



How to make a Complaint

"White Horse Housing chooses to value complaints, to learn from them, and improve future services".

What is a Complaint?

White Horse Housing Association defines a complaint as:

“an expression of dissatisfaction about our actions; or that of one of our agents, lack of action, or standards of services, where an initial response has not proven satisfactory. This could be received orally or in writing and by the complaint or their representative”.

This may include, but is not limited to:-

- Failure to provide a service or to achieve the standards of service we have promised.
- Failure to fulfil our legal or contractual obligations.
- Failure to follow a published policy.
- Unfair treatment of staff.
- Unacceptable delay or failure to respond to an enquiry or request.
- Dissatisfaction with a decision or the way that it was made.
- Dissatisfaction with the attitude of staff, contractors or agents.

A complaint is not:-

- A complaint against another customer of WHHA, or a third party.
- A report of anti-social behaviour.
- An initial request for a service.
- An issue that forms part of legal action being taken by or against WHHA.
- An issue that forms part of an existing insurance claim made against WHHA.
- An issue regarding an external policy or legal matter which is outside of WHHA's control.

This is not an exhaustive list and is provided as a guide to what may not be considered a complaint.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone who has any reason to come into contact with the business or services of WHHA, whether they are a tenant, leaseholder, managing agent, statutory organisation, contractor, private individual or a representative of any of these parties may log a formal complaint.

Complainants can be made by phone, email or letter (see contact details on the back page).

WHHA will provide assistance where necessary to those with particular needs or vulnerabilities that might affect their ability to access the complaints process. This will include providing face to face meetings, access to support services and working with advocates or designated persons to receive the complaint.

Group complaints

WHHA will accept complaints brought to us by a group of residents from the same residential area. The same complaint procedure will be applied to a group complaint as an individual complaint. The only difference shall be that the group shall be asked to nominate a lead complainant that we can liaise directly with, and who will be asked to co-ordinate any questions from the group. We, in turn, will send all correspondence to the lead complainant providing copies for the remaining group members.

Petitions

Petitions will be accepted by WHHA and evaluated as a complaint or a service review. If the petition is logged as a complaint it will be processed as a group complaint. If the petition is logged as a service review WHHA will carry out a full consultation.



Complaints

It is in the interest of the Association to ensure that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly. A full complaints policy is available and gives further information as well as setting out the strict time frame that must be met regarding the complaint.

Complaints Process Stage 1, 2 & 3

Stage 1: Tenants wishing to make a complaint should do so, either verbally or in writing, to the Operations Manager at Lowbourn House, Lowbourn Road, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 7DZ. The complaint should be made within 20 working days of the incident.

The Operations Manager will reply within 10 working days in response to the complaint.

Stage 2: If the complainant feels the stage 1 reply does not resolve the complaint then they can request it is escalated to stage 2 by writing to the Association's Chief Executive at **Lowbourn House, Lowbourn Road, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 7DZ** within 20 working days from the date stated in the letter from stage 1, asking for further consideration to be given to their complaint.

The Chief Executive will reply within 10 working days of receiving the complaint unless this is not reasonably practicable.

Stage 3: Where the complainant remains dissatisfied at stage 2 the complaint will be escalated to the Association's Appeal Panel. The purpose of a stage 3 review is to assess whether the findings made at stage 1 & 2 are fair and reasonable. If they are not found to be fair and reasonable the Appeals Panel are able to overturn the findings and/or make final judgements to resolve the complaint.

The Appeals Panel will be made up of 3 Board Members.

Appeals Panel Procedure

- The Panel will be convened within 28 working days from receipt of the letter of appeal.
- A report will be prepared by the Chief Executive or other relevant member of staff for the Panel. The report will outline the complaint, the actions taken by the Association to resolve and complaint and the outcome.
- The complainant will be provided with a copy of the report together with a copy of this procedure.
- The complainant is able to bring a representative or advocate to the Panel meeting but must inform the Chief Executive, in advance, of their intention to do so.
- The complainant is able to make comments on the report which is provided for the members of the Appeals Panel.
- The Panel will be chaired by one member. There may, in addition, be a secretary present to take notes.
- The Panel will commence with an outline of the complaints procedure, the investigations undertaken, evidence gathered, actions taken and the outcome of these actions.
- The Panel will ask the complainant what outcome they expect/ want from the process and hear the complainant's defence or mitigation. The complainant should have already informed the Panel of the reasons for the appeal in their letter.
- The complainant and his/her representative or advocate will leave the meeting.
- The Panel will then consider the appeal and the decision will be conveyed to the complainant by letter within 5 days of the Appeals Panel meeting. This letter will include how the complainant may take their complaint to the next stage if they are not happy with the outcome, for example, giving the address of the Housing Ombudsman.

Beyond Stage 3 - Designated persons and the Housing Ombudsman

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage 3 reply from the Appeals Panel they are able to ask the Housing Ombudsman to review their complaint. The Localism Act 2011 states that they must contact a Designated Person that could be a local MP, a local Councillor, a resident or resident's panel. They can assist in making the complaint but primarily their role is to review the decisions made by WHHA at any level of the complaints procedure and offer their impartial review of our findings.
- WHHA are able to reflect on the guidance offered by the Designated Person and adjust their findings if appropriate. If this does not resolve the complaint the Designated Person is able to refer to complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman. Alternatively the complainant can refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman 8 weeks after they have received their reply from the Appeals Panel.
- When a case is accepted by the Ombudsman the complainant and WHHA will be informed by the Complaints Team. Acceptance of a case through Ombudsman will not prevent case Managers continuing to seek to resolve the complaint wherever possible.

Please Note:

Complainants who are not applying for housing with WHHA or who are not paying for a service from WHHA do not have the right to appeal to the Housing Ombudsman.

Contact details for Housing Ombudsman

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

or call: 0300 111 3000
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Contact details for Regulator of Social Housing

Referrals and Regulatory Enquiries Team
Regulator of Social Housing
Level 2
7-8 Wellington Place
Leeds
LS1 4AP

email: enquiries@rsh.gov.uk
or call: 0300 124 5225

Services

It is nice to hear when you are pleased with our services. It helps us to identify what works well for our customers, which can be very useful for improving our services.

Contact Us

White Horse Housing Association Ltd

Tel: 01380 850916

Email: info@whitehorsehousing.co.uk

www.whitehorsehousing.co.uk

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