

# Complaints and Compliments Policy

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| **Who does this policy apply to:** | This Policy applies to all tenants, service users, staff, visitors and board members |
| **Review Date (minimum every three years)** | This policy will be subject to a review in February 2026 |
| **Policy Author/Reviewer and Job Title** | Michael Pughsley – Director of Housing  |

**POLICY**

# Purpose and Scope of the Policy:

The Association recognises that some of the decisions we make have a real impact on the lives of our tenants, members of the household, and other people we meet. Therefore, we want to ensure that decisions are fair and reasonable. Anyone can complain about any act or omission by WFHA that has disadvantaged an individual.

We are also aware that, even in the best run organisations, mistakes can happen.

We are also aware that the services we deliver are of good quality and so from time to time we are complimented for these services which we equally value.

This policy does not cover complaints that become involved in a legal process, for example, a legal disrepair case reported through a solicitor or legal action taken by the association against a tenant to enforce the terms of a tenancy agreement.

The association has a positive approach to receiving complaints and sees them as an important way of receiving direct feedback from complainers. Using the information to assess performance and inform the review of policies, procedures and services.

The aims of the policy is to:

* To deliver a complaints service in line with the associations service standards
* Facilitate organisational learning from complaints
* To ensure a “first time right” approach
* Information on complaints and how to progress this is easy to understand and use
* To work with partners and other agencies to coordinate comprehensive outcomes
* Facilitate early resolution to complaints
* Manage all complaints in an open and accountable way

# Policy Details:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the association, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual tenant or group of tenants.

Legislation and regulation has an impact on how the association implements its complaints policy and WFHA will continue to review the policy in line with any changes in these regulatory and statutory acts.

We can learn from both complaints and compliments to improve and enhance our services that we deliver. We are committed to making it easier to complain and aim to respond and resolve complaints quickly.

We monitor all our complaints to ensure that they are being resolved efficiently, effectively and fairly. As part of the Complaints and Compliments Policy we recognise the importance of feedback to the Board and compliance with the Ombudsman code of conduct.

The association will deal with complaints impartially, objectively and professionally

A complaint or a compliment can be raised in all areas of the services we deliver, such as repairs, re-housing, etc.

This may include:

* A failure by the Association to meet its legal duty as a landlord.
* A feeling of being treated unfairly or affected negatively by the Association’s policies and procedures.
* That the Association has not interpreted its rules properly or has failed to act efficiently
* A member of staff or a representative of the Association has behaved improperly or has been discourteous.

We would also like to hear if the services we deliver are of good quality. Any compliment received will be forwarded to the relevant staff member/team. We will celebrate and learn from these to keep improving our services.

**Reasonable adjustments**

The association will consider requests for reasonable adjustments providing they meet the criteria set out in the Equality Act 2010 as follows:

* Where there is a provision, criterion or practice which puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled
* Where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons that are not disabled
* Examples of reasonable adjustment would be ensuring that the provision of information is available in alternative formats, for example large print, braille or coloured paper, extension of time limits, agreed to a preferred method of communication.

The Equality Act 2010 does not define what is reasonable, guidance from the Human Rights Commission advised that key factors are considered:

* The effectiveness of the reasonable adjustment
* The practicality of the association making those adjustments
* The availability of resources including external assistance and finance
* Any disruption to the service making the adjustment may case

**Monitoring and learning**

Satisfaction is a key measure of the association performance and throughout a positive approach is taken, to learning. We use feedback to shape training and staff training, forming policy and procedure reviews , driving the tenant experience.

The Board receive a report quarterly detailing the number of complaints that have gone through the Complaints Procedure. We also deliver annual statistics to our tenants in the form of an annual report.

We also collect equality statistics to ensure that no one is treated unfairly. (Appendix three)

# Related Policies:

Vexatious Complaints Equality Safeguarding

Health and Safety

Home loss and compensation

Anti-social behaviour

Domestic Violence

Data Protection

Tenancy Guidance

Aids and Adaptations

**Equality Impact Statement:**

We will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently. We will not discriminate against any person on any grounds set out in our Equality and Diversity policy.

# Document History:

Date of Last Review: *August 2023*

Date of Review: February 2026

# Procedure:

**Appendix One – Internal procedures**

This procedure provides staff with a process for dealing with complaints and compliments.

**When should we not consider a complaint?**

* If the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago. Where the problem is a recurring issue, we should consider any older report as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the tenant.
* If legal proceedings have commenced
* Matters that have already been dealt with under the complaints policy.
* A first request for a service (e.g. repair) It will only become a complaint if the service requested has not been performed
* Neighbour disputes or anti-social behaviour unless the complaint refers to the failure to deal with the disagreement
* Dispute against the amount of service charges or rents being accurately charged in line with policy
* An appeal against policy decisions

If it is decided to not proceed with the complaint due to any of the above reasons, then a detailed letter is to be sent to the tenant advising them of why it is not suitable as a complaint.

