

Chapter 20: Telling us what you think



Customer feedback

We welcome any form of feedback, including suggestions, compliments and complaints. We are committed to making sure that we use customer feedback to help us improve our services and focus on the needs of our customers. Our staff will accept feedback from you in any form, and as a customer you should never hesitate to offer feedback of any kind.

You can make a suggestion, give us a compliment or complain in the following ways.

- Fill in and return the tear-out form in our feedback leaflet, *Complaints, compliments and suggestions*, which you can get from any Customer Services Centres.
- Contact the relevant Homes for Haringey service in writing, by phone, in person, by fax, by e-mail, or on our website. Use the on-line form on our website at www.homesforharingey.org.

We know that not everyone can access our services in the same way. To give everyone an equal opportunity to give feedback, we offer:

- translators and interpreters;
- audio tapes;
- sign language;
- documents in Braille; and
- minicom and textphone services.

Suggestions and compliments

Whenever we receive a suggestion or a compliment, we aim to send you an acknowledgement within two working days of receiving your suggestion or compliment.

- If we receive a suggestion, we will write to you within 10 working days explaining how we plan to use your idea or explain why we feel we cannot use your idea.
- If we receive a compliment, we will write to you within 10 working days to let you know we have passed your compliment to the officer concerned.

Complaining to us

We want to provide good-quality services for everyone, but we know that things sometimes go wrong. If they do, we need to know so that we can put them right and learn from them.

If you want to make a complaint about a service that we provide, you can contact us by:

- filling in the form in our booklet *Complaints, compliments and suggestions*;
- filling in the form on our website at www.homesforharingey.org;
- phoning us on 020 8489 4337, 020 8489 4321, 020 8489 4235 or 020 8489 4646;
- e-mailing us at complaints@homesforharingey.org; or
- writing to us at: Homes for Haringey feedback team
Freepost RRBE-JGLA-ATLY
13-27 Station Road
Wood Green
London N22 6UW.

If you make a complaint to us and a council service should deal with your complaint, we will pass it on to the right team and let you know that we have done so. There may also be other occasions when we cannot investigate your complaint. Again, we will let you know and, where possible, put you in touch with someone else who may be able to help.

The complaints process

First, it is always better to try to get problems solved by your local office. If you would like some informal advice on making a complaint, please call the feedback team on the phone numbers above.

Our complaint process has four stages and is designed to be as user-friendly as possible. Please let us know if you need help with your complaint so that we can organise an interpreting service or arrange for Braille or signing facilities.

Stage zero – sorted out sooner

When we receive a basic complaint, we will try to sort it out in **two working days**. If that is not possible and you remain unhappy we will automatically carry out a stage one investigation.

Stage one – local resolution

We will write to you within **two working days** to acknowledge your complaint and to give you the name and contact number of the person dealing with your complaint.

We will then aim to investigate your complaint fully within **10 working days**, and the investigator will write to you with their findings. If we are not able to meet this target, we will let you know, and usually say when we will be able to respond to you.

Stage two – service investigation

If you are not happy after the first stage of our complaints process, you can contact a member of the feedback team to let them know why. If we are not able to sort out the problem, we will write to you within **two working days** with details of the person who will be investigating your second stage complaint.

A senior manager who was not previously involved with your complaint will investigate it, and write to you with their findings within **20 working days**. If they are not able to meet this target, we will let you know and usually say when we will be able to respond to you.

Stage three – independent review

If you are still not happy after the second stage of our complaints process, you can contact Haringey Council's central feedback team to say why. The central feedback team will independently review how we have handled your complaint and carry out an investigation.

The central feedback team will write to you within **two working days** of receiving your complaint to give you details of the person dealing with your complaint. The investigator will reply to you in full within **20 working days**.

Central feedback team

Phone: 020 8489 2550

Fax: 020 8489 2533

E-mail: centralfeedback@haringey.gov.uk

Minicom: 020 8489 2535

Taking your complaint further

Local Government Ombudsman

If you are still not happy after complaining to us you can contact the **Local Government Ombudsman**. The ombudsman will usually only investigate your complaint after you have been through at least the first stage of our complaints process.

The ombudsman is an independent person who investigates complaints about local authorities. The ombudsman does not investigate all cases and will only consider matters such as neglect, unjustifiable delay or failure to follow our policy.

When the ombudsman receives a complaint, he or she will investigate it, taking evidence from both sides to reach a decision. This decision will be final. Investigations by the Local Government Ombudsman can last a long time and should be used only as a last resort when you feel you have a very serious complaint.

If you feel we have not dealt with your complaint satisfactorily, you can contact the ombudsman.

Local Government Ombudsman

Millbank Tower

Millbank

London SW1P 4QP

Phone: 020 7217 4620

Fax: 020 7217 4321

Advice line: 0870 602 1983

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Your elected representative

Your local councillor or Member of Parliament can also help you to make a complaint. If you want to contact either a councillor or a Member of Parliament, you can write to them or go to one of their surgeries. You can get details from your local Customer Services Centre, Haringey libraries, council offices and other buildings.

Legal action

In some circumstances you can take us to court. If you are considering this option, you should get expert advice first from a solicitor, an advice bureau or a law centre. If there is current legal action, we cannot investigate your feedback at the same time. Legal action overrules the feedback process.

Disagreeing with decisions – reviews and appeals

Some decisions give you the right to a review or appeal if you do not agree. You should first get in touch with your local housing office and explain the problem. If you feel that this does not sort the issue out, you may be able to ask for a review or appeal.

You can ask for a review or appeal about the following.

- **An offer of accommodation** – please see chapter 15, 'Moving home', for more information.
- **Housing Benefit decision** – please see chapter 2, 'Rent, Council Tax and Housing Benefit', for more information.