



## Complaints Policy

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Board of Management / Committee name	Board of Management
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Version:	V3



<b>Policy Version</b>	<b>Date of Approval</b>	<b>Changes made to Policy</b>
Version V1	26 October 2012	
Version V2	24 March 2014	
Version V3		New section on learning from complaints Some re-wording

## **1. Introduction**

The Association aims to deliver excellent services to all customers, whether to tenants, people on the housing list, contractors, consultants, members of partner organisations or anyone else. However there will be times when things go wrong and a customer may wish to make a complaint.

The Association aims to resolve complaints as close as possible to the point of service delivery in order to provide as seamless a service as possible. In this way the Association will maximise levels of customer satisfaction whilst also achieving best value.

This policy aims to create a culture of welcoming complaints and seeing them as an opportunity to make service and performance improvements.

A complaint is defined as: ‘any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf’.

Complaints can be about, but are not limited to:

- delays in responding to enquiries and requests;
- failure to provide a service;
- the standard of service;
- dissatisfaction with policy;
- treatment by, or attitude of a member of staff;
- failure to follow the Association procedure.

A complaint is not:

- a routine first-time request for a service;
- a request for compensation only;
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal;
- an appeal against a decision where there is an established appeal route;
- attempts to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where a final decision has already been determined.

## **2. Policy Statement**

The Association encourages an environment of openness to complaints, and sets out a framework to ensure that complaints are used as a learning tool and a way to drive forward improvements in service delivery.

## **3. Objectives**

- To ensure that, as far as possible, the services provided meet the requirements of customers;
- To value the contributions of our customers;
- To learn from compliments, comments and complaints

#### **4. Links to other policies and Business Plan**

- Customer Care Policy
- Unacceptable Actions Policy
- Compensation and Redress Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Privacy Policy

This policy also links in to the following value within the business plan:

##### **We are open and accountable**

- We provide relevant, accurate, user-friendly information about our performance that allows our tenants and others to hold us to account
- When we make mistakes we apologise and put things right as soon as possible

#### **5. Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure**

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 gave the SPSO new responsibilities and powers in relation to complaints handling. Specifically, it gave the SPSO a role to oversee the development of a standard model complaints procedure for each sector and to promote and monitor best practice in complaints handling.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman introduced a model complaints handling procedure for adoption by all local authorities and registered social landlords in Scotland during 2012/13.

The Association is committed to deliver the SPSO model complaints handling procedure. This includes any revisions to the model that may take place. In brief, the procedure is structured as follows:

##### **Stage 1 - Frontline resolution**

The Association aims to resolve complaints quickly and as close as possible to where the service is provided.

Stage 1 complaints are resolved within five working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If there is no resolution at this stage, or if the customer remains dissatisfied with the service provided, the complaint is taken to Stage 2.

##### **Stage 2 – Investigation**

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1; and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. At Stage 2 the Association is expected to:

- acknowledge receipt of complaint within three working days;
- discuss the complaint with the complainant to understand why they are unhappy and what outcome they are looking for;
- provide a written response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days. If the timescale takes more than 20 days then this is explained to the complainant.

## 6. Publicity and tenant involvement

It is important that customers have ready access to information about how to complain. This is made available to via:

- information leaflets
- the website
- newsletters
- letters from the Association will signpost the procedure if required
- any social media in use by the Association

## 7. Learning from complaints

The Association is committed to using complaints as part of its aim to improve the quality of services. This is done in three distinct ways:

- **As an Individual** – staff are encouraged to use reflective learning practices. This involves taking time to consider their role in service delivery and how they can use complaints to improve their own practice and habits. Even where a complaint is not upheld, there is the potential to reflect on what led to the complaint being made and how it can be avoided in the future. See Appendix 1 for further guidance on reflective learning.
- **As a team** – service complaints are discussed within teams on a regular basis. The frequency of meetings to discuss complaints will depend on the number of complaints received within the operational service area. It is important that teams remain open-minded, and do not adopt a defensive approach to discussing complaints. Team members are encouraged to contribute to decisions about improving working practice.
- **As an organisation** – where possible outcomes from complaints are used as a tool during training, and when reviewing or creating policies. This ensures that lessons learned are built in to service development and improvement. Where teams have amended practice as a result of reviewing complaints, this is highlighted by the Association so that it encourages openness and transparency.

It is a requirement of the model procedure that the Association demonstrates to customers that complaints are valued and that the organisation is actively learning and improving the services provided. Administrative structures are in place to capture this information, and feed it through to Association publications, the website and social media.

## **8. Monitoring and review**

Assessing and reporting complaints performance is an important element of the procedure. This reporting is both internal and external, with monthly information provided at Senior Management Team level, and quarterly information being available for the Board of Management and the tenants. The following key performance indicators are monitored within the analysis of complaints:

- number of stage one and stage two complaints completed within the reporting period
- number of completed complaints upheld within the reporting period
- stage one complaints target of completion within 5 working days
- stage two completion target of completion within 20 working days
- learning points from the complaints action list are also included in reports

### **Right to Complain**

In the event you are not satisfied with the service you have received, please contact the Association for a copy of our Complaints Policy, which can also be viewed on our website – [www.langstane-ha.co.uk](http://www.langstane-ha.co.uk)

### **Equality and Diversity**

The Association is committed to promoting equality and diversity across all areas of its work, and discrimination or harassment of any kind is not tolerated.

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