



**PORT OF LEITH**  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

# **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

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## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **Principles**

Our Policy is based upon the following principles:

- We aim to provide excellent services to our tenants and other customers. We pride in putting our customers first and ensuring our services are flexible and meet their needs.
- The aim of the Complaints Procedure is to give customers a clear process to follow to try to resolve a problem; ensuring problems are recorded and dealt with as quickly as possible. We then have an opportunity to monitor the quality of service provided so that we can continually work to improve it.
- Our target is to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, ensuring all complaints dealt with effectively and fairly.

### **Definition of a Complaint**

The Association defines a complaint as “an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard and quality of service, action or lack of action by the Association or its staff affecting an individual customer or a group of customers (*Raising Standards, Customer Complaints*). It is important to differentiate between an initial request for service e.g. notification of an initial routine repairs request which should be dealt with through the repairs reporting procedures and a complaint. A complaint under the Complaints Policy will occur when there has been a failure in routine service delivery, whatever the reason, and the customer has then expressed their dissatisfaction with the earlier action taken.

### **Eligibility to make a complaint**

Anyone who receives or requests a service from the Association can use the Complaints Policy. This includes tenants, people applying for housing, owners or sharing owners, customers receiving factoring services and people living in neighbouring property, Board Members or other organisations and contractors and suppliers. It also applies to people who may be acting on a tenant's behalf, such as a councillor, Member of Parliament, advice agency, solicitor, friend or relative, tenants' group or Resident's Association.

### **What can Customers complain about?**

The complaint can be about any aspect of our service which they are unhappy about. The complaint does not have to be put in writing and can be taken over the telephone, face to face or by email.

## **Our Service Standards in Managing Complaints**

- All complaints about the service will be fully considered and dealt with.
- To resolve complaints as quickly as possible, they will be treated with priority and the complainant kept informed on when they will be resolved, if the problem can't be dealt with immediately.
- Where the complaint can't be resolved immediately, the customer will be advised of the timescale for its resolution within 3 working days. If this timescale has to change, the customer will be advised of why within the 3 days and of the new timescale.
- Once the problem is resolved the customer is to be advised of the outcome over the telephone if the complaint is informal and in writing if it is formal by the timescale advised.
- No complaint should take more than 2 weeks to resolve, however where information is required from an external agency this timescale may be extended. The customer will be advised of why and the new timescale.

## **Staff Issues**

Where conduct or performance of a member of staff is the issue of a complaint this will be referred to the relevant Line Manager who will be responsible for conducting an investigation. The Line Manager will conduct an investigation and must consult with the Corporate Services Manager before informing the member of staff of the concerns, as it may result in disciplinary action. All stages in this procedure must be confidential.

## **Contractor Complaints**

The Complaints Procedure will be followed when managing complaints regarding contractor performance/attitude.

## **Recording of Complaints**

All complaints, both informal and formal, received by post and through the [info@polha.co.uk](mailto:info@polha.co.uk) email address will be recorded on the by the member of staff receiving the complaint on the complaints database. The complaint must then be forwarded to the appropriate employee to action. Managers will collate the information and report to the Manager's Meeting monthly and quarterly to the Management Group and annually to the Board of Management. This will let us monitor if we are continuing to provide good services and ensure the complaint, plus any underlying ineffectual processes are resolved. The number of complaints and whether complaints have been

dealt with in the policy timescales will also be reviewed regularly by the Management Team.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility to co-ordinate and report on complaints.

The relevant Manager will ensure appropriate action is taken in each complaint case.

Complaints will be monitored under the following categories:

- Access to services (including allocations, transfers etc).
- Quality of service (including complaints regarding contractor performance and complaints that our staff has not kept to an appointment).
- Unfairness or discrimination.
- Procedural failure.
- Policy issues.
- Attitude of staff.
- Anti social behaviour
- Estate management complaints within our control.

### **Publicity**

To ensure customers know how to make a complaint and how we will respond, we will provide a copy of the Complaints Policy at the start of each tenancy, include a summary in the Tenants Handbook, display copies of the policy in the office and display on the website. Copies will also be displayed on notice boards at sheltered housing developments and on any other notice board within Association developments. A form to assist complainants make their complaint in writing is available from the Association's office or can be downloaded from our website: [www.polha.co.uk](http://www.polha.co.uk) .

### **Confidentiality**

As far as possible all complaints will be treated in confidence. The name of the complainant will not be divulged any more than is necessary within the Association. However people making complaints must appreciate that if their complaint involves another tenant or a member of staff, it may be difficult for the Association to investigate without talking to that tenant or employee.

We will not normally deal with anonymous complaints, other than in a very general way, given the difficulty of carrying out a full investigation. We will, however, retain such complaints on file as they may provide an early warning of a service delivery failure.

### **Independent Advice**

Customers may seek independent advice from agencies before making their complaint from organisations such as the CAB or a solicitor

## **Equalities**

A copy of the Policy will be made available, where required on tape, in large print or in ethnic languages. We will assist customers with particular needs to make a complaint.

## **Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

All staff will ensure that complainants are advised that once the complaint has been through the Association's Complaints Procedure, that they can make a complaint to the SPSO and provide the 'Bringing a Complaint to the SPSO' leaflet.

We will co-operate fully with the Ombudsman during any investigation and will respond to any findings. Copies of all correspondence with the Ombudsman and any reports will be maintained by the Chief Executive.

## **Training**

All staff will receive a copy of the Policy and Procedure as part of induction training. Training will be provided on the benefits of handling complaints properly, using customer feedback to review process, the steps in the process, staff responsibility, logging complaints, who to ask for advice.

## **Board of Management**

Complaints against the Chief Executive will be heard by a panel comprising 3 members of the Board of Management. Complaints against a Director will be heard by a panel comprising the Chief Executive and two members of the Board of Management.

## **Policy Review Cycle**

The policy will be reviewed on a 2 yearly basis by the Board of Management.

## Scottish Housing Regulator Guiding Standards 3:

### SERVICE DELIVERY AND COMMUNICATION

#### GS 3.3 Complaints and Appeals

**We will deal fairly and effectively with anyone wanting to appeal against, or complain about, any of our decisions or activities. We make it clear that they can complain about us to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.**

*The Complaints Procedure should include the possibility of complaining to the governing body. In assessing compliance account will be taken of:*

- The quality and comprehensiveness of the Complaints Policy and the method of publication and dissemination.
- The number and nature of complaints received by the RSL.
- The manner in which complaints are recorded, the efficiency and fairness of the RSL in dealing with complaints and the RSL's response in making good any failures in service or other actions.
- The RSL's response to any recommendations by the Ombudsman.

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| <b>Department</b>                         | <b>Customer Services</b>  |
| <b>Policy Reference</b>                   | <b>CS 1.02</b>  |
| <b>Housing Regulator Reference</b>        | <b>GS3.3 Complaints and Appeals</b>   |
| <b>Date policy reviewed</b>               | <b>March 2011</b>   |
| <b>Review Period</b>                      | <b>2 Years</b>  |
| <b>Associated policies and procedures</b> | <b>Customer Care Policy and Procedure<br/>Equality and Diversity Policy<br/>(Service Provision)</b> |