

# Customer Complaints



## **Why Have A Complaints Policy?**

Rutherglen and Cambuslang Housing Association aims to provide a first class service but errors and, therefore, complaints are inevitable in organisations providing a service to people. It is therefore important to have a complaints policy that can deal effectively with these. The complaints policy also gives us the opportunity to keep an eye on the quality of the service we provide so that we can continually work to improve it.

The aim of this leaflet is to give clear details of what steps can be taken to try and put things right when there is a problem.

## **Who Can Use The Complaints Procedure ?**

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

The procedure is also open to people who may be acting on someone's behalf such as a councillor, Member of Parliament, advice agency or solicitor.

## **What Can You Complain About ?**

Complaints can be made about any aspect of our service, for example :

- **IF A REPAIR HAS NOT BEEN CARRIED OUT PROPERLY.**
- **IF SOMEONE HAS NOT RECEIVED INFORMATION YOU HAVE ASKED FOR.**
- **IF SOMEONE FEELS THAT A MEMBER OF STAFF, A COMMITTEE MEMBER OR A CONTRACTOR HAS NOT BEHAVED ACCEPTABLY TOWARDS THEM.**
- **IF SOMEONE FEELS HIS OR HER HOUSING APPLICATION HAS NOT BEEN HANDLED PROPERLY.**

These examples are given to provide some guidance and are not exhaustive. The Association encourages people to comment about any aspect of our service even though this may seem trivial.

Complaints against neighbours will be dealt with under our neighbour disputes procedure. If the complaint is about the way we have dealt with a neighbour dispute, then this is covered by the complaints policy.

The Association will always try to deal with complaints sympathetically, but there are some things we will not be able to provide information about. For example, it would be wrong for us to discuss with a third party the details of

someone else's housing application, as this would be a breach of confidentiality, but we can of course discuss how our allocations procedure works.

### **Trying To Sort Things Out Informally ; Stage One**

In the first instance it can often be quicker and easier for everyone if the problem can be sorted out informally.

To try and resolve a problem informally, you should talk (or drop a line) to the appropriate staff member and let him or her know what the problem is. The staff member will discuss the complaint in the context of the Associations policies and procedures and hopefully a solution will be reached. The majority of these complaints should be settled quickly and smoothly, often on the spot or within one working day. In these circumstances there should be no need for a formal investigation. You will, however, be given the opportunity to have the explanation given in writing. A record will be kept of the nature of the complaint for monitoring purposes.

This stage will only deal with complaints that are of a procedural nature and that do not contain serious allegations against staff or committee. If a complaint cannot be satisfactorily dealt with informally then you will be advised of stage two of the process.

### **THE FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE;**

#### **STAGE TWO**

If the problem has not been sorted out informally you should complain to the appropriate person. This will be;

1. The section head that deals with that aspect of the Associations business.
2. If the complaint is against a member of staff, to the Director.
3. Complaints about the Director should be sent to the Chair of the Management Committee.
4. Complaints about a Management Committee Member should be directed to the Director in the first instance.

When a complaint is made it is important for the Association to know exactly what the problem is and how it is expected to be resolved. We encourage complaints to be made in writing whenever possible but if this is not possible a complaint can be accepted by telephone or in person.

Whether a complaint is received in writing, by phone or in person, we will respond within three working days to acknowledge that the complaint is being dealt with.

We will give a written response within two weeks of receiving the complaint to inform the complainant of the outcome. It is possible that some things may not be within our control and take longer to sort out and in these cases holding letters will be issued to inform you of the reason for the delays.

If you are not happy with the response then you will be advised in writing of the appeals procedure.

### **TAKING THE COMPLAINT FURTHER - THE APPEALS PROCEDURE**

If you feel that the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, then you should write to the Chair of the Management Committee. This will be acknowledged within three working days. The appropriate Sub-Committee will deal with the complaint. The full Committee of the Association may deal with complaints of a very serious nature.

In cases where the complaint is about a Committee Member this will either be dealt with by the Management Committee or the Office Bearers depending on the nature of the complaint. As with other complaints you will be advised how the complaint is being dealt with within three working days of receipt.

The Chair of the Sub-Committee will write to the complainant within three working days of the meeting informing them of the decision. If you are still not happy with the decision they will be advised, in writing, about the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Association will, as far as possible, respect the confidentiality of the complainant. Whilst we are considering complaints the complainants name will not be divulged any more than is absolutely necessary within the Association.

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

It may not be possible for us to deal with anonymous complaints, as it is often difficult for us to check things with the person making the complaint. The Director will deal with anonymous complaints.

### **GETTING INDEPENDENT ADVICE**

We would always hope that a problem can be sorted out informally. You may feel it is important to get independent advice before deciding whether to complain to us formally. Possible sources of advice are:

- **WELFARE RIGHTS SERVICE**
- **CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**
- **LAW CENTRE**
- **SOLICITOR**

### **HOW DO WE RECORD AND MONITOR COMPLAINTS?**

Complaints can help the Association as well as the complainant. All formal complaints made to the Association will be recorded in the complaints register and reported to the Management Committee annually. The report will include the number and nature of complaints and of changes or improvements the Association has taken as a result of complaints received. The appropriate sub-committees will monitor complaints that are resolved informally.

Our Complaints Procedure will be advertised in our newsletters and web site and will be made available to anyone on request

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