



## Feedback & Complaints Handling – Care

### **Our Complaints Policy**

We aim to provide a consistently high standard of service to everyone who uses our services, and we care about getting it right - ideally first time. However, we recognise the importance of putting things right if they have gone wrong.

This document applies to any complaints from clients in relation to Audley's care services. We have a separate procedure for property-related complaints (sales and operations), which can be found here: [www.audleyvillages.co.uk/feedback](http://www.audleyvillages.co.uk/feedback)

If a complaint alerts us to possible abuse or neglect, we will tell the Council's adult safeguarding team and the Care Quality Commission. The safeguarding team will decide how to investigate and monitor outcomes.

Audley Group is committed to ensuring views about our services are valued and we actively encourage feedback.

The policy applies to Audley Villages, Mayfield Villages, and all other Audley Group functions.

### **Complaint definition**

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, our team members, or those acting on its behalf affecting an individual owner, customer, or group of owners / customers.

### **Our approach to complaints**

We aim to welcome, understand, and resolve individual complaints in a timely manner. We will seek to identify any lessons arising from complaints and use these to improve our service provision across Audley Care. We treat all complaints in confidence.

Audley Care is open to all forms of feedback - face to face, in writing (both letter and email), telephone and via social media.

Often people feel more comfortable about suggesting improvements rather than complaining formally. Anyone receiving services, and their friends/ family, may make a suggestion. We suggest that initially suggestions are made to the Registered Branch Manager of the relevant village.

If we reject a complaint at any Stage, we will explain why in our response and make it clear that complainants may then refer the matter to the Ombudsman.

There are certain matters that are not treated as complaints or are not covered by this policy. Below is a list of these matters. This is not a complete list and, where applicable, complainants will be advised if their issue is not covered.

- A service request. This is defined as a request from a customer or owner to Audley requiring action to be taken to put something right.
- Anonymous complaints.

- Complaints relating to an event that occurred more than 12 months prior, where Audley is unable to reasonably investigate it, given the passage of time.
- Complaints previously raised and have already exhausted this procedure.
- Where the complainant or Audley has started legal proceedings or taken court action.
- Unreasonable complainant behaviour relating to:
  - Unreasonable demands
  - Unreasonable persistence
  - Verbal abuse, aggression, or violence
  - Overload communication

## **Our Complaints Procedure**

### **Making a complaint**

Please raise any concerns with us as soon as possible and ideally within 12 months of the events or when they first became known, as it can otherwise be difficult to investigate them effectively and satisfactorily.

Audley Care assures clients and their families that it will not withdraw or reduce services because someone makes a complaint. We will not treat complainants differently because they have made a complaint.

### **Who can complain**

Anyone affected by the way Audley Care provides services can make a complaint.

We will liaise in the same way with anyone authorised formally to act on behalf of a complainant. In particular, a representative may complain about the affected person if they:

- have died
- cannot make a complaint themselves, or
- have given consent for the representative to act on their behalf.

If you are not happy making a complaint yourself and you do not know someone who can talk or write to us on your behalf, we will be happy to find someone from an independent organisation to act as an advocate for you.

We deal with anonymous complaints under the same procedure; however, it is better if you can provide contact details so we can tell you the outcome of our investigation.

### **How you can make a complaint**

You can complain:

- in person
- by telephone
- through a member of our staff
- through an advocate or representative
- where someone complains orally, we will make a written record and provide a copy of it within 3 working days
- by letter
- by email

## Responsibility

The Registered Branch Manager has overall responsibility for dealing with all complaints made about their service.

The Registered Branch Manager or Audley Care may ask one of the management team to investigate the complaint. That person will have enough seniority and experience to deal with the issues raised by the complaint.

We will provide as far as is reasonably practical any help you need to understand the complaints procedure or advice on where you may get that help.

## Outcomes

When we have fully investigated the complaint, we will arrange to meet with you to discuss the outcome, and write to you with:

- details of the findings
- any action we have taken and
- our proposals to resolve your complaint.

