



Homes for Haringey

# Complaints Policy



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## 1. Introduction

Homes for Haringey is a company wholly owned by Haringey Council to manage its properties on its behalf. This policy outlines how Homes for Haringey will manage and resolve complaints.

## 2. Policy

Homes for Haringey welcomes feedback and views feedback as an opportunity to improve services.

We log and aim to resolve complaints about failures of service.

Our primary intention is to resolve any service failure that the service user has experienced and to provide the service required. We realise that this is much more important to service users than providing a detailed explanation of what went wrong with our service.

As complaints relate to failures of service, the following are not complaints and will not be logged as such:

- Initial requests for service due to problems arising in the first instance.
- Enquiries about legislation.
- Enquiries about Haringey Council policy or Homes for Haringey policy.

## 3. Definition of complaint

A service user is unhappy with the service they received from Homes for Haringey and wants us to take steps to provide the service required / change what we are doing / not doing and/or apologise.

## 4. Examples of complaints

Examples of complaints include:

- A failure to provide the service required / poor service.
- We have failed to respond to the initial enquiry.
- Our staff were unhelpful or were not polite.
- We have failed to meet one of our customer services promises.
- We gave the resident unclear, misleading or unsuitable advice.



- Service user cannot contact staff member or staff member not returning calls.
- Repairs not completed within time frames.
- Homes for Haringey has not followed its documented policies and procedures.

## 5. Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all tenants and leaseholders, former residents, applicants and any other group or individual that uses or is directly affected by our service.

In this policy they will be identified as a 'service user'.

## 6. Policy principles

- **Homes for Haringey**
    - welcomes feedback including complaints and sees it as an opportunity to resolve service failure and to review and improve services
    - will advertise its complaints policy widely
    - aims to respond quickly to a complaint by providing the service required
    - will explain how we aim to provide the required service in writing
    - will keep service users informed of progress
    - will maintain a record of complaints
    - will use the outcomes of complaints when reviewing policy and practice
  - The policy will be easy to understand and use
  - The policy will be fair
  - Service users can use an advocate or support person to assist them when making a complaint
  - A service user has the right to make a complaint without being scared that they will be punished for doing so (without 'fear of retribution').
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## **7. Matters that cannot be dealt with under this policy**

Complaints that cannot be dealt under this policy include:

- Matters that have already been dealt with through the complaints, appeals or disputes policies
- Matters that are the responsibility of other tribunals and courts
- Matters where special procedures are in place
- Matters that have been dealt with in other tribunals or courts
- Disputes between tenants unless related to the handling of the dispute
- Matters that are outside the time frame
- Matters that are outside our control
- Insurance or legal matters
- Personnel matters
- Matters that are more appropriately dealt with through the applicable Appeals Policy
- Matters not directly related to the service user
- Matters more appropriately dealt with through the whistle-blower policy.

## **8. Time limits for complaints**

Generally, the right to complain is limited to 12 months from the date of the incident that led to the complaint, unless our staff are responsible for the delay.

## **9. Time frames**

Homes for Haringey will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 2 working days.

The time frame for dealing with a complaint will vary depending on the nature of the complaint. We will contact the customer and speak to them if needed to clarify the complaint, or if we believe they may not have put everything needed in writing.



- Stage 1 complaints will generally be dealt with within 10 working days (2 weeks) unless the person reviewing the case needs to speak to the parties involved and is unable to make contact.
- Stage 2 complaints will generally be dealt with within 25 working days (5 weeks) unless the person reviewing the case needs to speak to the parties involved and is unable to make contact.

## **10. How to complain**

Homes for Haringey offers a number of ways to lodge a complaint including:

- On-line
- In person
- By phone
- To resident reps
- At a meeting
- In writing.

## **11. Right to withdraw a complaint**

A service user has the right to withdraw a complaint at any time. They should preferably do this in writing.

## **12. Complaint Stages**

### **12.1. Informal Complaint**

Homes for Haringey aims to resolve complaints quickly and informally over the phone, in person, or through written correspondence.

Wherever possible the service user should consider raising the issue with the person they were originally dealing with as it may be possible to resolve the complaint immediately without it going through a more formal process.

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## 12.2. Stage 1 Formal Complaint

If the service user decides to log a complaint and if the call relates to a failure of service by Homes for Haringey, we will record it as a formal complaint.

### What happens next?

The complaint will be considered by someone in the team responsible for that area of work. The person reviewing the case will record and investigate the case.

We will contact the customer and speak to them if needed to clarify the complaint, or if we believe they may not have put everything needed in writing.

Having investigated the complaint, the reviewer will aim to propose a resolution to the complaint. This may include one or more of the following:

- A summary of the steps we will take to resolve the service failure and provide the service required.
- An apology.
- Changes to how things are done.
- An assurance about further actions.
- An explanation (though our primary focus is on providing the service required).



