

Housing management Complaints Policy

September 2025



Housing
Management



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

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1. Introduction

Our housing management department provides a range of landlord services for our residents in the 9,000 homes we manage. Resident feedback is key to making sure we continue to improve in line with residents' wishes.

If things are going well, or you've received a great service you'd like to see as standard, you can let us know by calling 0800 137 111 or emailing HM-complaints@rbkc.gov.uk. We'll pass on the compliment to the team or officer and look to see if there's anything we can learn to improve our service more generally.

And while we try to make sure our service works for all residents, we know there will be times when we don't meet residents' expectations; in this case you can make a complaint. This policy sets out the ways residents can let us know when something's gone wrong, and what we'll do when that happens.

We aim to treat all our residents with respect, to listen to their concerns, and resolve issues fairly. We take our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion seriously, and this policy is aligned with the **Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code** (<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>), the Council's codesigned **Service Standards** (<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/contact-us/codesigned-service-standards>), and relevant UK legislation.

We are committed to providing information and services that are accessible and available in appropriate formats. If you need help to make a complaint, require us to make reasonable adjustments in the way we communicate with you or if you require translation and/or interpretation services, please let us know by calling 0800 137 111 or emailing HM-complaints@rbkc.gov.uk.

This document includes information on the following important housing management processes:

1. **Complaints** – how to raise concerns about the services we provide in housing management.
2. **Management of unreasonable complainants** – how we handle behaviour that is unreasonable or disruptive while ensuring genuine concerns are addressed.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a clear, fair and consistent process for handling complaints.
- Put things right when we are at fault, including offering fair remedies and compensation where appropriate.
- Comply with all relevant legislation, regulatory codes, and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- Use feedback and lessons learnt from complaints to identify improvements across housing management and prevent the recurrence of issues.
- Protect staff and service users from unacceptable behaviour while ensuring genuine complaints are fully heard.

What this policy covers

- All housing management services, including estate services, rent income, responsive repairs, home ownership, and neighbourhood support.

What this policy does not cover

- Services outside housing management (e.g., social services, planning, parking, schools) unless explicitly referenced.
- Issues that are already subject to legal action, tribunal decisions, or insurance claims.
- Matters beyond the scope of RBKC's control. These will be redirected as appropriate.

2. Definitions

- **Complaint** – An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.
- **Resident (of Kensington and Chelsea)** – Council tenants and leaseholders, including individuals and families living out of borough in temporary accommodation provided and paid for by the Council.
- **Vulnerability** – A dynamic state which arises from a combination of a resident's personal circumstances, characteristics and their housing complaint. Vulnerability may be exacerbated when a social landlord or the Housing Ombudsman Service does not act with appropriate levels of care when dealing with a resident's complaint; however, if effective reasonable adjustments have been put in place, the vulnerability may be reduced.
- **Unreasonable complainant behaviour** – Behaviour that, because of its nature or frequency, hinders the Council's ability to consider the complaint or the complaints of others. This may be a single serious incident or a pattern over time.

3. Related documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following housing management policies and procedures (these are available on our Housing Policies webpage: www.rbkc.gov.uk/housing/consultations-publications-and-policy/housing-policies-0):

- **Tenant's Handbook**
- **Repairs Policy 2025 – 2030**
- **Voids and Lettings Policy**
- **Compensation Policy**
- **Rechargeable Repairs Policy**
- **Decants Policy**

4. How to make a complaint

The Council is committed to ensuring there is more than one way for you to contact us.

- **Online: Complaints Feedback Form**
- **Email: HM-complaints@rbkc.gov.uk**
- **Phone: 0800 137 111 or 020 3617 7080** (Lines are open Monday – Friday from 8am – 6pm)
- **In writing:** housing management, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8 7NX

If you contact us about an issue and haven't used the complaints process or used the word "complaint", we will consider the issues you are raising and may still investigate the matter under the Council's Complaints procedure.

Some of the things we'll look for when deciding on whether to treat your communication as a complaint are:

- Has there been a delay which is either unreasonable or longer than the published timescales in our housing management Repairs Policy?
- Have you raised concerns about the service you have received or a decision the Council has made?
- Has the Council not delivered on an action it agreed to do?
- Have you complained about the issue before without a full resolution?

