



**HOUSING**  
**ASSOCIATION LIMITED**

**A GUIDE TO KNOWES COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

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## **Introduction**

Knowes Housing Association prides itself on providing a high quality service to all users however we accept that there may be times when you are not happy about the way we are conducting our business, and if that is the case then you must tell us.

This guide details how you can access the Associations Complaints Procedure and outlines what you can do to get your point across and try and get things sorted!

For the Association, it allows us to check that we are doing things right, and when we are not, we are correcting things to make sure that the customer is happy.

## **What is a Complaint?**

You can complain about any aspect of our service which you are not happy about or if you feel you have not been treated fairly or properly.

Examples of a complaint would be as follows:

- Repair has not been carried out properly – an initial request is not a complaint but should the repair be carried out in an unsatisfactory manner then this would be a complaint;
- Housing Application not being dealt with properly – not being housed quickly enough would prompt an enquiry about the Allocations Policy, but failing to be dealt with in accordance with the Policy would be a Complaint;
- Not receiving information which is reasonable to receive having asked for it – if the information is of a sensitive nature then it may be that the Association is bound by Access to Personal Files and/or Data Protection Legislation, however if you request information on public documents or your own files and don't receive it, then this may prompt a complaint;
- Member of staff or committee not behaving reasonably towards you – it may be that a representative from the Association disagrees with you, and this is not in itself justification for complaining, however if you are not treated with respect or fairness then you should complain;
- Being unfairly discriminated against by the Association – the Association prides itself on its commitment to equalities for all, and should you feel that you have been unfairly discriminated against then you should complain and this will be investigated.

The Association has a separate “Whistleblowing” policy and this can be obtained from Knowes at 10 Field Road, Faifley, Clydebank 01389 877752

Complaints against neighbours will be dealt with under our Neighbour Dispute Policy and Procedure. However if you have a complaint about the way we have dealt with a neighbour dispute or anti-social matter then you can use the Complaints Procedure.

## How to Complain

We do not want to put barriers in your way to complaining as the quicker your complaint is heard, the quicker the problem can be resolved.

The initial stages of a complaint are usually accepted to be verbal, and these are usually resolved quickly. However the more serious complaints, or indeed, unresolved complaints are always preferred in writing. **HOWEVER IF THIS IS NOT SUITABLE A VERBAL COMPLAINT WILL BE RECEIVED AND DEALT WITH IN THE SAME WAY.**

## The Stages – who will deal with it & how quickly

Our Complaints Procedure is set out in a number of stages and your complaint will be dealt with depending on the severity of the complaint, or lack of satisfaction at the outcome.

These stages are summarised below and over the page provides more detail about each stage.

**Stage 1** This is an informal complaint and will be dealt with by any staff member on the same day.

**Stage 2** This applies to complaints which cannot be dealt with informally due to its sensitivity or severity, or where the informal complaint was not a success. Stage 2 complaints will be dealt with by a Manager or the Director.

**Stage 3** Should there still be dissatisfaction following the Manager/Director dealing with the complaint, or indeed the complaint is about the management of the organisation then the complaint at this stage would go the Chairperson of the Management Committee of the Association.

**Stage 4** A final appeal is open through the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. Telephone no. 0800 377 7330 or email: [ask@spsso.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsso.org.uk).

### Stage 1 Sorting it out informally

Should you wish your complaint to be dealt with formally you should proceed to the next stage. However, if you feel that discussing the problem with a member of staff may see the complaint resolved quickly, then your complaint will be dealt with at this stage.

At this stage, you should contact a member of staff letting them know what your complaint is. You can make contact by telephone, e-mail, calling into office, by letter or if you prefer to discuss the matter in your own home you

can request a home visit. The member of staff will investigate your complaint immediately. We aim to resolve these complaints within five working days. If the complaint cannot be resolved within this timeframe, we will send you an acknowledgement detailing what is happening with your complaint and a likely resolution date. If you are not happy with the outcome of the complaint you have the right to proceed to stage 2. If you wish to exercise this right you should contact the appropriate line manager within 21 days from the date of the outcome letter.

All staff members are trained to accept and deal with informal complaints.

## **Stage 2 Formal complaint**

If your informal complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction or you wish to register a formal complaint due to the severity of the problem then you should make a formal complaint by putting your complaint in writing. If you choose to complain verbally, a member of staff will record your complaint and ask you to sign to verify the nature and detail of the complaint.

If your complaint is about a member of staff this will be dealt with by the appropriate Manager or Director. Complaints about the Director should be sent to the Chairperson of the Management Committee at the Association's offices marked "Private & Confidential".

Once the formal complaint at Stage 2 has been received, we will respond to you within 3 working days to acknowledge receipt and confirm that your complaint is being investigated. We will endeavour to resolve your complaint within 5 working days of sending the acknowledgement letter. If your complaint cannot be resolved within this timescale we will write to you advising of this and giving a likely date for resolution. If you are not happy with the outcome of the complaint you have the right to appeal to the management committee within 21 days of the decision letter.

## **Stage 3 Appeal to the Association management committee**

This stage should only be used when all internal processes via the Associations staff and Management have been exhausted, or if the complaint is regarding the Director or a matter of a serious enough nature or involves the integrity of the Association.

At this stage a letter should be submitted either to the Director or to the Chairperson of the Association.

The Chairperson will write to you within 5 working days of receipt advising the date of the Committee Meeting at which your appeal/complaint will be heard. You will be invited to attend this meeting and may be accompanied by a representative/friend.

The Chairperson of the Committee will write to you within 5 working days of the Meeting to advise you of the Committee's decision.

## Stage 4 Final appeal

Should you still be unhappy, then you have a right of external appeal to the Public Services Ombudsman. This is a free and impartial advice and investigates individual complaints against Housing Associations. You should normally have used the Associations complaints procedure before referring to the Ombudsman.

A leaflet about the Ombudsman is available from the Association or from the Citizens Advice Bureau or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS telephone 0800 377 7330 email [ask@spsso.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsso.org.uk). A time limit exists of 12 months, following the day on which the complainant first had notice of the matter, to make a complaint of maladministration to the Ombudsman, unless the Ombudsman decides that there are special circumstances. Complaints will normally only be accepted in writing or electronically.

## 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 the area include:-

- **Citizens Advice Bureau** **0141 951 1778**  
**16 Alexander Street, Clydebank**
- **Councillor Margaret Bootland** **6pm 1<sup>st</sup> Tues of**  
**Surgery Knowes Housing Association** **month**
- **Welfare Benefits Advisor** **0141 951 4040**
- **Happy To Translate** **0131 444 9451**

## Confidentiality

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 Chairperson of the Management Committee then other Committee members will not be told who has complained.

You will appreciate, however, if your complaint involved another tenant or a member of staff it may be difficult for us to look into this without talking to the tenant or staff/committee member. If you ask us not to talk to the tenant or staff/committee 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.

# Step by step guide

