

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.

EASTENDHOMES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response is expected.
- 1.2 EastendHomes is committed to providing high quality, efficient and effective services to all its residents and service users, but recognises that sometimes people may be dissatisfied with its services or mistakes might be made in service delivery.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to make it easy to make a complaint by providing a range of means to do so and by providing a timely response which addresses any service delivery failure or prevents mistakes from recurring. A key part of the complaints process will be to identify, at an early stage, what the service user would like us to do to put things right, and to indicate in our response whether this is feasible now or in the future.
- 1.4 Complaints will be viewed positively as a useful means to identify potential service improvements.
- 1.5 EastendHomes is keen to obtain feedback from service users to review the services it provides and the way in which it provides them. EastendHomes wishes to learn from the complaints received and as such the organisation will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item at management meetings. Where training needs are identified as part of the learning outcomes, these are recorded and progressed by the service manager.
- 1.6 EastendHomes will operate clear and well-publicised procedures and timescales for receiving and dealing with complaints and compliments. EastendHomes will routinely monitor and publicise complaints responses within target, the number and nature of complaints annually, the outcomes and satisfaction with case handling and outcome.
- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with promptly, courteously, with consistency, systematically, fairly and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
- 1.8 EastendHomes recognises the value of involving residents in reviewing complaints and the final stage of the complaints process allows for members of the EastendHomes board and the tenant scrutiny panel to consider complaints that have been progressed to the final internal stage. In addition the Service Review Committee and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews EastendHomes' complaints performance across service areas and focus on particular concerns where they arise.
- 1.9 EastendHomes will ensure that all staff likely to be involved in handling complaints are familiar with the procedure.

- 1.10 EastendHomes is committed to maintaining membership of the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme to which service users can refer complaints following exhaustion of the EastendHomes complaints procedure, if issues remain unresolved to their satisfaction.
- 1.11 The investigating officer for each complaint at each stage will assess whether the complaint was reasonable, justified and therefore upheld and will note the reasons for this decision.
- 1.12 EastendHomes will accept complaints from an advocate authorised to act on behalf of a service user.
- 1.13 In instances where the nature of the complaint includes the person who would normally deal with it, an alternative member of staff of at least equal seniority will be identified to carry out the investigation and response.

2. PROCESS

Expression of Dissatisfaction

- 2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, sometimes called an informal complaint, is an issue which is raised and resolved at the first point of contact. EastendHomes will record all expressions of dissatisfaction and our response to them. This will not include any initial service requests, for example a heating breakdown but would include any service or customer care failure in subsequently dealing with that request, for example, the workman made a mess.
- 2.2 Expressions of dissatisfaction will be reviewed as part of the complaints performance monitoring process but will not form part of EastendHomes' formal complaints process. Any identified service failure trends will be reviewed to prevent future service failure and identify potential service improvements.

Expressions of dissatisfaction voiced at a public meeting or submitted on a customer feedback exercise will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction unless specifically requesting formal investigation, in which case a Stage One complaint will be initiated.

Stage One

- 2.3 A Stage One complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact and requires investigation and a full written response.
- 2.4 Enquiries will be received in a variety of possible ways, including:
 - by telephone
 - by personal caller
 - by email