Similarly, if you submit a complaint but the issues don't meet the criteria of a complaint (for example, you are making a service request) then we will respond under the relevant procedure. However, if the matter is still not resolved, you can raise a complaint about this subsequently.

Please note that a first-time request for information, advice or for an action to be undertaken would not normally be classified as a complaint, except in exceptional circumstances (to be assessed on a case-by-case basis). However, a complaint may arise because of a service request not being actioned, or the delivery of the action being delayed and/or carried out to an unacceptable standard.

Who can make a complaint: All residents, leaseholders, temporary accommodation tenants, and other service users interacting with our housing management team and services can make a complaint (see Definitions on Page 4).

Representatives can also complain on behalf of an individual. Where personal data is to be shared between the Council and a representative, the individual must give their consent.

The type of complaints we are not able to investigate under this policy

There are some issues that we cannot investigate under our housing management Complaints Policy, which include:

- Criminal actions.
- A dispute over a commercial contract where the relationship is between a private landlord and the Council.
- Allegations of fraud or corruption that would more properly be dealt with under the Council's Anti-Fraud procedures (<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/contact-us/report-problem/report-suspected-fraud>).
- A matter that has already been heard by a Court, Tribunal or any Council review panel.
- A matter where the resident or the Council has instructed legal support, started legal proceedings or has taken court action.
- Complaints about potential data breaches should be referred to the council's Data Protection Officer by email to DPO@rbkc.gov.uk or by post to Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8 7NX, or telephone 020 7361 3000.
- Complaints about Councillors are dealt with under the Council's Councillor's Code of Conduct (<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/council-councillors-and-democracy/councillors-and-committee-meetings/councillor-conduct>).
- Requests for housing transfers. These will be dealt with by the Council's housing needs department, in line with the Council's published **Allocations Policy** (Contact: email: housingsolutions@rbkc.gov.uk, telephone: 020 7361 3008)
- Complaints about a Council policy will be dealt with by the **corporate complaints team** (email: complaints@rbkc.gov.uk, telephone: 020 7361 2060).
- Petitions. Further details on how to submit a petition to the Council: <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/council-councillors-and-democracy/how-council-works/petitions-guidance>.

The Council does reserve the right to refuse to deal with complaints, or deal with them differently, if they are pursued unreasonably or could be handled more effectively in a different manner.

There are also separate arrangements in place for handling complaints linked to the following services:

- **Social services, schools, parking matters, planning applications, council tax and housing benefits** – if you are unhappy with a decision about these services, the letter notifying you of the decision should explain how to complain. Alternatively, you can contact our Corporate Customer Contact Centre on 0207 361 2060 (lines are open Monday – Friday from 9am – 4pm)

- **Waste collection** – for information on how to complain about waste collection contact Street line on 020 7361 3001 or email streetline@rbkc.gov.uk.
- **Sports centres** – please contact the General Manager at Chelsea Sports Centre in the first instance (020 7352 6985, chelsea.enquiries@gll.org). If you do not receive a satisfactory response, the matter should be escalated to the GLL Partnership Manager who is based at Head Office, Middlegate House, The Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, London SE18 6SX. Alternatively, you can contact the Customer Services line on 020 3457 8700 or email customerservices@gll.org.
- **Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests** submitted as part of a complaint will be processed separately to the complaint and the information requested sent in line with the Council's Freedom of Information and Subject Access Request timescales. (<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/contact-us/freedom-information-foi-requests> and <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/data-protection/data-protection/subject-access-requests>)
- For further guidance on where to direct your complaint, you can contact the Council's customer service team by emailing complaints@rbkc.gov.uk or calling 020 7361 2060 (Lines are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm).

5. Complaints process and timescales

The Council's housing management Complaints Process has two formal stages, in line with the **Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**. (<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>)

At both stages, it's important we understand what has caused your complaint, how the problem has affected you and what actions you would like the Council to take to resolve the problem. If we can't put things right in the way you want us to, we'll let you know. Whenever we can, we'll give you information about services or other organisations that may be able to help.

Quick resolution

If a problem can be resolved within two working days to your satisfaction, we may handle it informally without invoking the formal complaints process.

If the problem cannot be resolved quickly, if it is clear that the matter needs to be formally investigated, and/or if at any point the complainant indicates that they wish for it to be considered under the formal complaints process, the complaint will be referred to the relevant service for a Stage 1 investigation (in such cases, the Stage 1 target of 10 working days will start from the time that the complaint was originally made).

