

Complaints

Policy

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Appendices			

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to complaints.
- 1.2 We view complaints as a valuable source of feedback and learning for our services, helping to drive improvement and maintain a positive relationship with our customers.
- 1.3 Sometimes things go wrong, and when they do, we will try to put things right as soon as we can. We are committed to understanding what went wrong and making positive improvements to our services as a result.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all customers who live in our homes, applicants for a property owned or managed by Housing for Women, and any person acting on behalf of a resident with their consent.
- 1.5 This policy complies with the following regulatory and good practice standards:
 - Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
 - Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Standards (Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard)
 - Localism Act 2011

2 Policy aims and objectives.

- 2.1 This policy aims to ensure:
 - Housing for Women provides clear and transparent information about our approach to managing and responding to complaints.
 - Housing for Women provides a good and reliable service to all our customers and to treat all feedback as a learning opportunity to improve services in the future.

3 What is a complaint?

- 3.1 We define a complaint as:
 - ‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Housing for Women, our own staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.’
 - Our customers drive the complaints process (all complaints are initiated by customers raising concerns with us) and we are responsible for managing the process. Our colleagues will proactively engage in our complaint process and if further enquiries are needed to resolve a matter or at the customer’s request, the issue must always be logged as a complaint and treated as a complaint according to this process.

4 What we will deal with through this policy

- 4.1 Customers can complain about our standard of service, actions, or lack of action by us or anyone working for us (such as contractors).
- 4.2 There may be times when an issue can be put right ‘there and then’ and with an apology. These won’t be dealt with through our formal complaints process unless a customer asks us to do so.
- 4.3 There are some things that we will not deal with through our complaints policy. The following are not covered through this policy:
 - Neighbour dispute or reports of anti-social behaviour (our approach is set out in our anti-social behaviour policy) unless customers are unhappy with our response to these.
 - Complaints that are already being managed. This includes where legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.

- Situations where legal or regulatory action has already been taken and a determination has already been made, including through our complaints process or through the Housing Ombudsman.
- Insurance claims and appeals including damage to personal possessions and personal injury accidents which should be referred to the relevant insurers. However, a complaint about Housing for Women standard of service can still be made.
- If the complaint is disputing the service charge, we have set. Customers may resolve the dispute either directly with Housing for Women or through the courts (First Tier Tribunal). However, this does not prevent customers raising their complaint with the Housing Ombudsman.
- Anonymous complaints. However, we will record these to help us to improve our services.

4.4 If a customer's complaint can't be dealt with through this policy, due to it being listed as one of the exclusions above, we'll provide a detailed explanation setting out the reasons why a matter is not suitable for the complaints process. We'll also provide information on their right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman.

4.5 Anyone can make a complaint about the services that we, or anyone working for us (such as contractors), provide. We have two stages to our complaints process, as described below: Stage 1 and Stage 2. Non-residents can access Stage 1 only of our process and do not have access to the Housing Ombudsman Service. If they are unhappy with the outcome, their recourse is the same as other private individuals i.e. the courts.

4.6 Representatives or third parties can act on the behalf of a customer with the customer's approval. Housing for Women will deal with the complaint in the same way as if the customer had raised it directly.

5 How to complain

5.1 Complaints can be made in the following ways:

- Through our online customer portal My Account which is available on our website (<https://hfw.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-compliments.co.uk>)
- Through an online complaint form if you don't have a customer account
- By telephone on 0207 501 6120
- By email at complaints@h4w.co.uk
- Through our social media channel/s
- To a member of staff, for example a neighbourhood officer or support worker
- In writing to:

Complaints & Customer Service
 Housing for Women Sixth Floor
 Blue Star House
 234-244 Stockwell Road
 London
 SW9 9SP

5.2 All complaints should be made within six months of the issue happening.

5.3 Housing for Women will provide a complaints service that is accessible to all customers. We retain the right, where we consider complainant actions to be unacceptable, to restrict or change access to our service. See our Unacceptable Actions by Complainants policy for more detail.

6 Our complaint handling standards

6.1 Housing for Women Complaints and Customer Service Team is responsible for handling complaints. The person handling the complaints will have appropriate skills and no conflict of interest with the complaint they are investigating.

