

COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We aim to provide a high standard of service in everything we do and we will seek to achieve this by:
- employing suitably qualified and experienced staff;
 - operating in accordance with all statutory requirements;
 - complying with all relevant guidance published by the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and Chartered Institute of Housing;
 - implementing effective operational policies and procedures;
 - regularly seeking feedback through surveys etc. on how well we are doing.
- 1.2 We recognise however that there will be occasions when applicants, tenants, sharing owners and others receiving services from us consider that we have fallen short of the standards we would wish to achieve, and that individuals will wish to comment on or complain about an aspect of our services, or to suggest improvements in the way we deliver services.
- 1.3 This policy describes our overall arrangements for responding to comments and complaints. The policy is supported by detailed operational procedures.
- 1.4 Suggestions, comments or complaints may be made by or on behalf of anyone who receives, requests or provides a service from or to us. A leaflet clearly describing our comments and complaints procedures will therefore be made readily available to everyone who may need it.
- 1.5 In accordance with our Equal Opportunities policy, we will where necessary produce our comments and complaints leaflet in minority ethnic languages for those whose first language is not English, or in Braille or audio tape to assist those with hearing or sight impairment. We will also provide translation facilities where required to assist at interviews and meetings.
- 1.6 This policy complies with Performance Standard GS3.3.

2.0 AIM OF THE POLICY

2.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that:

- all suggestions and comments on the standards of our service are considered and where appropriate acted upon, with feedback as required to the person making the comment;
- all complaints are dealt with within the published timescales (see Appendix 1) and wherever possible to the satisfaction of both the complainant and ourselves;
- any shortcomings in procedures identified as a result of a suggestion, comment or complaint are rectified;
- we perceive and deal with comments and complaints as an opportunity for positive action
- we comply with Performance Standards and the Chapter on Customer Complaints in the SFHA's 'Raising Standards'.

3.0 SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS

3.1 Suggestions and comments from tenants, applicants and any others in receipt of services from us will be welcomed, as they can:

- provide informal feedback on the standards being attained;
- provide opportunities to improve existing services;
- provide 'early warning' of an issue that could evolve into a complaint, allowing early action to be taken.

3.2 Suggestions or comments will normally concern matters which can be dealt with immediately or within a very short time, with perhaps a follow-up 'phone call to the person making the comment when action has been taken or the matter investigated.

3.3 Where the suggestion or comment may involve considering an improvement to the standard of a particular activity, the Head of Section concerned or the Chief Executive may choose to reply more formally, where appropriate thanking the individual for their suggestion and outlining the action which has been or will be taken.

Such comments or suggestions may be recorded on the appropriate part of the database by the person responding to them.

3.4 To encourage constructive contributions, we may give a prize of up to £100 for any suggestion which results in a significant improvement in our standards and/or efficient provision of services.

4.0 COMPLAINTS

Stage 1 Complaints

- 4.1 Anyone wishing to make a complaint will be encouraged to do so in writing, either by letter, email or by completing our Complaints form. However an initial complaint may also be made verbally, either in person or by phone.
- 4.2 A Stage 1 complaint will be added to the database by the person receiving it and will normally be investigated and replied to by the relevant member of staff, e.g. Housing Officer.
- 4.3 Stage 1 complaints about the behaviour or attitude etc. of a member of staff will be passed to the relevant Head of Section or the Chief Executive for recording, investigation and reply.

Where the complaint is against a Head of Section, the complaint will be investigated etc. by the Chief Executive.

Where the complaint is against the Chief Executive, the Chairman will arrange for the investigation.

- 4.4 Complaints will be investigated and responded to in accordance with the procedures supporting this policy and within the current target timescales (see Appendix 1).

Stage 2 Complaints

- 4.5 A Stage 2 complaint is where the complainant is not satisfied with the reply received or the action taken at Stage 1. To be considered, a Stage 2 complaint must be in writing.
- 4.6 Stage 2 complaints will normally be dealt with by the management level above the level that dealt with Stage 1, e.g. Head of Section or Chief Executive, who will arrange for the complaint to be recorded, acknowledged and investigated in accordance with the procedures and within the current timescales (see Appendix 1).
- 4.7 The Head of Section, Chief Executive or Chairman will write to the complainant to advise them of the outcome of the investigation, within the stated timescales. The complainant will be advised of any action to be taken and informed of their right of appeal as detailed in Section 3 below (see Appendix 1 for timescales).
- 4.8 Where the complaint concerns an aspect of our Tenant Participation process, the complaint will also be considered by our Tenant Participation Working Group.