Stage 1 – Initial investigation:

All new complaints we receive will automatically be entered into Stage 1. Complaints will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt. The head of the relevant service will investigate and send a full response within 10 working days. If more time is needed, we will explain why and confirm a new date. If your complaint is about a member of staff, their immediate line manager will respond to you.

Stage 2 – Review by director of housing management:

If you're not satisfied with our response at Stage 1, you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 2, within 20 working days of the Stage 1 response being issued. The director of housing management (or assistant director, in the director's absence) will review your case and the previous response you received and will send you a full reply setting out their findings within 20 working days unless an alternative date is agreed.

Follow-up correspondence between stages

Sometimes complainants will contact us after a Stage 1 response, or before deciding whether to escalate to the Housing & Social Care Ombudsman, to query part of a response without clearly requesting an escalation. For example, they may ask about the sequence or request planned works to be rescheduled. In some cases, they explicitly state they do not want their correspondence to be treated as an escalation.

In all such cases, the Council will follow the complainant's wishes. The customer experience team will contact you (directly or via their advocate) to confirm how you want to proceed. If you request an escalation, the matter will be treated as such (Stage 1 moves to Stage 2, or, if both stages are complete, we will provide advice on how to contact the Housing Ombudsman). If you do not wish to request an escalation, the matter will be treated as a follow-up. We aim to respond to follow-ups within 10 working days. At any stage, before or after our follow-up, you may still request escalation.

6. What your options are after receiving a Stage 2 response

If your complaint is about housing management and you have been through the stages of our complaints procedure and are still unsatisfied, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman to review your complaint.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is free of charge and encourages the early resolution of complaints through its dispute resolution principles and helps individuals and organisations to learn from best practice across the housing sector.

The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted in the following ways:

- **Online:** www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/
- **Phone:** 0300 111 3000 (lines are open Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 5.15pm except public holidays)
- **In writing:** Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484 Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET
- You can find more information about the Housing Ombudsman and their services on their website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/.

7. Building and fire safety complaints

Following passage into law of the Building Safety Act 2022 (which came into effect 1 April 2024), the process for dealing with complaints relating to building, fire and structural safety has changed. This legislation can be viewed online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/30/contents/enacted.

The change only applies to building, fire and structural safety complaints concerning buildings that have seven or more storeys, or are 18+ metres tall, or both. The buildings within RBKC which fall within this criterion are listed on the flowchart in the associated appendix to this policy. The process at Stage 1 and Stage 2 remains the same as is set out within this policy.

Complaints escalated beyond Stage 2 that fall within this category are not investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service. Instead, responsibility for performing this function sits with the Building Safety Regulator, whose contact details are as follows: www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-the-building-safety-regulator, 0300 790 6787.

8. Heat networks and complaints handling

Heat networks provide heating and/or hot water from a central, communal boiler or heater to connected individual homes or buildings. If you have a boiler inside your home, usually in the kitchen or a storage cupboard, you are not on a heat network.

The Council recognises the importance of reliable and fair service delivery in all forms of energy provision. Therefore, we will handle all complaints related to heat networks with the same standards, seriousness, and principles as those concerning gas and electricity services. This includes ensuring timely responses, clear communication, and appropriate resolutions in line with our commitment to excellent customer service and accountability.

If your complaint relates to your heat network service and you have completed the stages of our complaints process, but remain dissatisfied, you can ask the Energy Ombudsman to review your complaint. Details on how to do so will be provided within the Stage 2 response.

The Energy Ombudsman is a free service, independent, and helps resolve disputes fairly. You can contact the Energy Ombudsman in the following ways:

- **Online:** www.energyombudsman.org/raise-dispute
- **Phone:** 0330 440 1624 (Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 9am to 1pm)
- **In writing:** Energy Ombudsman, P.O. Box 966, Warrington, WA4 9DF
- **Website:** www.energyombudsman.org

You can find more information about the Energy Ombudsman and their services on their website, including accessibility options such as braille, translation services, and sign language support.

9. Service charge disputes

Whilst the Council will consider disputes over service charges under its complaints process, once this has been exhausted (i.e. once a Stage 2 response has been issued), complainants will need to contact the First-Tier Tribunal rather than the Housing Ombudsman (as the former has jurisdiction with respect to disputes over the reasonableness of service charges).

