

Getting It Right

With Your Help We Can Get It Right!

We welcome your comments, suggestions and complaints because they give us an idea of how our service is seen by our customers. This helps us to learn and to improve the way we work.

We aim to deliver the highest standards of service to all of our customers; however, we recognise that we do not always get it right. When our services do not live up to your expectations we want to know about it.

This section explains how to:

- Make a complaint
- Make a suggestion
- Tell us when we have done something right

Complaints And Suggestions

It is important for us to receive feedback when we get things right, so that we can be sure that we carry on doing them.

We value your ideas and suggestions on how we can improve the way we work.

If you wish to make a suggestion, or if you would like to compliment the service you have received, you can do so using any of the following methods:-

- Visiting our website
- Telephoning our office
- Emailing us
- Speak to an Officer or Manager

Your ideas and feedback will be used to improve the service that we provide and to inform future reviews of the way we work.

We will let you know how your feedback and ideas have been taken into account.

If you are a tenant or shared owner you can also get your ideas heard by joining our Resident Involvement Board. For more information contact our office or your housing officer.

Who Can Complain?

Our complaints procedure is open to anyone who receives a service from us or who is affected by our decisions. This includes:

- Residents, shared owners and leaseholders
- Applicants for our housing
- Neighbours of our properties
- Groups representing our customers – such as residents' groups.

What Is A Complaint?

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by a customer with any aspect of service provision, delivery, Association policy or member of staff.

Note: Complaints about anti-social behaviour should be pursued under the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. You should only use the Complaints Policy if you believe we failed to follow that policy in the investigation of your complaint.

It is important not to confuse complaints, enquiries and service requests.

- If you contact us to see if your front door can be replaced, this is an enquiry. If we do not deal with your enquiry, it becomes a complaint.
- If you report a fault with your front door, this is a service request. However, if the repair is not carried out in the time that we say, it becomes a complaint.

When To Make A Complaint

You should make a complaint if you are unhappy with any aspect of our service, or if you feel that we or our contractors have done any of the following:

- Offered a poor standard of service
- Failed to do something we should have done
- Acted too slowly
- Treated you unfairly
- Treated you discourteously

You can also use our complaints procedure if you wish to appeal against a decision made by us.

Even if you do not wish to make a formal complaint, please let us know if we have made a mistake or not lived up to your expectations. We welcome your feedback and can learn from it to improve what we do.

Please bring matters to our attention promptly- we will not normally deal with complaints that are reported to us more than 4 months after the event as these are hard for us to investigate fairly.

If a complaint is considered to be of a vexatious or unreasonable manner, we may choose to deal with it differently or we may refuse to deal with the complaint completely. If this is the case, we will provide you with our reasons for defining the complaint as vexatious, and provide you with the criteria that determine whether a complaint is vexatious.

What We Will Do When We Receive A Complaint

When we receive a complaint we will:

- Welcome your feedback
- Listen to you and try to understand the issue
- Take your complaint seriously
- Ask you how you would like us to put things right
- Investigate it thoroughly
- Provide you with an explanation of how we arrived at our response

When receiving a complaint in person or by telephone we will:

- Be polite
- Listen to the points being made
- Not interrupt or defend the points being made
- Give clear information on what will happen next
- Not make promises other than that the complaint will be fully investigated

If the complaint is upheld:

- We will give you an apology
- We will put the mistake right if we can
- We may offer compensation if this is appropriate

If the complaint is not upheld:

- We will explain why and what you should do if you are not happy with this outcome.

How to Complain

We will receive a complaint in whatever way you choose to make it. It is not necessary for the complaint to be made in the complaints form. It can also be made in any of the following ways:

- By telephone call
- By fax
- By email
- By making a personal visit
- In a letter
- On site to a member of staff

In many cases we will be able to resolve the issue for you without the need for you to make a formal complaint. If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, however, you can then make a formal complaint to us.

How We Deal With A Formal Complaint

Stage 1

Once we have received your complaint it will be dealt with by the Complaints Co-ordinator. We will write to you within 24 hours of receipt, acknowledging that we have received your complaint and telling you the name of the person dealing with it, and the date that you will receive a full response. The target date for the final response will be 10 working days from the date that the complaint was received in the office that is dealing with the complaint.

The person will aim to investigate your complaint and send you a written response by the date given in the acknowledgement letter. If the problem is complicated and we are unable to resolve the matter within the timescale, we will write to you and inform you of this, and let you know the date by which we aim to be able to respond.

Stage 2

If you are still not happy, you can appeal within 20 working days of receipt of our response letter. You need to inform the Association why you are not happy with the outcome and how you want the matter to be resolved. This appeal will be referred to the Company Secretary. An appeal panel hearing will normally be convened within 20 working days and the complainant will be invited to attend if they wish to do so.

The appeal panel will consist of the Company Secretary, a Board Member and, where possible, a tenant representative, who will

consider the complaint and decide whether the action that we have taken is fair and reasonable. We will write to you to confirm the decision made within 5 working days.

Stage 3

From 1 April 2013, Stage 3 is required as a result of the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. This requires that if you are making a complaint, you have the right to appeal to a designated person tier prior to the Ombudsman, unless you wait 8 weeks from the end of the internal process to applying to the Ombudsman.

The Association does not currently have a recognised tenant panel; therefore you can refer the complaint to your local councillor or MP of your choice. The Association will provide advice and/or information regarding this if required.

Stage 4

If you have followed stages 1 and 2, but not stage 3, you have to wait 8 weeks before you can proceed to the Ombudsman.

If you have followed stages 1 to 3 of our complaints procedure and are still dissatisfied, the Housing Ombudsman Service can pursue your complaint for you. This is a free service, but only tenants, shared owners, ex occupiers and applicants can complain to the Ombudsman.

You must contact the Ombudsman within 6 months of the end of the internal stages. The Ombudsman Service will only consider the complaint if they think we have done something wrong. We will comply with the findings or recommendations that the Ombudsman makes.

You can contact them directly or we can provide you with information on request.

Their contact details are:

Housing Ombudsman Service, 81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN

Tel: Lo Call 0845 7125 973

Minicom: 020 7404 7092 Fax: 020 7831 1942

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Confidentiality

We treat all complaints and appeals in the strictest of confidence. We will not give out your name if you do not want us to. If during the course of our investigations we need to give out your name we will contact you first and get your permission before we do so. We cannot deal with formal complaints if you do not give us your name.

Compensation

You may be entitled to compensation if we fail to meet minimum service standards or if you have experienced financial or other loss; evidence of this would need to be produced. You may also receive compensation if we consider it appropriate to resolve an official complaint.