the issue. This helps us look into your complaint while things are still clear for everyone.
- 5.2 In some cases, we can look at complaints brought to us after 6 months, but you'll need to explain why you couldn't tell us earlier. We will also need enough details to investigate properly. In any event, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.
- 5.3 If the problem is a reoccurring or ongoing issue, we'll consider any older reports as background to the investigation.
- 5.4 If your complaint covers more than one organisation, we will work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.
- 5.5 If the complaint is about an organisation working on our behalf, (e.g., repairs contractor), you may wish to raise the matter informally and directly with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.
- 5.6 If you make a complaint and we complete our process, we're unlikely to accept another complaint about the same issue unless you provide new information.

6. What is not a complaint covered by this policy?

- **Requests for Service** - if you are requesting a service (e.g., reporting a broken fence for the first time). However, if you make a request for service and then are not happy with our response, you may make a complaint.
- **Complaints with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)** – we will not accept complaints that have already been investigated, or are under investigation, by the PSOW.
- **Service Charge Queries** – these are managed using our Service Charge Policy. If you are unhappy with the standard of services being delivered, you may make a complaint.
- **Subject Data Access Requests** (or other data protection matters) - these are managed using our Data Protection Policy.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)** – these are managed using our ASB Policy. However, if you are unhappy with how we have handled a case, you may make a complaint.
- **Personal injury claims** – these are managed by our insurers.
- **Disrepair Claims** – these are managed using our Disrepair Process.
- **External Organisations** (such as Torfaen County Borough Council or Gwent Police) - you will need to contact them directly, but we will signpost you to the correct organisation.

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7. How to make a complaint

7.1 There are a range of ways you can raise a complaint via:

- Our website
- My Bron Afon (online customer portal)
- Phone
- Letter – please send letters to the Customer Quality Officer, Tŷ Bron Afon, William Brown Close, Llantarnam Industrial Park, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3AB
- Email - complaints@bronafton.org.uk
- In person
- Social media (direct message)

7.2 If you need help in making a complaint in another way, just let us know. For example, if you require this information in email, large print, braille, audio, in Welsh or another language or format, please contact complaints@bronafton.org.uk or call 01633 620 111.

7.3 You can also find a full list of organisations that can offer advice on the Ombudsman website - <https://www.ombudsman.wales/advocacy-template/>.

8. Learning lessons

8.1 We take your concerns and complaints seriously and always try to learn from our mistakes. Every six months, our Senior Management Team looks at a summary of all complaints. To make sure we are always improving, we also share summaries of complaints and outcomes with the Ombudsman. When big changes are needed, we create a plan that explains what will be done, who will do it, and when it will be finished. We will also keep you updated once the changes have been made.

9. What recording and monitoring is in place?

9.1 We are committed to learning from customer feedback including complaints and compliments. All concerns and complaints are taken seriously and will learn from any mistakes we've made. We will ensure that:

- All complaints, feedback, and compliments are accurately recorded in our case management system.
- Regularly carry out quality assurance checks, completed by the central complaints team, to identify any themes, trends, or learning opportunities.
- Carry out regular reviews, analyse trends, check performance and recommend improvements and produce reports to the senior management team every six months.
- Highlight serious concerns and complaints to our senior management for review.

10. Who is responsible?

10.1 Our Board makes sure we have a fair and clear way to handle complaints. It also checks that we learn from complaints to make things better.

10.2 Our Chief Executive leads the way in making sure complaints are dealt with properly. They make sure we follow the rules and respond to customers in the right way and on time.

10.3 Directors, Heads of Service, and Managers must:

- Create a positive attitude about complaints in their teams.
- Make sure complaints are handled the right way, and actions are taken when needed.
- Look at the results of complaints, find ways to learn from them, and improve services.

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All colleagues are responsible for:

- Listening to customers and helping with their concerns in a polite way.
- Taking responsibility for complaints when needed and trying to fix problems early.
- Reporting and recording complaints properly so we can be open and learn from them.

11. Complaints Process

11.1 Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

11.1 If you have a problem, tell the person you're dealing with. They will try to sort it out straight away. If they can't fix it, your problem will be sent to our Complaints Team. They will let you know they've received your complaint within three working days and find the right person to look into it.

11.2 We'll ask how you want us to contact you and check if you need any special help, like large print documents.

11.3 The person looking into your complaint will try to give you an answer within ten working days.

11.4 If you're dissatisfied with the response, you can request a Formal Review. Alternatively, if the issue isn't resolved within ten working days, it will automatically be escalated for formal review.

11.5 Stage 2 - Formal Review

11.6 We will let you know that we have received your request for a Formal Review within three working days and tell you who will be looking into your concern or complaint.

11.7 If the problem is serious, we may ask someone from a different part of the organisation or an independent investigator to work on your complaint.

11.8 Sometimes, if the issue needs to be formally reviewed because of delays, we will let the same person continue to handle the review.

11.9 The person working on your complaint will get in touch with you to check the details of your concern and ask what you hope will happen. They will come to your home if you want them to, and they will look at the information we have about your complaint. If you don't want them to, please let us know.

11.10 If there is a simple way to fix the problem, we will ask if you would be happy for us to do that. For example, if you asked for a service and we can provide it, we'll do that instead of carrying out a full investigation.

11.11 We try to sort out problems as quickly as we can and aim to finish most reviews within 20 working days. If your complaint is serious or complicated, we will:

- Let you know why it might take longer to investigate.
- Tell you how long we think it will take.
- Keep you updated about what's happening and let you know if anything changes the original timing.

11.12 If your complaint relates to a communal or district heat network - a shared system that supplies heating and/or hot water to multiple homes - we will follow the regulations and timescales set by the Energy Ombudsman, rather than those set out in this policy. We will still raise and manage your complaint, but we have up to 8 weeks to work with you to try and resolve the issue. If we haven't resolved the matter within this time, or if you remain unhappy with the outcome, you have the right to refer your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman for an independent review.

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11.13 Where appropriate, we will suggest using mediation or another way to solve disagreements.

11.14 You can stop your complaint at any time, but we will still look into it if we think it's important.

12. Outcome

12.1 After the Formal Review, we will tell you what we found and explain how we reached our decisions. If we made a mistake, we'll explain what went wrong and why.

12.2 If there's a problem with the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to fix it, so it doesn't happen again.

12.3 If we find things we could have done better, we will:

- Say sorry.
- Explain what happened and why.
- Give you reasons or help you understand.
- Take action if there was a delay.
- Look at the decision again and make changes if needed.
- Update our records if they're wrong.
- Offer a financial payment if it's fair to do so, based on our Compensation Policy.
- Change rules or ways of working to prevent future problems.

13. The Ombudsman

13.1 If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can investigate your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining, have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the service provider.

13.2 The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right.

13.3 You can contact the Ombudsman at:

Phone: 0300 790 0203

Online complaint form: <https://complaints.ombudsman.wales/en/pre-complaint>

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

Address: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ.

14. Energy Ombudsman – Heat Network Complaints

14.1 If your complaint relates to a communal or district heat network - a shared system supplying hot water and/or heating to multiple properties - and we have not resolved the matter within 8 weeks, or you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you can refer your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman.

14.2 You can contact the Energy Ombudsman at:

Phone: 0330 440 1624

Email: enquiry@energyombudsman.org

Address: Energy Ombudsman, P.O. Box 966, Warrington, WA4 9DF

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