

Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy

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1. Introduction and rationale to policy

Housing for Women aims to provide good services and sets itself high standards for response, courtesy, efficiency and quality. We encourage and welcome feedback on our services, whether positive or negative. Our effective handling of and response to complaints increases tenant and service user confidence and satisfaction and can provide valuable insights into what we do well and where we need to improve.

The complaints policy was last reviewed in 2014.

2. Policy Statement

Housing for Women's policy is to listen to all types of feedback, whether a complaint, comment or compliment and use this to inform service development and improvement.

This policy is supported by a detailed procedure to ensure all feedback is noted, recorded, monitored, responded to and contributes to learning.

Complaints, comments and compliments can be made in any way – verbally or in writing.

Our complaints principles are:

- Encourage feedback, both positive and negative
- Put matters right wherever necessary and in the shortest possible amount of time
- Resolve complaints at the first point of contact, wherever possible
- Keep complainants informed of progress in dealing with their complaints
- Ask and understand what a resident wants from their complaint and respond accordingly
- Learn from complaints, comments and compliments to help us develop and improve our services and change our practices or procedures to meet the needs of our residents
- Staff are empowered and confident to respond to complaints and will provide a high standard of service
- Measure satisfaction with complaints handling and complaints outcome for all formal complaints
- Record, acknowledge and give thanks for comments and compliments
- Openly and transparently report on complaints and lessons learned to residents

3. Who Does This Policy Apply To?

This policy applies to all tenants and service users of Housing for Women. It does not apply to members of the public who have no contractual relationship with the organisation. This policy will apply to leaseholders only where there is a direct contractual relationship between Housing for Women and the lessee.

A third party may raise a complaint on behalf of a tenant or service user. All responses will be communicated to the tenant or service user unless they have given written permission for us to communicate with the third party. Where complaints are received from a third party they will be contacted to confirm receipt of the complaint and how we will communicate our response.

Complaints made by e.g. occupants of neighboring properties or other parties will be recorded and responded to where required but are not subject to this policy.

4. Location of this policy

[Complaints Policy Approved Final July 2017.pdf](#)

5. Definitions

Comment - A comment is positive or negative feedback about our service, which does not require a response

Complaint - A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, in any form, with our services, whether justified or not, which requires a response

Compliment - A compliment is an unsolicited expression of thanks or praise for a member of staff or service area

Designated Person – can be an MP, a local Councillor, or a recognised Tenant Panel to whom a complaint can be referred after Stage 3 and before the Housing Ombudsman service

Enquiry - when a resident contacts us to ask us something about their home or tenancy. E.g. request for information about their rent account. If we fail to provide the information then this may become a complaint

Formal Complaint - an expression of dissatisfaction with our services or how we deliver that service that was not able to be resolved at the first point of contact or where the resident has requested a formal written response

Informal Complaint - an expression of dissatisfaction with our services or how we deliver that service that can be resolved at the first point of contact and does not require a formal written response but does require a record to be made of the action and response. Wherever possible the person taking the expression of dissatisfaction is responsible for seeking a resolution and owning the process from start to finish

Member Enquiry – any enquiry or channeling of a complaint via a third party including: Councillors, MP's; funders; other stakeholders or a recognised public representative

Service Request - when a resident contacts us to ask us to do something in their homes or in relation to their tenancy. E.g. reporting a valid repair; asking for a transfer application. If we fail to provide the information or service then this may become a complaint

Vexatious Complaint – a vexatious complaint is recognised in law as one which is brought without sufficient reason and / or serves only to annoy or harass

6. Exclusions

The following are excluded from the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy:

- Neighbour nuisance and ASB: these are requests for assistance and action. If we fail to deal with the problem or the resident does not feel that we are dealing with it properly this then may become a complaint
- Complaints about policy decisions: expressions of dissatisfaction will be noted but not dealt with through the complaints procedure
- A personal injury claim being dealt with by our insurers
- Issues where a resident has commenced legal action against us
- A dispute against the amount of rent or service charge being charged
- Enquiries or service requests as defined above
- Complaints made more than 6 months after the matter occurring, unless it has only recently become known or concerns an on-going delay. Older complaints may be considered at the discretion of the manager responsible for the service

7. Policy Detail

7.1 Comments

Comments are the responsibility of the person taking a call or the addressee in regard to e-mails or other written forms and they will express thanks to the tenant, service user or other party for their feedback.

7.2 Compliments

Compliments are the responsibility of the person taking a call or the addressee in regard to e-mails or other written forms and they will express thanks to the tenant, service user or other party for their feedback. Feedback about individuals, teams or suppliers will be fed back to them and their line manager or contract manager.

