



EDEN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

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Original Document Author	Sean Relph (AD Corporate Resources)
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Review/Amendments Record

Date	Change by	Summary of Change
28/3/2013	Sean Relph	Inclusion of elements for 'Designated Persons'
8/3/2017	Adele Woof	Change of job titles following organisation restructure
25/7/2017	Jenny Everingham	Interim review ahead of Scrutiny Panel review.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Association views 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 e.g. customer surveys, focus groups and tenant bodies.
- 1.2 The Association also encourages and welcomes positive comments from our customers. These will be properly recorded and reported, as they also influence our service delivery.
- 1.3 Our policy and procedures 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 will endeavour to rectify, to the satisfaction of the customer, mistakes in delivery and genuine grievance, where identified. Where possible, 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 and staff.
- 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 and other methods of communication.
- 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. POLICY CONTENT

2.1 Definition of a Complaint

- 2.1.1 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.
- 2.1.2 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.
- 2.1.3 Guidance will be provided to all employees to ensure that the definition and the procedure are properly understood by all, and to encourage positive attitudes. Definitions will be contained in the guidance notes to the procedure.

2.2 Categories of a Complaint

- 2.2.1 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
 - 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
- 2.2.2 The list should not be seen as exhaustive.

2.3 Complaints about Members and Directors

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

2.4 Complaints to the Independent Housing Ombudsman and the Equality and Human Rights Commission

- 2.4.1 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 and has been referred to the Ombudsman via

a 'designated person'¹, or a clear gap of eight weeks has elapsed since the closure of the Association's own complaints procedure has occurred.

2.4.2 Complainants will be informed of their choices for 'designated persons' within standard literature which accompanies EHA's responses to complaints.

2.4.3 EHA welcomes tenant panels who wish to be recognised as 'designated persons'. A method for accepting such recognition will be agreed with the Association's primary tenant assembly from time to time.

2.4.4 Complaints referred to these bodies will be overseen by the Chief Executive, and Board advised.

2.5 Characteristics of our Complaints Procedure

2.5.1 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; a **maximum** of 10 working days for stages 1 and 2, and 28 days for stage 3.
- 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.)

2.5.2 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;

¹ A designated person refers to an MP, local councillor or a tenant panel specifically recognised as a designated person. The aim of designated people is to assist in resolving complaints at a local level before going to the Housing Ombudsman.

- 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.

In recording we should also check and comply with our residents wishes around whether they wish to receive our standard communications. There may be cases where the recording is for internal learning and monitoring which the customer does not wish to take further forward.

- 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 customer approved, available in audio form and translatable, as required..

2.6 Feedback

- 2.6.1 Customer Feedback is important to us and is a rich source of information from which we can seek to continuously improve our services. Customer feedback will be recorded and evaluated appropriately and will complement this policy. Feedback will only be recorded as a complaint where the customer has explicitly requested this.

3. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 3.1 Through the management of our Complaints Policy, we aim to treat all customers fairly and with respect and professionalism, regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.
- 3.2 To enable all residents to have clear information and equal access to our complaints policy, we will provide the information in large print, Braille, audio or in other languages where reasonably requested.
- 3.3 The Association will apply this policy flexibly in the case of vulnerable and disabled customers and may, at its discretion, choose to exceed or amend its procedures to meet the needs of a particular individual or family.
- 3.4 Full details of our approach are set out in our Equality and Diversity Policy.

4. CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT

- 4.1 The Association recognises the importance of working in partnership with our customers to develop and continuously improve our services and raise standards.
- 4.2 To demonstrate this commitment, this policy:
- has been developed in light of customer feedback, comments and complaints;
 - will be widely communicated and feedback on complaints and compliments shared with customers;
 - will be reviewed in consultation with service users and customers.

5. POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 5.1 Performance monitoring will be undertaken in the following areas to assess the impact of complaints and compliments:
- the number of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints (aim to maximise the number satisfied at stage 1)
 - the numbers dealt with satisfactorily at each stage
 - the number of compliments
 - the number of service improvements as a result of complaints received.
- 5.2 This Policy will be reviewed periodically or in line with legislative or regulatory changes.
- 5.3 Monitoring results will be used by the Association to inform future policy review in this area. All reviews will consider whether:
- the current Policy adheres to legislative and regulatory requirements and reflects current good practice;
 - the aims and objectives of the Policy are being met;
 - the current Policy outcomes meet the needs and aspirations of our customer base;
 - service users are aware of and understand the Policy and believe it to be consistent and fair;
 - the service offers value for money.
- 5.4 Overall monitoring and review of the Policy will be undertaken in consultation with:
- staff groups
 - Board Members
 - service users
 - tenant groups
 - relevant partners, agencies and statutory services as relevant

6. RESPONSIBILITY

- 6.1 The Director of Finance and Corporate Resources retains the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
- 6.2 The Executive Team is responsible for the operational delivery of this policy and associated procedures. This includes responsibility for monitoring and review, staff awareness and training, policy development and communication to customers.

7. POLICY PROCEDURES AND GUIDLINES

- 7.1 Procedures for the implementation of this policy can be found on 'Ernie' and are entitled.
- Complaints & Compliments Procedure
 - Service failure payment procedure can be found in appendix 5 of the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Policy.