



hebridean housing
partnership



► Comments, Compliments & Complaints Handling Policy

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COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Our Complaints Handling Procedure reflects HHP's commitment to valuing complaints. It seeks to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.
- 1.2 The procedure has been adapted from the model developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The SPSO have tried to produce a standard approach to handling complaints across the housing sector.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 This procedure aims to help us to 'get it right first time'. We want quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by capable, well-trained staff.
- 2.2 Complaints give us valuable information we can use to improve customer satisfaction. Our complaints handling procedure will enable us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and may also prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from happening again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the service user's views and experience, and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our customers a form of redress when things go wrong, and can also help us continuously improve our services.
- 2.3 Resolving complaints early saves money and creates better customer relations. Sorting them out as close to the point of service delivery as possible means we can deal with them locally and quickly, so they are less likely to escalate to the next stage of the procedure. Complaints that we do not resolve swiftly can greatly add to our workload.
- 2.4 The complaints handling procedure will help us do our job better, improve relationships with our service users and enhance public perception of HHP. It will help us keep the customer at the heart of the process, while enabling us to better understand how to improve our services by learning from complaints.

HEBRIDEA HOUSING PARTNERSHIP COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 3.1 HHP is committed to providing high-quality customer services.
We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

- 4.1 We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT COMPLAINTS?

- 5.1 Complaints can be made about things like:
- delays in responding to enquiries and requests;
 - failure to provide a service;
 - our standard of service;
 - dissatisfaction with HHP policy;
 - treatment by or attitude of a member of staff; or
 - HHP failure to follow proper procedure.
- 5.2 Complaints may involve more than one of HHP's services or be about someone working on our behalf.

WHAT CAN'T BE COMPLAINED ABOUT?

- 6.1 There are some things that can't be dealt with by the complaints procedure. These include:
- a routine first-time request for a service, for example reporting a problem that needs to be repaired or initial action on anti-social behaviour;
 - requests for compensation;
 - HHP policies and procedures that have a separate right of appeal, for example, if a service user is dissatisfied with the level of priority they have been given when applying for a house, they may have the right to appeal against the decision;
 - issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal; and
 - an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision following a stage 2 investigation. If the service user is still not satisfied, they can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for an independent review of the complaint.
- 6.2 If other procedures or rights of appeal can help the service user resolve their concerns we will give information and advice to help them.

WHO CAN COMPLAIN?

- 7.1 Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. See also the section on 'Getting help to make a complaint'.

HOW TO COMPLAIN?

- 8.1 Service users can complain in person at any of our offices, by phone, in writing, by email or by using our complaints form. Link: [HHP Complaint Form](#)
- 8.2 It is easier for us to resolve complaints if they are made quickly and directly to the service concerned. Service users should talk to a member of our staff

from the service they are complaining about. We should try to resolve any problems on the spot.

8.3 To receive a complaint we require:

- full name and address;
- as much detail as possible about the complaint;
- what has gone wrong; and
- how the service user wants us to resolve the matter.

HOW LONG DOES A SERVICE USER HAVE TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

9.1 Normally, the complaint must be made within six months of:

- the event being complained about; or
- the service user finding out that they have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

9.2 In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If the service user feels that the time limit should not apply to their complaint, they should tell us why.

CONTACT DETAILS

*Hebridean Housing Partnership
Creed Court
Gleann Seileach Business Park
Willowglen Road
Stornoway
Isle of Lewis
HS1 2QP*

*Hebridean Housing Partnership
17 Winfield Way
Balivanich
Benbecula
HS7 5LH*

Telephone:
0300 123 0773

Email:
customerservices@hebrideanhousing.co.uk

Website:
www.hebrideanhousing.co.uk

WHAT HAPPENS ON RECEIPT OF A COMPLAINT?

- 10.1 We will always inform the service user who is dealing with their complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage One – Frontline Resolution

- 11.1 We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action to resolve the problem.
- 11.2 We will give our decision at stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 11.3 If we can't resolve the complaint at this stage, we will explain why. If the service user is still dissatisfied they can ask for their complaint to be investigated further through stage 2. They may choose to do this immediately or sometime after our initial response. We can help them with making this request.