7.3 Informal Complaints

Informal complaints are the responsibility of the front line member of staff taking a call or the addressee in regard to e-mails or other written forms and to resolve in line with the complaint principles.

If the front line member of staff believes that the matter is outside their scope of influence and control they will discuss this with their line manager for advice.

7.4 Formal Complaints

Formal complaints are the responsibility of the relevant service manager, but can be responded to

by team members, and to resolve in line with the complaint principles.

Formal complaints relating to any member of staff must be assigned to the line manager.

7.5 Member Enquiry

Any member enquiry is the responsibility of the relevant service manager to respond to. All MP enquiries will be reported to the Chief Executive and Director of the relevant service area.

7.6 Persistent, Frivolous or Vexatious Complainants

There may be occasions where we receive complaints which may be frivolous or vexatious and where it is not possible to reach a reasonable solution or where the complainant will not accept a reasonable solution. Such a complaint may be as a result of someone being difficult and unreasonable or 'vexatious' but may also be due to a medical condition, mental illness or learning difficulty making effective communication difficult.

Persistence in trying to resolve an issue or complaint is not in itself vexatious and each case will be assessed individually.

If we consider a complaint may be vexatious we will carry out an assessment and liaise with any support or external agencies involved.

A Director will then agree with the service manager how to deal with the situation based on the individual circumstance.

8. Complaint Stages

Formal complaints are subject to a 3 stage procedure that is set out in detail in the Procedures accompanying this policy.

At each stage the complainant may escalate the complaint within 28 days if they are not satisfied with the response.

Stage 1 – Relevant Member of Senior Management Team:

- Responsibility as above
 - If a complaint is about a member of staff the complaint will be responded to by their line manager
- Response must address all issues raised in complaint, state whether the complaint is fully, partially or not upheld and set out a timetable for any actions required

Stage 2 – Relevant Director:

- Responsibility as above
- Complainant to be asked to explain reasons why they remain unhappy with the original response, their reason for wanting to progress the complaint and the remedy they are seeking if not set out in their reply
- Response must address all issues raised in original complaint, state whether the Stage 2 complaint is fully, partially or not upheld and set out a timetable for any actions required
- In cases where remedy sought is an increase in any compensation offered the Executive Team reserve the right to consider the claim in accordance with the 'Compensation and Reimbursement Policy' in advance of escalating to Stage 3

Stage 3 - Panel:

- Responsibility of Chief Executive to arrange a panel hearing involving at least one Board Member and a recognised tenant representative (i.e. member of Tenant Scrutiny Panel)
- The Director of the relevant service area will be responsible for submitting an overview of the complaint and providing copies of all relevant correspondence and information. The Director or Service Manager may be required to attend the panel hearing.
- The complainant will be given the opportunity to attend the panel and review the relevant documentation
- The panel will decide whether to reject or uphold the appeal and the Director or Chief Executive will inform the complainant of the result within 10 working days of the hearing

Beyond Stage 3:

- A complainant who has been through the internal procedure but is still not satisfied with the outcome has the following options:
 - a. They can ask for a designated person for help in resolving the complaint
 - b. They can wait 8 weeks and then refer the complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman who will have the final say in the matter. It is not the Association's role to refer cases to the Ombudsman but this maybe suggested by a designated person. The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Contact details: **Independent Housing Ombudsman**
 Exchange Tower
 Harbour Exchange Square
 London
 E14 9GE
 Tel. 0300 111 3000

[NB – a designated person can be an MP or a local councillor.]

9. Procedures

Detailed procedures relating to complaints, comments and compliments are located at [Complaints Internal procedure _ New 2017 Policy.pdf](#)

10. Reporting and Monitoring

All complaints, comments and compliments will be reviewed internally on a quarterly basis.

Formal complaints will be reported to the Board on a quarterly basis.

11. Learning

Learning outcomes will be recorded against both upheld and not upheld complaints as well as from comments and other feedback. Respective service managers will be responsible for implementing changes and improvements identified through the complaints process.

We will regularly publish where changes have been made as a result of learning from complaints.

12. Confidentiality

Housing for Women is committed to the principle of confidentiality and requires that any information known, written or held about any complainant remains confidential, unless we have their written consent to divulge information to relevant interested parties.

13. Equalities, Inclusion and Diversity

We aim to ensure that all tenants receive a fair and equal standard of service.

We will provide translation services if required.

We will monitor complaints by known diversity criteria to ensure that anyone who makes a complaint receives the same level of service.

14. Forms/Appendices

Forms relating to this policy are included within the procedures as above.

15. References

This policy has been written making due reference to good practice published by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Related Policies:

Policy Name	Existing / New or Revise
Compensation & Reimbursement	Approved January 2017
Inclusion and Diversity	New

16. Further information

The Housing Ombudsman Service: <http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>