## How we handle complaints

We set out our process and timeframes below. If at any Stage we find that we need more time to investigate a complaint, we will explain why and agree a new deadline with you.

In the first instance, please contact the Registered Branch Manager. If you do not know who this is, you can send your complaint to [carefeedback@audleygroup.com](mailto:carefeedback@audleygroup.com) and we will ensure it is directed to them.

**Stage 1:** Address to Registered Branch Manager: [feedback@audleygroup.com](mailto:feedback@audleygroup.com)

- Acknowledgement and logging of the complaint within 3 working days of receipt
- Response within 20 working days of the complaint being received. We will keep you informed about the progress of the investigation.

If you are unhappy with our stage 1 response, please let us know and we will escalate it to stage 2.

**Stage 2:** Escalate to Head of Care: [feedback@audleygroup.com](mailto:feedback@audleygroup.com)

- Response from Head of Care, providing our final decision in writing, within 40 working days of us first receiving the complaint, unless we have previously agreed a later deadline with you. We will keep you informed about the progress of the investigation.

If you are not satisfied with our final decision at stage 2, or we fail to provide it by the relevant deadline, you may refer your complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). You should normally contact the Ombudsman within 12 months of receiving our final decision. The LGSCO provides a free independent service. Please note that the LGSCO will not normally investigate a complaint until the provider has had an opportunity to respond and resolve matters.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman  
Tel: 0300 061 0614 Website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

We will cooperate with the Ombudsman during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting decision, which will be binding on us.

## **CQC**

Audley Care services are registered with and regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC does not investigate individual complaints but takes them into account in developing its inspection programme. The CQC is happy to receive information about services at any time.

Care Quality Commission National Correspondence  
Citygate  
Gallowgate  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 4PA

Tel: 03000 616161

Web site: [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

### **Complaints under the ARCO Code (in relation to domiciliary care provided by Audley Care)**

As an 'ARCO Approved Operator', we seek at all times to comply with the ARCO Consumer Code (see [www.arcouk.org](http://www.arcouk.org)). ARCO itself does not have a complaint handling function but has nominated The Property Ombudsman as its Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) provider. Where we are unable to resolve satisfactorily any complaint from you about compliance with the ARCO Consumer Code in relation to personal (domiciliary) care provided by Audley Care, you may refer this to The Property Ombudsman Service at Milford House, 43-55 Milford Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2BP. Tel: 01722 333306 E-mail: [admin@tpos.co.uk](mailto:admin@tpos.co.uk).

We will cooperate with the Ombudsman during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting decision, which will be binding on us.

## **Mediation**

We will explore the use of mediation by an external organisation with your agreement, where appropriate.

## **Your Rights and Protections**

### **Equality, discrimination, and diversity**

To make it as easy as possible and in keeping with our obligations under the Equality Act, we will take reasonable steps to adapt our normal complaint handling policies, procedures, and processes where appropriate to accommodate a disabled person's needs, for example providing correspondence in large print or identifying an auxiliary aid or service. We will also look to take steps, when reasonable, to accommodate the communication needs of others, for example accessing a language line service for those whose first language is not English.

We will not discriminate against anyone who makes a complaint. If a complainant behaves inappropriately in making a complaint, we will seek to manage that behaviour as necessary, while treating the complaint like any other.

We are committed to respecting diversity in all aspects of our work and meeting our obligations under the Equality Act. In line with this, we welcome feedback on any aspect of this policy where there is a question over its adherence to the above legislation.

**Data Protection**

We are committed to applying this policy in line with the General Data Protection Regulations as set out in our Data Protection Policy.

**Recording and monitoring**

Complaints and their resolution are recorded in Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports.

**Commitment and review**

The Group Board looks to the support and professionalism of staff at all levels in making this policy truly effective. This policy statement, along with other related supporting policies and procedures in use, will be regularly reviewed and revised as and when necessary.

The Care Director is accountable for the overall policy and is responsible for its implementation and for ensuring compliance.

Approved by Audley Executive Board on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023

\*We can provide this policy in other languages or in other formats on request.