If the tenant is not satisfied with this decision, they have the right to take this to the ombudsman who may in turn instruct us to proceed with the complaint.

# Compliments

1. Initial compliment received either via email, verbally, in person or in writing an acknowledgement is sent out within one working day. Acknowledgement is sent to the complainant, thanking them for the compliment.
2. Verbal compliments are also accepted and point 3. to be followed
3. Compliment is logged onto the compliment spreadsheet – by the Housing Operations Coordinator
4. Compliment is given to the relevant manager to share with the staff or department.

# Complaints Summary

1. When the initial complaint received either via email, verbally, in person or in writing, an acknowledgement is sent out within one working day. Acknowledgement is completed by the staff member receiving the complaint.
2. Complaint is logged onto the complaint spreadsheet – by the Housing Operations Coordinator
3. Complaint is given to the relevant Head of Department to respond following Stage one process (below)
4. Spreadsheet is updated with stage one response and date of appeal timescale deadlines – Housing Operations Coordinator
5. If at this stage the complaint response is accepted, then the complaint is closed.
6. The complainant is advised in the letter of how to appeal the decision and the timescale. If the complainant does appeal, the matter is progressed to stage two and the details of the appeal and all previous correspondence are passed to the Director of Housing.
7. The Director of Housing will respond in writing to the complainant either upholding the appeal or the original decision. The complainant will be advised the next route of escalation is to the Housing Ombudsman.
8. If at stage two the response is not appealed, then the complaint is formally closed.
9. Key performance Indicators are to be completed each month with the relevant statistical information relating to all complaints, this is the responsibility of the Housing Services Team.

# Informal complaint

This is the stage when we hope to resolve most complaints. Anyone making a complaint can speak to any staff member and raise an informal concern, staff will either deal with this themselves or pass to the most appropriate staff member to investigate. At each stage staff will keep the complainant updated with the progress of the investigations and findings.

Anyone has the right to complain. The formal complaint procedure will then apply.

WFHA will respond to informal complaints within 5 working days.

# Stage 1. Departmental Heads

If anyone is dissatisfied with how we have dealt with their informal complaints and wish to escalate this to a formal complaint, the formal complaint will need to be either in writing, verbally, via email or on an online form. This will be passed to the relevant Head of Service. The complainant should be asked for further detail if the complaint does not detail the history of the matter sufficiently: eg documentation, photos etc..

On receipt, an acknowledgment will be sent advising the complainant who their complaint has been passed to and predicted timescales of completion.

At this stage a meeting may be called with the tenant or their representative (other than a legal representative) to look at the issues and agree desired outcomes. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

The Head of Service or relevant manager will send a written response normally within 10 working days. If it seems likely that it will take more than 10 working days to reply, the Head of Service should inform the complainant the reasons for the delay and when a full reply will be sent. The complainant will be informed of their right to, and the process for, appeal to the Director of Housing.

If the complainant is satisfied with the response, then the complaint will be recorded as closed. However, if they are dissatisfied, they have the right of appeal. This will need to be done in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the original stage one response letter.

An appeal must have clear and valid reasons for taking this course of action but all appeals will be considered on the merits of the information provided. A clear explanation will be sent to the tenant regarding a decision not to escalate to stage two.

# Stage 2

**Appeal to the Director**

Anyone who is dissatisfied with how their stage one complaint has been dealt with and wish to appeal against this, will need to do so either in writing or via email to the Director of Housing.

The appeal needs to outline what parts of the formal stage one response they are appealing against, why and what outcomes are desired that differ from the stage one response, providing documentation, photos etc. where appropriate.

On receipt of the appeal, an acknowledgment will be sent advising the complainant of who the appeal has been passed to and predicted timescales of completion.

At this stage the Director may request a meeting with the tenant or their representative (if they chose to unless this is a legal representative) to look at the issues and agree desired outcomes.

The Director will respond normally within 20 working days. If it seems likely that the appeal will take more than 20 working days, the Director will inform the complainant giving the reasons for the delay and when a full reply will be sent. This should not exceed 10 further working days. The complainant will be informed of their right to appeal to the Housing Ombudsman.

If the complainant is satisfied with the appeal response, then the complaint and appeal will be recorded as closed. However, if the complainant is still dissatisfied with the stage 2 response to the appeal they may ask the Housing Ombudsman to help resolve the matter.

**Contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service**

The complainant can contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service and WFHA will respond to any requests for evidence from the Ombudsmen within 10 working days of request.

Housing Ombudsman Service PO Box 152

Liverpool L33 7WQ

Telephone 0300 111 3000

E-mail info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

On-line www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

# Appendix Two– Tenant easy to read guidelines.

See separate leaflet.