



Homes for Haringey

Complaints Policy and Procedure



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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 and procedure set out 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 resident has experienced and to provide the service required. We realise that this is much more important to residents 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

Homes for Haringey has adopted the definition of a complaint proposed in the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint handling code 2020 which is:

'An expression of dissatisfaction however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents'.

In this policy the term 'resident' denotes council tenant, council leaseholder, council licensee, and also service user.



4. Examples of complaints

Examples of complaints include:

- A failure to provide the service required / poor service provided.
- 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.
- Resident cannot contact a member of staff or a member of staff 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 'resident'.

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 residents informed of progress
 - will maintain a record of complaints
 - will use the outcomes of complaints when reviewing policy and practice
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- The policy will be easy to understand and use
- The policy will be fair
- Residents can use an advocate or support person to assist them when making a complaint
- A resident has the right to make a complaint without being scared that they will be punished for doing so (without 'fear of retribution').

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 resident
- Matters more appropriately dealt with through the whistleblowing policy.

If Homes for Haringey decides not to deal with a complaint for the reasons above, we will provide an explanation to the complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

A complainant has the right to challenge this decision by bringing their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. Where appropriate the Ombudsman will instruct the landlord to take on the complaint.



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.

We may contact the resident and speak to them to clarify the complaint, or if we believe they may not have presented all the information needed.

- Our Investigating Officers in Stage 1 complaints will contact residents prior to sending their final decision in order to agree resolution and/or enable challenge.
- 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:

- Via social media *
- On-line
- In person
- By phone
- To resident reps
- At a meeting
- In writing



*Please note that complaints via social media come to our communications team who may directly message to obtain more details to enable the complaint to be processed. Our replies may not be provided in the same way as we received them. You may share a concern on Twitter and we may email you back privately in order to maintain confidentiality and privacy.

11. Right to withdraw a complaint

A resident 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 and disputes between us and residents as early as possible. We recognise that many residents may not wish to follow a formal process and just want an issue resolved.

Wherever possible the resident 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.

12.2. Stage 1 Formal Complaint

If the resident decides to make a complaint where they believe that there has been a failure of service by Homes for Haringey, we will record it as a formal complaint.

What happens next?

The complaint will be investigated by an Investigating Officer based in the team responsible for that area of work.

We will contact the resident and speak to them to clarify the complaint, if that is required, or if we believe they may not have presented all the information needed.



When we contact the resident, we will inform them of our position and give the resident a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision.

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 within 10 working days.

If a resident remains unhappy they can ask for the complaint to be dealt with as a Stage 2 Formal Complaint.

If the resident is not happy, at any stage they can contact the Housing Ombudsman service.

info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
0300 111 3000
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

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 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 within 25 working days from the request to escalate.

What happens if the issue is not resolved?

If the resident 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.
- 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 within 20 working days from the request to escalate. Any additional time will only be justified if related to organising a panel and the complainant will be kept informed.

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 Residents' Complaints Panel, an MP or Councillor (these are also known as 'designated persons').

A resident can complain directly to the Housing Ombudsman but only if the resident 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 resident
- Someone who is responsible for the resident (for example a support worker)
- A friend, relative, or advocate, as long as they have the consent of the person

15. Use of advocate or support person

The resident can choose to have an advocate or support person. We must, however, have a signed consent if the resident 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 resident 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: making reasonable adjustments

- We are committed to ensuring our feedback process is accessible to all and understood by staff and the public.
- Homes for Haringey and Haringey council will comply with its duties under equalities and human rights legislation.
- We will make reasonable adjustments for customers with a disability and arrange translations or an interpreter where appropriate.
- Homes for Haringey can organise an interpreter, Braille or signing facilities if necessary.
- Where the resident 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.

18. Quality assurance

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

21. 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	Reviewed with Managing Director,	C. Ugwu / N. Ali / B. Mooney



Revision	Date	Description of changes	Consultation? Who	Reviewed by
		that our focus is on resolving complaints by providing the service required, and to integrate footnotes into the text.	Communities & Customer Relationship Director, and Feedback Team Manager	
5.0	16/12/2020	Amendments made to ensure compliance with Ombudsman's Code for Complaints Handling.	Reviewed with service and ELT.	J.Missenden, L.Jones, B.Mooney