



Complaints Procedure

Why have a complaints procedure?

Clydebank Housing Association aims to provide a first class service but there may be occasions when you are not happy about something, and if this is the case it is important for you to tell us.

The aim of this complaints procedure is to give you clear details of what steps you can take to try and get things put right where there is a problem.

The complaints procedure also gives us the chance to keep an eye on the quality of service we provide so that we can continually work to improve on it.

Who can use the complaints procedure?

Anyone who receives or requests a service from Clydebank Housing Association can use the complaints procedure. This includes tenants, people applying for housing, owners or sharing owners and people living in the neighbouring property.

The procedure is also open to people who may be acting on your behalf, such as a Councillor, Member of Parliament, advice agency or solicitor (it is very important they get your signed consent to do this). As you will see later, we do encourage you try to sort things out with us first.

If you belong to a tenants' group or residents' association and would prefer to ask them to help you complain we will be happy for them to contact us on your behalf.

Members of Clydebank Housing Association staff or committee should refer to the Section on "Whistleblowing" (Appendix A).

What can you complain about?

You can complain about any aspect of our service which you are unhappy about, for example:-

- if a repair has not been carried out properly

- if you have not received information you have asked for
- if you feel that a member of staff, a committee member or a contractor has not behaved reasonably towards you
- if you feel your housing application has not been handled properly
- if you feel you have been unfairly discriminated against

Complaints against neighbours will be dealt with under our neighbour disputes procedure. But if you have a complaint about the way we have dealt with a neighbour dispute, then you can use the complaints procedure.

We will always try to deal with complaints sympathetically, but there are some things we will not be able to give you information about. For example, it would be wrong for us to discuss with you the details of someone else's housing application, as this would be a breach of confidentiality, but we can of course talk to you about how our allocations procedure works.

Who will know about my complaint?

We will as far as possible respect the confidentiality of your complaint. Whilst we are looking into your complaint your name will not be divulged any more than is absolutely necessary within the Association, and if your complaint goes to the Chair of the Complaints Sub-Committee then other Committee members will not be told who has complained.

You will appreciate, however, that if your complaint involves another tenant or a member of staff it may be very difficult for us to look into this without talking to that tenant or staff member. If you ask us not to talk to the tenant or staff member we will try to respect your wishes, but it will probably not be possible for us to take any action to tackle the problem.

It will not normally be possible for us to deal with anonymous complaints as it is obviously difficult to check things with the person making the complaint.

Getting independent advice

We would always hope that a problem can be sorted out informally.

However, you may feel it is important for you to get independent advice before you decide whether to complain to us formally. Advice agencies in this area include:-

- Welfare Rights Service
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Law Centre
- Solicitor
- Shelter

How do we record and monitor complaints?

Complaints can help us as well as you! All formal complaints made to the Association are recorded and reported to the Director who will regularly advise the Management Committee of changes or improvements the Association may be taking as a result of complaints received.

Improving our service to you

Complaints are not the only way of telling us what you think of the service we provide! We always welcome suggestions on how we can improve things so if you have any ideas about this please let your housing officer know or drop us a line.

Trying to sort things out informally

You have every right to make a formal complaint whenever you wish to, but in the first instance it can often be quicker and easier for everyone if the problem can be sorted out informally; the choice is yours.

To try to resolve a problem informally, the best thing for you to do is to inform (or drop a line to) your housing officer or any other officer if this is appropriate, and let him or her know what you would like to be put right. He or she will let you know how long it should take for the problem to be sorted out, and hopefully a solution will be reached.

If you live in sheltered housing, you may be happy to try and resolve things informally by letting the warden know what the problem is. She or he will let you know how long it will be before the problem can be sorted out. But if you do not feel comfortable about involving the warden you should contact the housing officer.

Stage 1 – Informal Complaints

Sometimes people wish to have their dissatisfaction recorded, without making a formal complaint. On these occasions, we still record the complaint and the action taken, keeping an open register for internal office use only. By doing this, we believe that we can monitor the main causes of dissatisfaction and take the appropriate steps to improve our service.

Stage 2 - The Formal Complaints Procedure

If the problem has not been sorted out informally, you should in the first instance complain to the Housing Manager at Clydebank Housing Association's office. If you have a complaint against a member of staff you should write to the Director.

Complaints about the Director should be sent to the Chair of Clydebank Housing Association's Committee.

When you make a complaint it is really important for you to let us know exactly what the problem is and how you would like to see it resolved. We would encourage you to do this in writing wherever possible, but if this is not easy you can complain by telephone or in person. If the Housing Manager is not available your complaint will be noted by the person who speaks to you and passed onto the Housing Manager.

If you have made a complaint by telephone or in person, the member of staff who notes the complaint will check with you that they have taken a correct record, and you will be asked to sign it, in order to confirm that it is an accurate expression of your complaint.

Whether you have complained in writing, by phone or in person, we will write to you within three working days to acknowledge that your complaint is being dealt with.

We will then write to you again, normally within two weeks of receiving the complaint to let you know the outcome. At times complaints may take longer to resolve but we will keep you updated if there is any delays in responding to your complaint.

If you are not happy with the response you will be able to use the appeals procedure.

Stage 3 – The Appeals Procedure - Appeal to Management Committee

If you do not feel that staff have resolved your complaint satisfactorily, you can appeal to the Association's Management Committee. Although it is this committee which is responsible for considering your appeal, it has passed this task to a Complaints Sub-Committee, which has three members and meets as and when required. On some occasions your complaint may be dealt with by the full Management Committee.

After you have written to the Chair of the Management Committee s/he will write to you within three working days to acknowledge receipt of your letter.

Although not compulsory, you can in addition to your written complaint, talk to the Sub-Committee about your complaint. You can also bring along a friend or adviser (for example from a Citizens Advice Bureau) if you want to.

The Chair of the Sub-Committee will write to you within three working days of the meeting to let you know the decision.

If you remain unhappy about the final response or outcome of your complaint you have the right to take your complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

The SPSO takes complaints about most public bodies in Scotland and this includes Housing Associations. Please contact them to obtain a complaint form or for advice on submitting your complaint. This is a free and impartial service, their contact details are listed below:-

SPSO Contact Details

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH6 6SA

Or FREEPOST

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)
FREEPOST EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

Tel 0800 377 7330
Fax 0800 377 7331
Email ask@spsso.org.uk
Website www.spsso.org.uk

Please note: Normally you must have gone through all stages of the Association's own complaints procedure before the Ombudsman can consider your complaint.