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# 'It's a moral duty for homes to ensure concerns are heard'

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abuse at Roseland Court, a care home near Truro in Cornwall. In 2015, after they became concerned for her welfare, Betty's family placed a secret recording device in her room. The recordings caught carers calling Betty a "disgusting little reprobate" and talking about filling her mouth with soap.

Betty had paid £93,000 in fees and the family had spent tens of thousands more on legal costs. After Ms Morley's involvement, the initial compensation offer of £10,000 was increased tenfold to £101,700 (read more on page 4).

George McNamara of Independent Age, a charity, said providers needed to do more to ensure residents and

families were able to complain. "While it may not be a legal requirement for care homes to proactively provide that information, it is a moral duty for them to ensure the concerns of residents and families are heard and considered formally," he added. "Only then can people have the reassurance of living in a home where they feel truly safe."

Independent Age criticised the "concerning" lack of a standard time frame for complaints handling, as residents could face substandard care for an indeterminate period of time.

Judy Downey of the Relatives & Residents Association (RRA), a charity, echoed others who said families were often worried about the consequences of complaining to a care home. She

cited the case of a relative's friend who had filled in a feedback form with a few suggestions for improvements. The resident was later told her friend "wasn't happy" with her care and was asked to leave.

"I would encourage people to ring us for help," Ms Downey said. "We can offer advice and can help mediate."

A complaint should first be made to the care home itself. If it is not resolved satisfactorily, it can be escalated to the ombudsman either by using an online form or by telephone.

The service is able to look at a wide range of problems, including fee disputes and safeguarding failings. Last year it recommended that one council refund customers £500,000

over delays to carrying out financial assessments. It also found against a provider that had separated a husband and wife for 10 months.

The ombudsman can recommend payment of what it calls "time and trouble" payments. A spokesman said that although it could not order anyone to pay, most providers complied with its recommendations. In 2017-18 there was just one case of non-compliance.

An alternative avenue, if there are concerns over complaining to the provider, could be to complain to an independent body such as the RRA, said Ms Downey. They can provide support with complaints and can help raise issues over regulation with bodies such as the Care Quality Commission.