- by letter
 - via authorised delegate or advocate of the service user
- 2.5 EastendHomes has a separate Vexatious, Frivolous and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy. If it is considered that the complaint falls within the criteria of this policy a separate procedure will apply.
- 2.6 A separate Compensation and Payments Policy exists to support this Complaints and Compliments policy, and to provide guidance in making payments of compensation where this may be appropriate.
- 2.7 A separate Petitions Policy operates where a group of residents (ten or more tenants or leaseholders) have made a joint representation to EastendHomes.
- 2.8 Where a service user wishes to pursue a formal complaint, they will be sent a copy of EastendHomes' complaint form, together with information on how to make a complaint. All complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, but complaints will be progressed however they are made. Where a complaint is taken on behalf of a service user, the officer taking the complaint will write the complaint down on a complaint form and send a copy to the complainant to sign and return as an accurate statement of their issues and concerns (assistance, including home visits, will also be offered to people whose first language is not English, or who have particular needs such as literacy problems). The timeline for response to the complaint will start when the completed form is returned with the complainant's signature. Formal complaint forms will also be available for residents to download from the EastendHomes website or may be made directly through website contact. EastendHomes is unable to deal with complaints made anonymously.
- 2.9 Formal complaints can be initiated by providing a summary of the issues of concern by e-mail to enquiries@eastendhomes.net. However wherever possible, complainants will be encouraged to use the standard form to ensure that all the necessary information is captured.
- 2.10 Normally, complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the service delivery failure in order to allow EastendHomes to conduct a timely investigation, minimise the impact of any service delivery issues, and to incorporate timely learning outcomes to service delivery provision.
- 2.11 Once a complaint form is received, a holding reply will be sent within 3 working days acknowledging receipt and informing the complainant that the complaint is being dealt with, who will be responding to it, and the timescales for a response.
- 2.12 The Stage One complaint will be dealt with by the appropriate service manager - e.g. the Leasehold Service Manager, the relevant Housing Centre Manager or the Regeneration Project Manager. The complainant will receive a full written response within 10 working days. Where this is not

possible for a particular reason, a response will be provided within 7 working days, explaining why a full response is not possible at that time and giving a date by which a full response will be provided. All full responses will detail the action that has been taken, the outcome, and whether the complaint has been upheld. If further action is necessary to resolve the issue, the complainant will be kept informed of such action and the outcome(s).

Stage Two

- 2.13 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request that the relevant Director consider the complaint as a formal Stage Two complaint. The complainant should make this request within 15 working days of receiving a response under Stage One, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response already received. A written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days and a full written response within 15 working days. If further investigation is required which means a full written response within 15 days is not possible the complainant will be notified within 10 working days of their request in writing with an indication of when a full response will be sent.

Stage Three

- 2.14 If the resident or applicant is still not satisfied with the response received under Stage Two they can ask within 15 working days of receiving the response for the complaint to be considered under Stage Three stating the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the response received under Stage Two. A panel comprising of a minimum of two members of the EastendHomes Board and two tenant scrutiny panel members will consider all Stage Three complaints. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fulfil the representation of residents with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, resident board members may take the positions of Scrutiny Panel members to ensure that residents are represented amongst the panel membership. EastendHomes will aim to convene the Panel within four weeks of the request from the complainant, to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely manner. Members should not hear cases from complainants where there is a conflict of interest. This includes friendships, family relationship, a financial stake, close residential proximity, or being involved in current or previous disputes.
- 2.15 The complainant will have the right to present their case to the panel. The complainant will also have the right, at their own cost, to have a representative, friend or advocate present, provided that EastendHomes is informed at least twenty four hours in advance. The meetings of the Complaints Panel are not, however, open to the general public or observers and complainants can have no more than one advocate present.
- 2.16 The panel will be minuted and the decision notified to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting. No indication of the decision of the panel will be given at the time of the hearing. A note of the meeting will be

provided; however minutes of the deliberations of the panel will be confidential. If the panel is unable to make a decision and requires additional information, the complainant will be advised of this.

2.17 EastendHomes may wish to interview the complainant at any stage of the complaints process. The complainant will have the right, at their own cost, to have a friend or advocate present but should inform EastendHomes first.

2.18 The Panel will conduct the proceedings in the following format, unless otherwise agreed by the panel:

- The panel will receive a written summarised chronology of the case five working days before the scheduled panel meeting, including the key pieces of paperwork and/or correspondence. The collated chronology will also be sent to the complainant.
- The EastendHomes lead officer (Chief Executive, Director or Deputy) will attend and will introduce and provide a summary of the complaint for the panel.
- The complainant, if attending, will have the opportunity to address the panel and to answer any questions from the Panel. The panel may request that involved officers leave the room, if considered appropriate.
- Any officer(s) or partner service providers attending, as appropriate, can present relevant information and will answer any queries or points of clarification required by the panel.
- The panel will thank the complainant for attending the panel but no decision will be confirmed at the time of the meeting.
- The panel may then wish to deliberate on the complaint in closed session and will come to a decision. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Panel. Where additional information is required before a decision can be reached, the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation and the expected decision date.
- The above format can be varied subject to mutual agreement of the panel members at the commencement of the meeting.

