



**Muirhouse  
Housing  
Association**

<b>Title of Policy:</b>	Complaints Policy
<b>Date of Adoption or Last Review:</b>	25 March 2019
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Ainan Groat
<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	April 2022
<b>Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes and Standards:</b>	<p>Outcome 1: Equality</p> <p>Outcome 2: Communication</p> <p>Outcome 3: Participation</p> <p>Standard 13: Value for Money</p>
<b>Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management:</b>	<p>Standard 2 – 2.1, 2.2, 2.3  <i>“The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.”</i></p> <p>Standard 5 – 5.3  <i>“The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity</i></p>

# Complaints Policy

## 1. Introduction

Muirhouse Housing Association is committed to providing high-quality customer services. However, we understand there may be occasions when things go wrong or a customer is not happy with the level or quality of our service. We want to encourage our customers to give us feedback so that we can put things right, explain and apologise, and learn from our mistakes. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of our Complaints Policy is to ensure that all complaints are dealt with promptly and consistently, are handled with courtesy and fairness and to promote a culture of 'valuing complaints' in MHA.

## 3. Scope

### Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter states what tenants can expect from social landlords, in terms of the quality and value for money of the services they receive, the standard of their homes, and opportunities for communication and participation in the decisions that affect them. This policy aims to ensure we meet the Charter standards and outcomes, in particular:

*Outcome 1, Equality: Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.*

*Outcome 2, Communication: Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.*

*Outcome 3, Participation: tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.*

*Standard 13, Value for Money: Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.*

## Equality and Diversity

We promote equality and diversity and operate equal opportunities policies which inform this policy and all aspects of our business. We will ensure that we keep to the Equality Act 2010 by being committed to equal and fair treatment for all and opposed to any form of unlawful discrimination.

In all of our interaction with customers no one will be treated differently or less favourably than others because of any of the protected characteristics as listed in the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

## Model Complaints Handling Procedure

We have adopted the Model Complaints Handling Procedure for Registered Social Landlords produced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman in line with the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. This includes a customer leaflet which provides standardised information on the complaints procedure to customers of all RSLs in Scotland. The Complaints Handling Procedure aims to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process for resolving complaints early and locally by capable, well-trained staff. These shared values, commitment and procedures inform our Complaints Policy.

### **4. Definitions**

A complaint is 'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about Muirhouse Housing Association's lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of Muirhouse Housing Association'.

### **5. Principles and Approach**

Anyone who receives or requests a service from us can make a complaint, either in person at our office, by telephone, by e-mail or in writing. This includes:

- Tenants or owners
- People applying for a house
- People acting on behalf of the above, e.g. solicitor, advice agency, councillor, MSP

A complaint may relate to:

- Delays in responding to enquiries and requests
- Failure to provide a service
- Our standard of service
- Dissatisfaction of our policy
- Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- Our failure to follow proper procedure

We will not deal with the following under the complaint's procedure:

- A first request for a service
- A request for information or explanation of policy or practice
- Any policies and procedures that already have a separate route of appeal (eg housing application decisions)
- A complaint we have already investigated and given a final decision on
- Complaints that are in court of have already been heard by a court of a tribunal.

All complaints will be treated sympathetically and in confidence.

## **6. Roles and Responsibility**

Overall responsibility and accountability for the management of complaints lies with the Chief Executive and the Board of Management.

### All Staff

All staff are responsible for trying to resolve complaints on the spot to the satisfaction of the customer wherever this is possible. The Complaints Handling Procedure provides a quick, simple and streamlined process for resolving complaints early and locally. It provides an opportunity for all staff to

resolve complaints internally through 'frontline resolution'. We have adopted the 'Employees Guide to the Complaints Handling Procedure'. All staff will be trained in line with this good practice.

Where a complaint is complex or cannot be resolved at the first point of contact it will be investigated in line with our Complaints Handling Procedure.

### Housing Services Team Leader

On the Chief Executive's behalf, the Housing Services Team Leader is responsible for managing complaints and the way we learn from them, ensuring that recording and reporting on complaints is thorough and effective, overseeing the implementation of actions required as a result of a complaint investigating complaints and deputising for the Chief Executive on occasion.

### Housing Officers

The Housing Officers are responsible and accountable for the management of complaints investigation. They will be involved in investigating and co-ordinating all aspects of the response to the customer. This may include preparing a comprehensive written report, including details of any procedural changes in service delivery that could result in wider opportunities for learning across the organisation.

### Chief Executive

Our final position on a complaint investigation is signed off by our Chief Executive and we will confirm that this is our final response. This ensures that our senior management own and are accountable for the decision. It also reassures the customer that their concerns have been taken seriously.

### Board of Management

The Board of Management's role is to develop and foster a culture that values complaints. The Board will ensure that recording and reporting of complaints is thorough and effective so that Board reports reflect a true picture, and that information and learning from complaints are used to improve our understanding of, and to steer MHA's policies and practices.

## **7. Redress**

We expect that a prompt and positive response to a complaint will resolve the problem. In the event of prolonged periods of inconvenience or distress to a tenant in resolving a problem it may be appropriate to consider financial compensation in some form. This is considered by and at the discretion of the Chief Executive up to a maximum of £200. More significant compensation would be considered by and at the discretion of the Board, on receiving a full report from and recommendation by the Chief Executive.

## **8. Monitoring and Performance**

We will record all complaints in a systematic way so that we can use the complaints data for analysis and management reporting. By recording and using complaints information in this way, we can identify and address the causes of complaints and, where appropriate, identify training opportunities and introduce service improvements.

This information is reported regularly quarterly to our Board of Management.

Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform us of where services need to improve. It will also help us report efficiently on the Annual Return on the Charter.

## **9. Customer Engagement and Tenant Scrutiny**

We are committed to working with our tenants to improve the services we provide and to involve them in influencing decisions about their homes and their communities. We will consult with our tenants if we want to make changes to policies and service standards which will have a significant impact on them. Through our Tenant Improvement Group, we will ensure that tenants are involved in looking closely at our services to make sure they are working well and give value for money. Our Tenant Improvement Group reviewed our Complaints Policy and made recommendations for improvement which were approved by the MHA Board and are included in our updated policy.

## **10. Complaints and Service Improvement**

We publish on a regular basis in newsletters, on our website and in our office the outcome of complaints and the actions we have taken in response. This demonstrates the improvements resulting from complaints and shows that complaints can influence our services. It also helps ensure transparency in our complaints handling service and will demonstrate to our customers that we value complaints. We may also use case studies whenever possible and confidentiality allows, and examples to demonstrate how complaints have helped improve services.

## **11. Policy Review**

The Complaints Policy will be reviewed at least every three years by the Board of Management.