Stage 3 - Appeals

- 4.9 Where the reply has been sent by a Head of Section but the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be advised that they have the right to appeal to the Chief Executive (see Appendix 1 for timescales).
- 4.10 Where the initial reply has been sent by the Chief Executive, or where the complainant has appealed to the Chief Executive, they will be advised that if they remain dissatisfied they have the right to appeal to the Management Committee (see Appendix 1 for timescales).
- 4.11 In the event of an appeal to the Management Committee, an ad-hoc Complaints Panel comprising 3 members of the Management Committee (excluding the Chairman and any other Committee Member if they have already been involved at an earlier stage) will be convened (see Appendix 1).
- 4.12 The complainant may request to, or be invited to attend the appeal hearing to present their case, and may be accompanied by a friend or colleague. Following the presentation of the case and any questions, the complainant will be asked to withdraw and the panel will proceed to discuss the case and make their decision.
- 4.13 In the case of a very serious complaint the Complaints Panel may recommend that the matter be referred to the Management Committee.

Ombudsman

- 4.14 If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the hearing by the Complaints Panel they will be advised that they may appeal to the Public Services Ombudsman and will be given information to assist them to do so.

5.0 TIMESCALES AND RECORDS

- 5.1 We will aim to respond to each stage within specified timescales. The current target timescales are detailed in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 We will ensure that the appropriate details of each complaint are recorded at each stage in the process, so that the necessary details are available should the complainant remain dissatisfied and further investigation etc. is required.

6.0 REDRESS

- 6.1 Where we accept that we have not achieved the desired standards we will offer appropriate redress. This may be in the form of an apology, or recompense for loss or damage, or a goodwill payment in compensation for inconvenience or distress.

6.2 Where a goodwill payment is to be offered, the Chief Executive will have delegated authority to offer up to £500 and the Complaints Panel will have delegated authority to offer up to £1,000. Offers above £1,000 will have to be approved by the full Management Committee.

7.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

7.1 Wherever possible we will respect the confidentiality of complainants and those being complained about. Where it is necessary to reveal a name, we will only do so with the individual's agreement.

8.0 TRAINING

8.1 We will provide appropriate training for all staff who have to deal with comments and complaints in the course of their duties.

8.2 We will also provide training to Members of the Management Committee who may be involved in hearing appeals.

9.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

9.1 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that all staff and Committee members comply with this policy and the procedures which support it.

9.2 The Head of Policy and Development will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for recording the information required to monitor the receipt, progress and outcome of each formal complaint.

9.3 On a monthly basis, the Senior Management Team will monitor progress with dealing with current complaints, and will consider any action required as a result of emerging trends etc.

9.4 The Head of Policy and Development will ensure that the Comments and Complaints Procedure is publicised as widely as possible to all who need to be aware of it, including the production of an information leaflet on suggestions, comments and complaints.

9.5 The Chief Executive will ensure that an annual summary of all complaints received and of the outcome following investigation is submitted to the Management Committee.

9.6 The Head of Policy and Development will ensure that this policy is reviewed by the Management Committee at least every five years.

Click [HERE](#) to see a copy of the leaflet

FIRST APPROVED IN	MAY 1995
CURRENT VERSION NO. 4.0 APPROVED IN	DECEMBER 2007
NEXT REVIEW DUE BY	DECEMBER 2012
COMPLIES WITH	Performance Standard GS3.3 and Raising Standards Chapter 8

APPENDIX 1

COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY - TIMESCALES

STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS

1. Where the complaint is straightforward and requires little investigation, letter to complainant advising the outcome of the investigation, action taken/to be taken etc., to be sent within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.

OR

2. Where the complaint is more complicated, acknowledgement letter to be sent within 2 working days of receipt, followed by letter advising the outcome of the investigation, action to be taken etc., to be sent within 2 weeks (10 working days) of receipt of the complaint.

NOTE: If the investigation requires more time, an interim response will be sent within 2 weeks advising on progress and estimating when the formal reply will be sent.

STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS

3. Acknowledgement letter to be sent within 2 working days of receipt, followed by letter advising the outcome of the investigation, action to be taken etc., to be sent within 2 weeks (10 working days) of receipt of the complaint.

NOTE: If the investigation requires more time, an interim response will be sent within 2 weeks advising on progress and estimating when the formal reply will be sent.

STAGE 3 - APPEALS

Appeal to Chief Executive

Timescale within which the complainant may appeal to the Chief Executive – 2 weeks from the date they receive the written reply from the Head of Section.

Acknowledgement letter to complainant – within 3 working days of receipt of appeal letter.

Letter to complainant advising the outcome of the investigation etc. to be sent within 2 weeks (10 working days) of receipt of the appeal, unless further time is required to investigate, in which case an interim reply will be sent within 2 weeks.

Appeal to Management Committee

Timescale within which the complainant may appeal to the Management Committee - 4 weeks from the date they receive the written reply from the Chief Executive (or Chairman).

Acknowledgement letter to complainant – within 3 working days of receipt of appeal letter.

Letter to complainant notifying the date of the Complaints Panel hearing – to be sent within 2 weeks of receipt of the appeal.

Complaints Panel to meet within 4 weeks of the date of the notification letter to the complainant.

Letter to complainant advising the outcome of the appeal hearing to be sent within 5 working days of the Complaints Panel meeting.