



## Complaints Handling Policy

29 August 2019

<b>Policy Manual Section:</b>	Governance
<b>Policy Number:</b>	G06
<b>Scottish Social Housing Charter Standards and Outcomes</b>	1. Equality 2. Communication 3. Participation
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Govan Housing Association can provide this document on request, in different languages and formats, including Braille and audio formats.



## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Having a good complaints handling service is a vital part of ensuring that customers receive the service to which they are entitled. It demonstrates that we actively strive for continuous improvement in all that we do and that we treat people with respect and are responsive to their views and priorities.

*“An organisation that truly welcomes values and uses complaints to inspire and guide improvement will deliver better public services than one that does not “*

Professor Alice Brown  
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Website

- 1.2 Govan Housing Association recognises that a streamlined complaints handling process that is prompt, efficient and responsive will greatly enhance the Associations image with its tenants and customers. We aim to attend to any complaint as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations, which are evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case. We will try to ‘get it right first time’ and endeavour to resolve the complaint to the tenant or customer’s satisfaction.
- 1.3 We know that complaint handling that is long winded and inefficient or defensive may damage the Association’s reputation. The Complaints Handling Policy and supporting procedures will help us to do our job better as well as improve relationships with tenants and customers. It will enable us to better understand tenants and customers’ concerns about our service and take these into account to improve our services, practices and policies to meet their needs, whilst achieving organisational objectives and goals.

## 2.0 Complaints Handling – Principles

- 2.1 In implementing this policy we aim to comply with the SPSO Statement of Complaints Handling Principles, which states that effective complaints handling is:

**User Focused:** It puts the customer at the heart of the process.

**Accessible:** It is appropriately and clearly communicated, easily understood and available to all.

**Simple and Timely:** It has as few steps as necessary within an agreed and transparent timeframe.

**Thorough, proportionate and consistent:** It should provide quality outcomes on all complaints through robust but proportionate investigation and the use of clear quality standards.

**Objective, impartial and fair:** It should be objective, evidence based, and driven by the facts and established circumstances, not assumptions and this should be clearly demonstrated.

And should:

**Seek early resolution:** It aims to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity, to the service user's satisfaction wherever possible and appropriate.

**Deliver improvement:** It is driven by the search for improvement, using analysis of outcomes to support service delivery and drive service quality improvements.

### **3.0 Legislation**

- 3.1** The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (the Act) gave the SPSO the authority to lead the development of simplified and standardised complaints handling procedures across the public sector. The Act built on the work of the Crerar and Sinclair Reports that sought to improve the way complaints are handled in the public sector.

Following consultation, a Statement of Complaints Handling Principles was developed by the SPSO. These Principles were approved by Parliament and published in January 2011. This Policy is based on the model Registered Social Landlords' Model Complaints Handling Procedure, the latest of which was issued in April 2012.

### **4.0 Risk Management**

- 4.1** The Association has considered the potential risks of failing to make our customers aware of their right to make a complaint. If people do not let us know about their dissatisfaction we are unaware and unable to rectify the issues. This could also potentially damage the reputation of the Association. We will ensure that the customer complaints policy is widely advertised throughout all aspects of the Association's publications.

### **5.0 Equality & Diversity**

- 5.1** Govan Housing Association is committed to ensuring equality & diversity and fair treatment for all people in its work.

5.2 In Implementing the Complaints Policy and Procedures we will ensure that we achieve fairness throughout our operations. Our commitment to equality & diversity and fairness will apply irrespective of factors such as gender or marital status, race, colour, disability, age, sexual orientation, family circumstances, employment status, language or social origin or other personal attributes

5.3 We will support our tenants and customers to ensure we attend to any specific needs or requirements they have to ensure they can have access to, and enable them to progress their complaint i.e. interpretation and translation services e.g. interpreter, large print, braille, etc.

## **6.0 Complaints – Definitions and Stages**

### **6.1 Definition**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us, or on our behalf. This may include:

- Delays in responding to enquiries and requests;
- Failure to provide a service;
- Inadequate standard of service, such as repair not carried out properly;
- Dissatisfaction with a policy or a decision (but only if there is no other way of dealing with the matter such as a formal appeal process);
- Provision of misleading, unsuitable or incorrect advice or information;
- Unacceptable behaviour by, or attitude of, a member of staff, Committee member, volunteer or contractor's staff;
- Unfairness, bias or prejudice in service delivery;

We recognise that while in most cases it will be clear if the individual is making a complaint, which should be dealt with in accordance with this policy, there may be occasions when this is not initially clear. As a result, we will provide relevant training to our staff who deal with members of the public to help them identify manage accordance with this policy.

### **Stages**

There are two stages for handling complaints:

- **Stage 1 – Frontline resolution**
- **Stage 2 – Investigation**

### **Stage 1 complaints will be:**

- Issues that are straight forward and easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation;
- Dealt with at the 'front line', i.e. by an appropriate staff member who can deal with the complaint quickly and registered;
- Replied to with an 'on the spot' apology, explanation or other action to resolve the complaint right away, or in the majority of cases within 5 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances and an extension is agreed with the complainant.

**Stage 2 complaints will be:**

- Issues that have not been resolved at Stage 1
- Issues that are complex, serious or high risk, normally requiring thorough investigation (these will include complaints against the attitude or behaviour of staff, Committee members, volunteers or contractor staff);
- Passed to the Head of Departments for investigation, co-ordination and reply; except for all staff attitude or behaviour complaints which should be passed direct to the Compliance Manager for investigation and outcome.
- Acknowledged within 3 working days and replied to within 20 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances and an extension is agreed with the customer.

**Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, (SPSO)**

If a tenant is still dissatisfied following our Stage 2 reply, they will be advised that they have exhausted our internal complaints handling process and may now liaise directly with the SPSO and will be given information to assist them to do so, including SPSO contact details and that any appeal must be submitted to the SPSO within 12 months of their complaint first being raised with us.

**First –Tier for Scotland Housing and Property Chamber**

Owners who exhaust our internal process and remain dissatisfied following the conclusion of Stage 2 can appeal to the First –Tier for Scotland Housing and Property Chamber. We will provide contact details to the complainant to support them with this step.

**7.0 Responsibility**

7.1 All Govan Housing Association staff will take responsibility for complaints that they become aware of and do all that they can to help customers and deal with problems as fully as possible.

**8.0 Recording Complaints**

8.1 We will ensure that the appropriate details of each complaint and the outcome are recorded at each stage in the process, so that the details are available should the customer remain dissatisfied and further investigation etc. is required, and also to provide information on trends etc., that may require us to review standards, policies or procedures.

## **9.0 Publicising Outcomes**

9.1 We will publish summary information on complaints received, their outcome and any resulting action on our website and in our Newsletter.

## **10.0 Confidentiality**

10.1 Wherever possible we will respect the confidentiality of customers that make complaints and those being complained about. Where it is necessary to reveal a name, we will only do so with the individual's agreement.

## **11.0 Training**

11.1 We will provide the relevant training required by all staff who have to deal with complaints in the course of their duties.

## **12.0 Monitoring and Review**

12.1 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that all staff comply with this policy and any procedures that support it.

12.2 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for recording the information required to monitor the receipt, progress and outcome of each complaint.

12.3 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services will ensure that the Complaints Handling steps are publicised as widely as possible to all who need to be aware of it.

12.4 The Senior Management Team will monitor the progress with dealing with current complaints and will consider any action required as a result of emerging trends, reporting the lessons learnt to the Management Committee on a quarterly basis.

12.5 This policy will next be reviewed in August 2024, or earlier if required.

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