Stage Two – Investigation

- 12.1 Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.
- 12.2 When using stage 2 we will:
- acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days;
 - discuss the complaint with the service user so we understand why they remain dissatisfied and what outcome they are looking for; and
 - give a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.
- 12.3 If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell them. We will agree revised time limits and keep them updated on progress.

WHAT IF THE SERVICE USER IS STILL DISSATISFIED

- 13.1 After we have fully investigated, if they are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with their complaint, the service user can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.
- 13.2 The SPSO **cannot** normally look at:
- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (**so service users should make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO**);
 - events that happened, or that they became aware of, more than a year ago; or

- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

To contact the SPSO:

In Person:
SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

By Post
SPSO
Freepost EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

Mobile site: <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

COMPLAINTS ABOUT FACTORING

- 14.1 The SPSO does not normally look at complaints about our factoring service. From October 2012 the Homeowners Housing Panel will try to resolve complaints and disputes between home owners and property factors. So if the complaint is about a factoring service, and the service user is still dissatisfied after our investigation stage the service user will be able to go to the Homeowners Housing Panel.

To contact the Homeowner Housing Panel:

Homeowner Housing Panel

Europa Building

450 Argyle Street

Glasgow

G2 8LH

Telephone: 0141 242 0175

Fax: 0141 242 0141

Email: hohpadmin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

REPORTING A SIGNIFICANT PERFORMANCE FAILURE TO THE SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR

- 15.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) can consider issues raised with them about 'significant performance failures'. A significant performance failure is defined by the SHR as something that a landlord does or fails to do that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, and which the landlord has not resolved. This is something that is a systematic problem that does, or could, affect all of a landlord's tenants. If the service user is affected by a problem like this, they

should first report it to us. If they have told us about it but we have not resolved it, they can report it directly to the SHR.

- 15.2 A complaint between an individual tenant and a landlord is not a significant performance failure. Significant performance failures are now, therefore, dealt with through this complaints handling procedure. Service users can ask us for more information about significant performance failures. The SHR also has more information on their website:

<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/>

Phone: 0141 271 3810

GETTING HELP TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

- 16.1 We understand that service users may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint themselves. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if the service user has given them consent to complain for them.
- 16.2 The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance or Citizens Advice Bureau will provide advice on advocates in the area.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: 0131 260 5380 Fax: 0131 260 5381 Website: www.siaa.org.uk

Citizens Advice Scotland

Website: www.cas.org.uk

- 16.3 We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services.
- 16.4 We can also give this leaflet in other languages and formats (such as **large print**, audio and Braille).

COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS

- 17.1 Comments and compliments may also be made using the same contact methods as complaints. All compliments will be recorded and reviewed.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

- 18.1 The Complaints Policy will be reviewed no less than every 5 years or earlier if change is required by the SPSO.

POLICY CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Change Applied	Date	By
3.0	Updated in line with SPSO guidance	August 2011	Katrina Palmer
4.0	Model CHP for RSLs adopted	September 2012	Katrina Palmer
5.0	Amend review cycle Added sentence on compliments.	September 2015	Katrina Palmer

INTERPRETATIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

The following interpretation and abbreviations are used in this policy:

Word	Interpretation
<i>HHP or Partnership</i>	Hebridean Housing Partnership
<i>Board</i>	Means the Board of the Hebridean Housing Partnership
<i>Board Members</i>	All Members of the Board including co-opted Members
<i>SPSO</i>	Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
All references to the masculine gender in this policy shall read as equally applicable to the feminine gender	



HHP is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, Registered Number: 2644R(S), Registered Office: Creed Court, Gleann Seileach Business Park, Willowglen Road, STORNOWAY, Isle of Lewis HS1 2QP. It is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number: SC035767, registered as Registered Social Landlord with the Scottish Housing Regulator, Registration Number: 359 and registered as a Property Factor, Registration Number PF000183

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