

COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

APPROVED BY HHP BOARD:
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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Our Complaints Handling Policy is to ensure our procedures are based on the SPSO's model. It seeks to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.
- 1.2 The procedure has been adapted from the model developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The SPSO have tried to produce a standard approach to handling complaints across the housing sector.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 This procedure aims to help us to 'get it right first time'. We want quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by capable, well-trained staff.
- 2.2 Complaints give us valuable information we can use to improve customer satisfaction. Our complaints handling procedure will enable us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and may also prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from happening again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the service user's views and experience, and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our customers a form of redress when things go wrong, and can also help us continuously improve our services.
- 2.3 Resolving complaints early saves money and creates better customer relations. Sorting them out as close to the point of service delivery as possible means we can deal with them locally and quickly, so they are less likely to escalate to the next stage of the procedure. Complaints that we do not resolve swiftly can greatly add to our workload.
- 2.4 The complaints handling procedure will help us do our job better, improve relationships with our service users and enhance our public perception. It will help us keep the customer at the heart of the process, while enabling us to better understand how to improve our services by learning from complaints.

HEBRIDEAN HOUSING PARTNETSHIP COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 3.1 We are committed to providing high-quality customer services. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

- 4.1 We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

WHAT CAN I COMPLAIN ABOUT?

- 5.1 Complaints can be made about things like:
- failure or refusal to provide a service;
 - inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service;
 - delays in responding to enquiries or requests;
 - unfairness, bias or prejudice in service delivery;
 - lack of provision, or the provision of misleading, unsuitable or incorrect advice or information;
 - a repair that has not been carried out properly or in an agreed timeframe;
 - dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual;
 - failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services;
 - failure to follow the appropriate administrative process;
 - conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
 - disagreement with a decision, (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).

- 5.2 Complaints may involve more than one of our services or be about someone working on our behalf.

WHAT CAN'T BE COMPLAINED ABOUT?

- 6.1 There are some things that can't be dealt with by the complaints procedure. These include:
- a routine first-time request for a service, for example reporting a problem that needs to be repaired or initial action on anti-social behaviour;
 - requests for compensation;
 - Our policies and procedures that have a separate right of appeal, for example, if a service user is dissatisfied with the level of priority they have been given when applying for a house, they may have the right to appeal against the decision;
 - issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal;
 - disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector;
 - a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts;
 - a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment;
 - a concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern);
 - a concern about a child or an adult's safety;
 - an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision;

- abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our Unacceptable Actions By Complaints Policy; or
 - a concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf).
- 6.2 If other procedures or rights of appeal can help the service user resolve their concerns we will give information and advice to help them.

WHO CAN COMPLAIN?

- 7.1 Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser). If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent. Please also read the section on Getting help to making a complaint below.
- 7.2 If the complaint is raised by a child, is raised on behalf of a child or is about matters that affect a child then the SPSO's Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process Guidance will be followed to ensure our Policy is delivered in a way that meets children's rights under the UNCRC.

HOW TO COMPLAIN?

- 8.1 Service users can complain in person at any of our offices, by phone, in writing, by email or by using our complaints form.
- 8.2 It is easier for us to resolve complaints if they are made quickly and directly to the service concerned. Services users should talk to a member of our staff from the service they are complaining about. We should try to resolve any problems on the spot.
- 8.3 To receive a complaint we require:
- full name and address;
 - as much detail as possible about the complaint;
 - what has gone wrong; and

- how the service user wants us to resolve the matter.

HOW LONG DOES A SERVICE USER HAVE TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

9.1 Normally, the complaint must be made within six months of:

- the event being complained about; or
- the service user finding out that they have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

9.2 In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If the service user feels that the time limit should not apply to their complaint, they should tell us why.

CONTACT DETAILS

Hebridean Housing Partnership Creed Court

Gleann Seileach Business Park

Willowglen Road

Stornoway

Isle of Lewis

HS1 2QP

Hebridean Housing Partnership

Units 7 & 8 Eabhal Business Park

Balivanich

Isle of Benbecula

HS7 5AD

Telephone:

0300 123 0773

Email:

customerservices@hebrideanhousing.co.uk

Website:

www.hebrideanhousing.co.uk

WHAT HAPPENS ON RECEIPT OF A COMPLAINT?