6.2 Housing for Women has a two-stage complaint process. The table below sets out our timescales for responding to complaints once we have received them:

Activity	Timescale
We let you know that we have received the complaint and log it on our system	Within 5 working days of complaint being received
We provide a response to the Stage 1 complaint	Within 10 working days of a stage 1 complaint being logged
We provide a response to the Stage 2 response	Within 20 working days of a stage 2 complaint being escalated

Stage 1: initial complaint

- 6.3 When a complaint is made, we will acknowledge and log it within five working days.
- 6.4 We will carry out a non-biased investigation and we aim to share a comprehensive answer within 10 working days of the complaint being logged.
- 6.5 Where we're unable to respond to a Stage 1 complaint within 10 working days, we will agree any extension with the person raising the complaint. We will then respond within 20 working days and provide regular updates.

Stage 2: Escalating your complaint.

- 6.6 If a customer is not happy with the way we've dealt with a complaint or our decision at Stage 1 they should let us know within 20 working days of the stage 1 decision if they wish to move to Stage 2. See the section on how to complain about contact information.
- 6.7 We will accept a request to escalate the complaint to the next stage unless an exclusion applies (see section 4). Housing for Women will not add new information on the complaint at Stage 2. New information may be treated as a new complaint.
- 6.8 We will aim to provide a response to complaints escalated to Stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated.
- 6.9 Where Housing for Women is unable to respond to a Stage 2 complaint within this time, we will agree an extension with the person raising the complaint. Housing for Women will respond within 30 working days we'll provide regular updates.
- 6.10 If the resident is unhappy once the complaints process has been exhausted, Housing for Women will signpost to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

7 Putting things right

- 7.1 Where something has gone wrong Housing for Women will acknowledge this and share the actions already taken, or those we intend to take, to put things right. These may include:
 - Apologising
 - Explaining what happened
 - Reconsidering or changing a decision
 - Amending a record
 - Changing policies, procedures, or practices
- 7.2 Housing for Women will consider compensation if it is found that service delivery did not meet our expected standards.
- 7.3 Compensation will reflect the extent of any service failures, and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. Housing for Women will also consider and out of pocket expenses caused by the complaint event. Please see Housing for Women Compensation Policy for further detail.
- 7.4 Where appropriate, we may consider discretionary compensation for damage to personal belongings, in addition to signposting to our insurers.

8 Housing Ombudsman Service

8.1 A complaint can be raised with the Housing Ombudsman Service at any stage of the process for an independent review of the case.

8.2 The Housing Ombudsman service can be contacted in the following ways:

- Online: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents
- Telephone: 0300 111 3000
- Email: info@housingombudsman.org.uk
- In writing to:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

9 Learning and improvement

9.1 Housing for Women promotes a positive complaint handling culture. We have processes in place to make sure we gather learning from complaints and use this insight to make positive changes to our services.

9.2 Housing for Women will share our learning from complaints with our customers, colleagues and through our Customer Annual Report.

9.3 Housing for Women completes an annual complaints self-assessment sharing how well we think we're performing against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Complaint self-assessments can be found on Housing for Women website.

10 Consulting on this policy

10.1 This policy has been developed and updated informed by feedback from customers about our complaint handling.

10.2 This policy was also developed in consultation internally across Housing for Women, including operations, policy, and communications teams.

11 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Statement

11.1 Housing for Women, colleagues, partners, stakeholders, and contractors are committed to providing services, which are relevant and appropriate to the needs of people. We will treat others fairly and without discrimination.

11.2 We will make sure that all our services relating to this policy are accessible and available for all customers as set out in the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

11.3 We have undertaken an equality impact assessment for this policy.

12 Data Protection Statement

12.1 The protection of personal data is of great importance to Housing for Women and more than just a legal obligation.

12.2 Housing for Women are the data controllers registered with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) with the following registration numbers:

- Housing for Women: Z6468014

12.3 Our data protection policy and procedures are governed by UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We collect and process personal information to provide housing services and meet our contractual and legal obligations. All staff and persons are approved and authorised to receive

personal data are obliged to handle personal data in accordance with applicable laws and regulations at all times.

12.6 You can also contact the Data Protection Officer / Data Compliance team at customer.service@h4w.co.uk

13 13 Associated documents

- Compensation policy
- Complaints procedure
- Unacceptable Actions by Complainants policy
- Anti-social behaviour policy