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSURE

3.1 At all stages of the complaints process, the complainant is requested to indicate whether they want to escalate their complaint through the internal procedure within fifteen days of receipt date of their response letter. This potential period for escalation can be extended, by mutual agreement, in cases where further activity or information relevant to the complaint may develop in the following three months. At closure of the case, a letter confirming case closure will be sent to the complainant along with the

complaints satisfaction questionnaire.

4. OUTCOMES/FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 As part of the investigation at every stage, the investigating officer will indicate whether the complaint was upheld or not as part of the written response to the complainant.
- 4.2 Where a mistake has been made EastendHomes will apologise in writing, and may also seek to compensate the complainant appropriately.
- 4.3 Payment of compensation may on occasion be made as a good will gesture, and will not necessarily indicate an admission of culpability.
- 4.4 Complaints investigators and panel members should make reference to the Compensation and Payments Policy, and associated guidelines, to determine appropriate levels of compensation..
- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 3, she or he can complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. EastendHomes have no control over this aspect of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman is completely independent of EastendHomes. Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of completion of the EastendHomes complaints process, in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 4.6 On receipt of a request from the independent Housing Ombudsman EastendHomes will make the necessary arrangements to respond to requests for relevant information and correspondence.

5. PUBLICITY

- 5.1 The complaints procedure will be publicised and available for use by anyone wishing to complain about any aspect of EastendHomes' service provision or service delivery, including standards of customer care.
- 5.2 The procedure will be widely advertised, through the EastendHomes website, Tenants' Handbook and Leaseholders' Handbook, newsletters and posters in local housing offices. Information about the procedure will also be provided translated into the major community language(s).

6. IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- 6.1 The complaints procedure is an opportunity for us to review the policy and procedures which have led to a decision, to check that these have been followed correctly or to recommend changes to these where, we learn that they do not work properly. We do learn from our mistakes or where we could do things better, but we also have to follow certain guidelines from the government, and work to certain budgets and so sometimes are unable to simply give customers what they want. However, we still need to ensure

that we have followed policies and procedures in reaching any decision and justify those decisions to you.

- 6.2 All complaints received will be monitored, and details recorded of the date received, the nature of the complaint, the date action was taken and the nature of the action taken. EastendHomes wishes to learn from complaints received and as such management team meetings will consider the 'learning outcomes' relating to each complaint as a standard agenda item. Where training needs are identified these will be recorded and progressed by the appropriate manager. The Senior Management Team will regularly monitor the performance of the complaints procedure across all Directorates.
- 6.3 EastendHomes will ensure that an officer will be responsible for:
- Registering and monitoring complaints and performance within response times
 - Ensuring that complainants are kept informed of any delays in the progression of the procedure and likely revised completion dates
 - Receiving comments on EastendHomes policies
 - Presenting statistics on complaints performance and presenting these as part of the of the KPI report to the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This will include sectional and thematic analysis.
 - Registering the learning outcomes from each complaint. At the completion of each stage, the learning outcome will be recorded and fed back to all previous investigation officers so that service improvements can quickly be incorporated into service delivery arrangements.
 - Undertaking a post-complaint satisfaction questionnaire which captures complainants' satisfaction with how the complaint was dealt with and the final outcome. This information will be monitored by the Service Review Committee and Tenant Scrutiny Panel as part of the Key Performance Information provided.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 6.1 EastendHomes will maintain a compliments register to monitor positive resident feedback on services.
- 6.2 EastendHomes will encourage residents to provide general suggestions and compliments. EastendHomes will ensure that where compliments are received that these are generally recognised within the organisation and seen as part of the overall learning process.
- 6.3 EastendHomes has introduced a Customer Care Excellence Award Scheme which allows residents and staff to nominate staff members who have excelled in their contribution to the work of the organisation, particularly in the area of customer care.
- 6.4 Customers will be encouraged to submit suggestions, compliments and or staff nominations using a range of forms and promotional material.

- 6.5 Where gifts are received for staff these will be entered into the hospitality register, and will be treated in accordance with the guidance given in the EastendHomes Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct.