

Feedback & Complaints Handling – Village Operations (Owner) and Sales Complaints (Non-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 customers in relation to the buying/selling process and to complaints from owners in relation to property or village management matters. We have a separate procedure for care-related complaints, which can be found here:

<https://www.mayfieldvillages.co.uk/complaints-procedure-care>

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. We will not treat complainants differently because they have made a complaint.

Audley Group 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. We'd suggest that initially suggestions are made to the General Manager of the relevant village.

We welcome complaints from customers (intending purchasers) and owners (residents) alike. We will liaise in the same way with anyone authorised formally to act on behalf of a complainant.

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 relevant 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.

Our Complaints Procedure

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.

We operate two separate processes depending on whether complaints relate to **Property Sales (Customers)** or **Village Operations (Owners)**. We set out our processes 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.

Property Sales (Customer) Complaints Handling

Property Sales Complaints may initially be made to the following email address, and will be directed to the Village Sales Manager: feedback@audleygroup.com

You can also complain in person, by telephone, by letter, through a member of staff, or through an advocate or representative. We will provide a written acknowledgement of any complaint made verbally within 3 working days.

Stage 1: Address to Village Sales Manager

- Acknowledgement and logging of the complaint within 3 working days of receipt
- Response within 10 working days of the complaint being received.

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 the Regional Director of Sales

- Response providing our final decision in writing, within 15 working days of the complaint being escalated.

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 Property Ombudsman Service. You should normally contact the Ombudsman within 12 months of receiving our final decision.

Property Ombudsman Service, Milford House, 43-55 Milford Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2BP
Tel: 01722 333306 E-mail: 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.

Village Operations (Owner) Complaints Handling

Owner Complaints may initially be made to the following email address, and will be directed to the relevant Village General Manager: feedback@audleygroup.com

You can also complain in person, by telephone, by letter, through a member of staff, or through an advocate or representative. We will provide a written acknowledgement of any complaint made verbally within 3 working days.

Stage 1: Address to Village General Manager

- Acknowledgement and logging of the complaint within 3 working days of receipt
- Response within 10 working days of the complaint being received.

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 Operations Director

- Response within 15 working days of the complaint being escalated.

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 Housing Ombudsman Service. You should normally contact the Ombudsman within 12 months of receiving our final decision.

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET

Tel: 0300 111 3000 E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.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.

Complaints under the ARCO Code

As an 'ARCO Approved Operator', we always seek to comply with the ARCO Consumer Code (see 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, 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.

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

Complaints in relation to Rents and Leasehold Management

Certain complaints in relation to rents and leasehold management may also be referred to the Residential Property First-tier Tribunal. We will provide you with contact details for the relevant office where your complaint appears to fall within the remit of the Tribunal.

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 Group Operations Director is accountable for the overall policy and is responsible for its implementation and for ensuring compliance.

Approved by Audley Board on the 9 February 2024

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