Details on how to do so will be provided within the Stage 2 response, alternatively you can write to them at: First Tier Tribunal, Property Chamber, 3rd Floor, 10 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7LR. You can also find more information about the First-Tier Tribunal on their website, <https://www.gov.uk/housing-tribunals>.

10. Third party support

Use of advocates – Complainants may ask another person, known as an advocate, to act on their behalf in bringing their complaint to the Council's attention. The advocate may be a friend, relative or representative from an external organisation such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

When contacting the Council, the advocate must substantiate that they have the complainant's written permission to raise a complaint on their behalf to meet data protection requirements unless they are a Member of Parliament (MP) or Councillor. For enquiries from an MP or Councillor, there may be some circumstances where it is necessary to contact the complainant to obtain consent to process their sensitive personal data.

Designated persons – Under the Localism Act 2011, residents can ask for a complaint about their tenant/landlord relationship with the Council to be considered by a 'designated person' once it has exhausted the internal complaints process.

A 'designated person' can be an MP, a local Councillor or a recognised tenant panel. The 'designated person' will either try to help resolve your complaint directly with the Council or may refer it to the

Housing Ombudsman. When referring the complaint to the Ombudsman the complainant must wait eight weeks from the date of the Council's final decision letter before doing so.

11. Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will be looked into under the Council's housing management Complaints Policy. Such complaints will be passed to the relevant manager responsible for the day-to-day service for investigation, or referred to the Council's audit, risk and fraud investigations team, as appropriate.

12. Enquiries from elected representatives

MP and Councillor enquiries are logged and monitored by the customer experience team and allocated to the head of service or director responsible for the service in question. All responses will be sent within five working days from the date of receipt.

13. How we learn from complaints

The Council has mechanisms in place to ensure that the information we receive from complaints is fed into improving services for our residents. Users of the complaints process may be surveyed for their views on the handling and outcome of their complaint, to enable the Council to monitor resident satisfaction with the process and identify any improvements.

The Council has a responsibility to report on its complaints processes to monitor how they are being used, how satisfied service users are and how the complaints received are being used to improve services.

The Council produces an annual complaints report which offers an overview of how complaints across the council, including within housing management, have been managed over the year. The report is published annually between November and January for the previous year. It is shared with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea leadership team and the Overview and Select Committee, where it is reviewed, and feedback is provided for further insights and recommendations. More information about the annual report can be found on our website: www.rbkc.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints-comments-and-compliments.

Performance on complaints against targets and trends is also reported to the senior management team within housing management to ensure accountability for service delivery.

14. Managing unreasonable complainant behaviour

The Council is committed to the fair treatment of all complaints. Occasionally, a small number of complainants act in ways that are unreasonable or excessively persistent. This can prevent complaints (their own or others') from being resolved and place significant strain on Council resources.

In line with the **Housing Ombudsman – Managed Behaviour Policy** (<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/home/about-us/corporate-information/policies/dispute-resolution/managed-behaviour-policy/>), unreasonable or unacceptable behaviour may be one incident (e.g. abusive language) or ongoing behaviour over time (e.g. excessive demands). Examples include:

Unacceptable behaviour

- Aggressive, offensive, discriminatory, or threatening behaviour or language (verbal or written) that may cause employees to feel offended, afraid, threatened, or abused.
- Insulting, degrading, derogatory or discriminatory remarks; including racist, sexist, disablist, homophobic, or transphobic comments.

- Making unjustified complaints or allegations about employees without any evidence.
- Publishing information about employees online, including social media.
- Recording and publishing conversations with employees that are taken without their consent.
- Contacting employees using their personal details or social media presence such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X or LinkedIn.

Unreasonable demands

- Refusing to co-operate by not providing information we request to allow us to help resolve the issue while still expecting a resolution.
- Introducing new, minor or irrelevant issues part-way through an investigation.
- Refusing to accept decisions or submitting the same complaint again with only minor differences or without new evidence.
- Repeatedly demanding a response outside the agreed complaints process and timescales.
- Repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint without reason.
- Repeatedly refusing to speak to employees or insisting to speak to them when it is not possible.