- 10.1 We will always inform the service user who is dealing with their complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages:

STAGE ONE – FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

- 11.1 We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action to resolve the problem.
- 11.2 We will give our decision at stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 11.3 If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to stage 2. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at stage 2 either:
- within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
 - within two months of receiving your stage 1 response (if this is later).
- 11.4 In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

STAGE TWO – INVESTIGATION

- 12.1 Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: where the customer remains dissatisfied after stage 1 and those that clearly require investigation, and so are handled directly at this stage. If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at stage 1, you can ask us to handle it at stage 2 instead.
- 12.2 When using stage 2 we will:
- acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days;
 - we will confirm our understanding of the complaint we will investigate and what outcome they are looking for

- try to resolve the complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation); and where we cannot resolve the complaint, we will give a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days

12.3 If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell them. We will agree revised time limits and keep them updated on progress.

WHAT IF THE SERVICE USER IS STILL DISSATISFIED

- 13.1 After we have given them our final decision, if they are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with their complaint, the service user can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.
- 13.2 There are some complaints about housing that have an alternative route for independent review. We will tell you how to seek independent review when we give you our final response on your complaint or a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

To contact the SPSO:

By Post

SPSO
Bridgeside House
99 Macdonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

Freepost SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

If you would like to visit in person you must make an appointment first.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT FACTORING

- 14.1 The SPSO does not normally look at complaints about our factoring service. From December 2017 the Housing and Property Chamber First-tier Tribunal for Scotland will try to resolve complaints and disputes between home owners and property factors. So if the complaint is about a factoring service, and the service user is still dissatisfied after our investigation stage the service user will be able to go to the Housing and Property Chamber First-tier Tribunal for Scotland.

To contact the Housing and Property Chamber First-tier Tribunal for Scotland:

Housing and Property Chamber First-tier Tribunal for Scotland

Glasgow Tribunals Centre

20 York Street

Glasgow

G2 8GT

Telephone: 0141 302 5900

Email: HPCAdmin@scotcourtribunals.gov.uk

REPORTING A SIGNIFICANT PERFORMANCE FAILURE TO THE SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR

- 15.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) can consider issues raised with them about 'significant performance failures'. A significant performance failure is defined by the SHR as something that a landlord does or fails to do that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, and which the landlord has not resolved. This is something that is a systematic problem that does, or could, affect all of a landlord's tenants. If the service user is affected by a problem like this, they should first report it to us. If they have told us about it but we have not resolved it, they can report it directly to the SHR.
- 15.2 A complaint between an individual tenant and a landlord is not a significant performance failure. Significant performance failures are now, therefore, dealt with

through this complaints handling procedure. Service users can ask us for more information about significant performance failures. The SHR also has more information on their website:

<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/> Phone: 0141 242 5642

GETTING HELP TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

- 16.1 We understand that service users may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint themselves. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if the service user has given them consent to complain for them.
- 16.2 The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance or Citizens Advice Bureau will provide advice on advocates in the area.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: 0131 510 9410 Website: www.siaa.org.uk
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Citizens Advice Scotland

Website: www.cas.org.uk

- 16.3 We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services.
- 16.4 If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille please tell us in person, contact us on 0300 123 0773 or email us on customerservices@hebrideanhousing.co.uk

COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS

- 17.1 Comments and compliments may also be made using the same contact methods as complaints. All compliments will be recorded and reviewed.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

- 18.1 The Complaints Policy will be reviewed no less than every 5 years or earlier if change is required by the SPSO.

INTERPRETATIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

The following interpretation and abbreviations are used in this policy:

WORD	INTERPRETATION
HHP or Partnership	Hebridean Housing Partnership
Board	Means the Board of the Hebridean Housing Partnership
Board Members	All Members of the Board including co-opted Members
SPSO	Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
UNCRC	United Nation Convention on the Rights of Children
All references to the masculine gender in this policy shall read as equally applicable to the feminine gender	



HHP is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, Registered Number: 2644R(S), Registered Office: Creed Court, Gleann Seileach Business Park, Willowglen Road, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis HS1 2QP. It is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number: SC035767, registered as Registered Social Landlord with the Scottish Housing Regulator, Registration Number: 359 and registered as a Property Factor, Registration Number PF000183

Email: info@hebrideanhousing.co.uk

Web: www.hebrideanhousing.co.uk

Phone: 0300 123 0773