The response will be given in writing.

If the service user is still not happy, they can ask for the complaint to be dealt with as a Stage 2 Formal Complaint.

### **12.3. Stage 2 Formal Complaint – independent review**

This independent review will be undertaken by an officer who was not involved in reviewing the original Stage 1 Complaint (this role is currently undertaken by an officer from the London Borough of Haringey's Feedback and Information Governance Team).

The investigating officer reviewing the case will record and investigate the case. This may include contacting the person who has put in the complaint for more information.

Having investigated the complaint, the reviewer will aim to propose a resolution to the complaint. This may include one or more of the following:

- A summary of the steps Homes for Haringey will take to resolve the service failure and provide the service required.
- An apology.
- Changes to how things are done.
- An assurance about further actions.
- An explanation (though Homes for Haringey's primary focus is on providing the service required).

The final response will be given in writing.

#### What happens if the issue is not resolved?

If the service user is still unhappy, they can:

- Request a Complaints Panel Hearing; and/or
  - Ask for the complaint (if it is a housing management issue) to be referred to the Housing Ombudsman.
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- Wait 8 weeks and then contact the Housing Ombudsman themselves.
- Contact the First Tier Tribunal if it is a leasehold issue (previously known as the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal – LVT).
- Contact the Local Government Ombudsman if it is a homelessness or allocations issue.

## **12.4. Homes for Haringey’s Complaints Panel**

### What is the Complaints Panel?

The Complaints Panel is made up of tenants and leaseholders.

Their role is to review the actions Homes for Haringey took to resolve the complaint. The panel may make recommendations to Homes for Haringey where they think more could have been done.

The final response will be given in writing.

## **13. The Housing Ombudsman**

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent service that looks at housing management complaints.

The Housing Ombudsman will accept complaints referred via the Complaints Panel, an MP or Councillor (these are also known as ‘designated persons’).

A service user can complain directly to the Housing Ombudsman but only if the service user has gone through the formal complaints process and more than 8 weeks have passed since the end of that process.

## **14. Who can complain?**

- The service user
  - Someone who is responsible for the service user (for example a support worker)
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- A friend, relative, or advocate, as long as they have the consent of the person

## **15. Use of advocate or support person**

The service user can choose to have an advocate or support person.

However, there must be signed consent on file if the service user wants Homes for Haringey to liaise directly with the support person or advocate.

## **16. Consent**

We accept feedback from people acting on behalf of someone else. We will need the service user to give their consent when someone is acting on their behalf.

Homes for Haringey will:

- Make giving consent simple and straightforward.
- Not use the issue of consent to make it difficult for someone to make a complaint. If the person has not or cannot give written consent Homes for Haringey will consider if there are other options for obtaining consent or responding to the issue.

## **17. Help with a complaint**

Homes for Haringey can organise an interpreter, Braille or signing facilities if necessary.

Where the service user has only limited English Homes for Haringey may access the services of a support person, advocate or interpreter.

Deaf, hard of hearing, speech impaired and deaf blind people can make calls using the Typetalk and TextDirect Relay Service.

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## **18. Quality assurance**

- Applicants and residents aware of policy.
- Policy is widely advertised on the Homes for Haringey website, our offices, resident newsletters and other relevant documentation.
- A written record is kept of complaints, timeframes and outcomes (complaints register).
- All complaints are reported at Board level.
- A written record is kept of any changes made to policy or practice because of complaints.

## **19. Barriers to making complaints**

Homes for Haringey will be mindful of the fact that:

- Some people are reluctant to complain for personal or cultural reasons.
- Other residents will have difficulty understanding the process because they speak only limited English or because they have difficulties with reading.

## **20. Resident consultation**

- Workshop held with residents.
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## 21. Authorisation

Original Author:	Sheryl de Vries	Authorised by:	ELT
Owned by (Team/Dept):	Feedback Team	Effective from:	August 2019
Consultation Required?	Yes	List who was consulted	Internal & external
Section:	Cross Cutting /Feedback		
Applies to:	All Homes for Haringey		

## 22. Version control

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Consultation? Who	Reviewed by
1.0	01/10/2014	Initial Release	C Services	E. Weyalo
2.0	18/12/2015	Reviewed	Internal and External	S. de Vries
3.0	13/08/2018	Corrected review date.	Internal	B. Mooney
4.0	30/07/2019	Amendments made to reflect improved target response times, to confirm that our focus is on resolving complaints by providing the service required, and to integrate footnotes into the text.	Reviewed with Managing Director, Communities & Customer Relationship Director, and Feedback Team Manager	C. Ugwu / N. Ali / B. Mooney