Unreasonable contact

- Persistently contacting the Council with excessive calls, emails, or letters.
- High volumes of information provided by email, webform, or post where the information repeats what has already been given.
- Lengthy telephone calls repeating the same points for discussion.
- Repeated contact whilst a complaint is being progressed or after it is closed.
- Excessively copying our employees into emails with other parties where this is not necessary.

The complainant will be told why their behaviour is unreasonable and asked to change. If it continues, restrictions may be applied. These will always be proportionate and explained in writing and normally last 3–6 months.

Possible restrictions include:

- Contact limited to a named officer or set times/days.
- Contact restricted to letter (not email/phone).
- Only accepting contact via an advocate, solicitor, or councillor.
- Limiting contact to certain times or to a limited number of times per week or month.
- Requiring meetings to take place with a witness present.
- Declining to consider repeated complaints about the same matter.
- Logging correspondence without reply unless it raises new, relevant issues.

New complaints – If a complainant under the restriction raises a new, unrelated issue, it will be considered on its merits. However, restrictions may continue if they are still appropriate. This policy will not be used to block genuine new complaints.

Protecting staff – Where behaviour is abusive or threatens staff safety, the Council may act immediately without warning. This could include recording the individual on the cautionary contacts list, reporting to police, or legal action to restrict access to services or premises.

Record keeping – The Council will keep records of the complainant's details, what restrictions were applied and when, and of all reviews and communications. Records are retained for two years after resolution.

Appeals and reviews – Complainants may ask the executive director of housing and social investment

to review any restriction within 14 days. This decision is final, although they may still approach the Local Government Ombudsman or other relevant body. Restrictions are reviewed by the resident engagement and complaints manager every three months and complainants will be informed of the outcome.

15. Monitoring, review and accountability

To ensure legislative, regulatory amendments and best practice developments are incorporated, or to address any operational issues with the procedure, this policy will be reviewed annually by the resident engagement and complaints manager, and every three years by the director of housing management.

Input and approval will be sought from our residents (via the Tenants Consultative Committee or similar) prior to making any substantive changes. This is in line with our Corporate Values (Putting Communities First, Respect, Integrity, Working Together), and is intended to ensure our policy continues to meet the needs and aspirations of our residents.

16. Equalities statement

The Council is committed to promoting fair and equal access to services and equal opportunities in employment, the procurement of goods and as a community leader. The Council's policies, procedures and day to day practices have been established to promote an environment which is free from unlawful and unfair discrimination, while valuing the diversity of all people.

Discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability and age is not acceptable: the Council will take action to ensure no person using the council's premises or services receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by requirements or conditions that cannot be justified. The Council will tackle inequality, treat all people with dignity and respect and continue to work to improve services for all service users.

Further detail on the Duty, and the Council's approach to fulfilling its requirements, can be found at www.rbkc.gov.uk. We have considered equalities issues when developing this policy, by carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment.

17. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018

As a directorate of RBKC, housing management shares the commitment to ensure that all data is:

- Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner
- Collected for a specific and legitimate purpose and not used for anything other than this stated purpose, or as provided for in our privacy and fair processing notices
- Relevant and limited to whatever the requirements are for which the data is processed
- Accurate, and where necessary, kept up to date. Any identified inaccuracies will be amended or removed without undue delay
- Stored for as long as required, as specified within RBKC's Records Retention policy
- Secured with appropriate solutions, which protect the data against unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss, destruction or damage.

For further information about the Council's commitment to GDPR, go to www.rbkc.gov.uk.

18. Legal context

This policy will ensure full compliance with relevant legislation, regulatory requirements.

This policy is informed by, and compliant with, a range of legislation and guidance, including:

