



Making a complaint

Guidance Notes

What are our aims?

Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) aims to provide a first class housing service to all of its customers which meets their needs. However, sometimes things will go wrong and customers will feel dissatisfied with the service they have received. We want to know when this happens so we can try to put things right and avoid getting things wrong again by dealing with complaints effectively and properly. We also aim to learn from complaints and improve our service for the benefit all of our customers.

We aim to make our complaints procedure easy and comfortable to use, consistent, impartial and confidential with relevant and understandable results. We are happy to talk about any aspect of the procedure with you to help decide if you wish to use it.

Who can use our complaints procedure?

Anyone getting or asking for a service from HHP can use our Complaints Procedure. This includes tenants, people looking for housing and the wider community affected by our activities.

The procedure can also be used by people acting on behalf of someone who wants to complain such as Councillors, MSP or MP, Solicitors, Citizens Advice Bureaux, relatives and friends.

What are our key principles?

When we deal with a complaint we will:

- Acknowledge having got the complaint and tell you when we will reply
- Take it seriously
- Deal with it when we say we will covering every point of the complaint
- Investigate it thoroughly and honestly
- Give clear and open reason in our reply for our decision
- Set right any wrong done or difficulty caused
- Advise of the appeal or review process which can be followed including how to contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Our complaints procedure is designed to be sympathetic, welcoming and non-defensive and resolve problems as soon as possible to put complaints back to the position they would have been if there had been no problem. We will not treat you any less favourably in future because you have complained.

What can you complaint about?

You can complain about any aspect of our service including:

- Repairs not done or done wrongly
- Not getting information you should have been given
- How you have been dealt with by our staff or contractors
- Housing applications and how they have been handled
- Unfairness or discrimination
- Our Policies.

When should you not use the complaints procedure?

Please do not use the complaints procedure if:

- You are asking for a service (for instance if your central heating breaks down)
- You want to complain about neighbours - this will be dealt with by our Anti-social Behaviour Policy
- You want to ask about what services we provide.

You should contact your local HHP office to ask about these matters.

Are some complaints different?

Please note that we may not be able to consider some complaints under the procedure if they are being made in an unreasonable way or if there is a better way to resolve what you have asked us to do.

We may also have to consider other people's right to confidentiality when replying to certain kinds of complaints (for instance about housing applications).

How can I complain?

An informal approach

It is usually best to first get in touch with staff at your local HHP office - details on the last page. They will try to sort things out quickly and effectively and will be pleased to help you. Our aim is to resolve almost all complaints in an informal way.

Formal complaints

If we can't sort out the problem a formal approach is available. This has 3 parts:

Stage 1 - Putting in a formal complaint

- You should, where possible, put your complaint in writing so we can be clear on what you expect from us. There are complaint forms available for use if you will find that helpful. You will find one attached to these guidance notes.
- We will take formal complaints verbally and our staff will write down the details and send you a copy to check that we have got the information correct.
- We will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days.
- The complaint will be investigated by a senior member of staff and you will be told the outcome with 28 days. We may take longer if the complaint is complicated but we will tell you if that is so.
- Our reply to your complaint will cover all points in it and we will make clear the reason for our decision.

Stage 2 - Making an appeal

If you are not happy with our response to your formal complaint you can appeal:

- Put your appeal in writing to our Chief Executive
- Your appeal will be acknowledged within 5 days
- The Chief Executive will either deal with your complaint or put it to HHP's Board Members
- You will be told if your appeal will be heard by Board Members of HHP meeting on a specific date and as soon as is possible
- You will be able to come to that meeting or be represented

Stage 3 - Contacting the Housing Association Ombudsman

If you are not prepared to accept the decision of our Board Members you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman who investigates complaints about Housing Associations. This is a free and independent service. A leaflet about the Ombudsman is available from our HHP local offices.

You can get in touch with the:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

4 Melville Street

EDINBURGH

EH3 7NS

Tel: 0800 377 7330

E-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk

How are complaints monitored?

All formal complaints we receive are recorded and details are kept of any action taken in response. Reports will be made to our Board about levels of complaints and recommending changes required to our practices and procedures which are needed as a result of complaints received.

Are complaints dealt with confidentially?

Yes.

How do I contact HHP?

General enquiries

All general telephone enquiries: 0300 123 0773

Local Area Contact

Stornoway

(Covering all of Lewis)

Contact

Andrea Watson

Phone number

0300 123 0773

Balivanich

(Covering Harris, Uist & Barra)

John Alick MacQuarrie

0300 123 0773

Any enquiries about the complaints procedure can be made to :

John MacIver

Director of Operations

Hebridean Housing Partnership

Gleann Seileach Business Park

Willowglen Road

Stornoway

HS1 2QP

Tel: 0300 123 0773

Hebridean Housing Partnership

Aiming to deliver excellent housing services throughout our Islands