

EDEN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

Approved by the Board of Management

16 March 2004

**Approved by the Executive Management
Team**

14 March 2007



EDEN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. PURPOSE AND AIMS

- 1.1 The Association view complaints handling as a key element of its customer care approach and a means of monitoring, maintaining and improving the level and quality of service provided to all of its customers. It will serve to supplement information received on our services from other sources eg customer surveys, focus groups and tenant bodies.
- 1.2 The Association also encourages and welcomes positive comments from our customers. These will in future be properly recorded and reported, as they also influence our service delivery.
- 1.3 The policy and procedure aim to promote a positive approach from all employees (staff and organisations we employ) and members of the Association. Regular training and updates will be provided to further enhance that approach.
- 1.4 We would endeavour to rectify, to the satisfaction of the customer, mistakes in delivery and genuine grievance, where identified. Measures will be introduced to prevent their recurrence and to improve our working practices.
- 1.5 Through our various publications and reports, we will make it clear to all of our customers that the Association positively welcomes and encourages all feedback, whether positive or negative.
- 1.6 We will ensure that the methods of registering complaints are readily accessible and understandable to all of our customers.
- 1.7 We will ensure that all complaints are recorded and action taken, monitored and reported, including changes to service delivery, working practice, procedures and policies. These will be reported to Board and publicised through the Association's newsletters.
- 1.8 We will allow for financial compensation to customers, within defined corporate guidelines, where service failure has occurred and resulted in personal loss, distress, inconvenience, nuisance and annoyance.

2. DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

- 2.1 A complaint is, in general terms, an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action, or lack of action, taken by the Association or its staff, affecting an individual customer, or group of customers.
- 2.2 Complaints or compliments can be made in person, by phone, email, fax or letter and

can be logged on the Association's Complaints Database by any member of staff.

- 2.3 Guidance will be provided to all employees to ensure that the definition and the procedure is properly understood by all, and to encourage positive attitudes. Definitions will be contained in the guidance notes to the procedure.

3. CATEGORIES OF COMPLAINT

- 3.1 The following represent the broad categories that our policy and procedure will cover and which will be used as a basis for recording and monitoring complaints received.

- a. dissatisfaction with the way Association policies are carried out;
- b. failure to consider relevant matters in arriving at a decision, or with action taken in implementing a decision;
- c. complaints regarding employee attitudes and the actions of individual employees;
- d. delays in responding, or complaints about the administrative process;
- e. failure to provide a service;
- f. failure to achieve standards/quality of service;
- g. failure to fulfil statutory responsibilities;
- h. bias or unfair discrimination, with particular reference to equality and diversity.

- 3.2 The list should not be seen as exhaustive.

4. COMPLAINTS ABOUT MEMBERS AND DIRECTORS

- 4.1 All complaints made specifically about the acts/omissions of a Member and/or Director should be forwarded to the Chief Executive/Chairman.

5. COMPLAINTS TO THE INDEPENDENT HOUSING OMBUDSMAN AND THE COMMISSION OF RACE EQUALITY

- 5.1 Complainants should be advised of their right to appeal to the above bodies and assisted with the process. Complaints to the Independent Housing Ombudsman should be made only after the Association's own Complaints procedure has been exhausted.

- 5.2 Complaints referred these bodies will be dealt with by the Chief Executive, and Board advised.

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 6.1 The Association's procedure is designed to achieve the optimum effectiveness by exhibiting the following characteristics:

- a. be easy to use, workable, user friendly and accessible to all customers;
- b. be simple, with the various stages set out;
- c. be quick, with prompt action taken; **maximum** of 14 days for any stage

- d. be objective, with provision for independent investigation, if necessary;
- e. be confidential;
- f. be comprehensive, with the same standard features for all parts of the organisation;
- g. be responsive, to prevent repetition of a similar case; (through detailed recording of action taken to ensure improvement in the service.)

6.2 The test of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure is whether it helps to resolve the dissatisfaction of customers, about a service they have received or expected to receive. This should be based on the following principles:

- a. the clear responsibilities for complaints procedures should be identified, with a defined role for staff and senior management.
- b. that the complaints procedures should be well publicised both inside and outside the Association, and customers informed about their course of redress or compensation;
- c. complaints received should initially be dealt with as close as possible to the point of service delivery, thus providing officers or their immediate supervisors with an opportunity to deal with the matter at an early stage; all complaints, however minor, should be recorded, even if the matter has apparently been resolved, and all staff involved should have easy access to monitor progress and outcomes.
- d. complaints received should be recorded, analysed and used to improve services where appropriate, and so contribute towards the monitoring of the Association's performance;
- e. complainants should be kept informed of investigations/outcomes and, where no satisfactory solution can be found, complainants should be fully informed of the reasons and what other avenues are available;
- f. that procedures should involve, where necessary, independent investigation and review;
- g. that any information leaflets about the complaints procedure should be plain English, available in audio form and translatable, as required, for ethnic groups.

7. REVIEW

7.1 The operation of the policy and procedure will be the subject of regular review by Executive Management Team and periodic review by Board on its effectiveness and application.