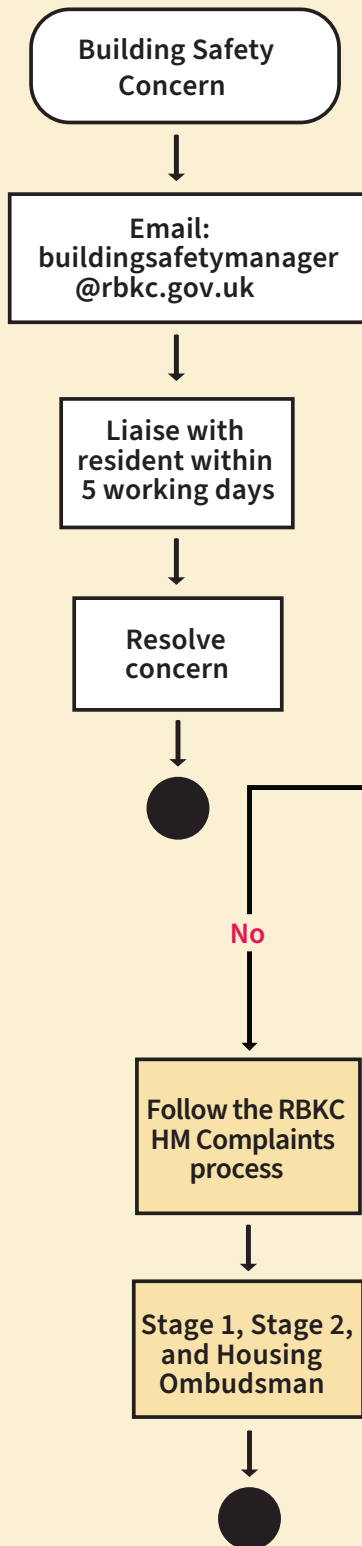
- **Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**
- **Housing Ombudsman Managed Behaviour Policy**
- **Local Government Act 1974**
- **Local Government Act 2000**
- **Housing Act 1996**
- **Building Safety Act 2022**
- **Localism Act 2011**
- **Awaab's Law**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018**

19. Appendices

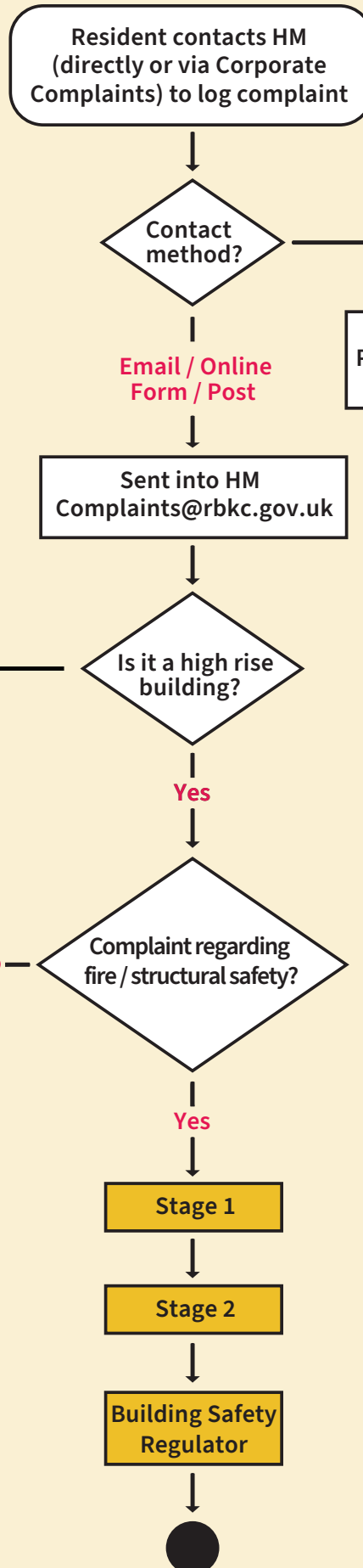
- Appendix 1 – Building Safety Complaints Flow Chart (see page next page)

Building safety concerns and complaints

Concerns



Complaints



List of high rise buildings

- Adair Tower
- 237 Acklam Road
- Ashburnham Tower
- Berenger Tower
- Blantyre Tower
- Broadwood Terrace
- Carton House
- Chelsea Reach Tower
- Chesterton Square
- Dartrey Tower
- Dixon House
- Elm Park House
- 5 Elm Park Gardens
- 7 Elm Park Gardens
- 67 Elm Park Gardens
- 68 Elm Park Gardens
- 93 Elm Park Gardens
- Frinstead House
- Gillray House
- Greaves Tower
- Hazlewood Tower
- 4 Hortensia Road
- Kelso Cochrane House
- King Charles House
- Lacland House
- Lonsdale House
- Lowerwood Court
- Markland House
- Marley House
- Milman's House
- Raymede Tower
- Riley House
- Trellick Tower
- Treverton Tower
- Whistler Tower
- Whitstable House