

Complaints policy

This policy outlines the process that Haig Housing Trust (HHT) uses to manage complaints. It is owned and agreed by the Board on recommendation of the Estates Committee (EC) working with the Chief Executive (CE), who is responsible for day-to-day operational compliance. It will be reviewed in line with the Board's policy schedule and changes in external regulations such as The Housing Ombudsman.

Haig Housing recognise that from time-to-time things go wrong. We encourage issues to be raised quickly so that the matter can be put right and resolved informally. If that does not work this policy explains how to make a complaint and how it will be handled.

We are committed to ensuring that all complaints are handled fairly, recorded appropriately and that any issues are rectified. We welcome feedback and will always seek to make improvements based on these. Complaints are viewed as a means of improvement and are welcomed as an opportunity to resolve dissatisfaction and to improve our services. We recognise that the word complaint does not have to be used for it to be treated as such.

We will ensure that:

- › complaints will be dealt with impartially, objectively and professionally. We look to resolve a complaint in the most efficient way and provide excellent tenant service.
- › complaints are easy to make and that the process is understood by our tenants and others that may want to make a complaint such as an advocate, friend or family member or any third-party person. Where representatives are involved data sharing consent will be required from the tenant.
- › making a complaint will not adversely affect the way in which a complainant is treated by Haig Housing. If legal proceedings are involved, we may suspend the complaint pending conclusion of that process.

What is a complaint?

Our policy is aligned to The Complaints Handling Code designed by the Housing Ombudsman Service. The service is set up by law to look at complaints about housing organisations. The service is free, independent, and impartial. Haig Housing benchmarks procedures against the Housing Ombudsman code to provide best practice in this area.

The **complaint definition** provided by the Housing Ombudsman is *“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual tenant or group of tenants.”*

The **service request** definition provided is *‘a request from a tenant to their landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right’*.

When we receive feedback we will ask how we can put matters right and aim to resolve issues outside of our complaints process. We will confirm if the feedback is a complaint or service request, as a request for action is not a complaint.

How to make a complaint, comment or suggestion

- › **In writing by post:** Complaints, Haig Housing, Mountbarrow House, 12 Elizabeth Street, London, SW1W 9RB
- › **Verbally** to a member of staff or via **telephone:** 020 8685 5777
- › **In writing by email:** complaints@haighousing.org.uk
- › **In writing online via feedback form:** www.haighousing.org.uk/residents
- › **Complaints received online or via Haig's social media or website:**
The Communications team, will give an initial response to the complainant where possible and pass the complaint to the Complaints Officer to address to ensure confidentiality and privacy is maintained.

Outline of our complaint's resolution process:

There are two stages to the complaint's process:

Stage one: Investigated and responded to by Complaints Officer.

Stage two: Investigated and responded to by a Director external to the service area of the complaint.

Stage one complaint

- › Complaint acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days of receipt.**
- › Complaints Officer will make contact to discuss the complaint area and desired outcome.
- › A complaint investigation and response will be completed **within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.** If it is not possible to resolve the complaint within that time, we will contact the tenant.
- › The response will detail the outcome of the investigation, if the complaint is upheld or not upheld and any action taken to resolve the complaint.
- › If the complaint is upheld, it means we fully confirm the complaint. We will detail what actions we will put in place as a result of the complaint.
- › If the complaint is not upheld we will explain why.

A complainant can ask for a review to escalate to Stage 2 if they are not satisfied with the outcome. A request for review should be sent to the Complaints Officer within 10 days of the complaint response.

Stage two complaint

If a tenant requests escalation to Stage 2 the request is acknowledged, defined and logged **within 5 working days of escalation request being received** by the Complaints Officer.

The acknowledgement letter will include the Director that is investigating at Stage 2.

The Director will contact the complainant to understand what outcome they would like to see. An investigation and response to the stage two complaint will be sent **within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated.** Should the complainant not be satisfied with the result at stage two they can seek advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau (www.citizensadvice.org.uk).

Complaints may not be considered if:

- › The complaint issue occurred over twelve months ago.
- › Legal proceedings are involved, we may suspend the complaint pending conclusion of that process.
- › Complaint matters have previously been considered under the complaints policy.

Important – *this policy does not apply to complaints about neighbours or other tenants, which will be dealt with by other internal procedures.*