



Futures Housing Group Complaints, Comments & Compliments Policy

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Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Futures Housing Group (the Group) and its subsidiaries, aims to provide services that meet customer needs, both in terms of appropriateness and quality. This policy also applies to all subsidiary companies. It will help us to provide effortless services, resolve complaints at the earliest available opportunity, and learn from our mistakes.

We are committed to using plain English and making the process of complaining as simple and straightforward as possible.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The Group sets out to provide a high quality of service and satisfaction to our customers. This policy provides a means by which customers can inform us when they feel dissatisfied with the service they have received.

We recognise that occasionally things go wrong and therefore we need to respond speedily to put them right. We welcome and encourage all customers to give their views and opinions. We also welcome praise when our team members do things well or go the extra mile.

3. AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To deliver an effortless and high quality customer experience which is tailored to individual's complaint.
- To be fair, transparent and consistent in the way we manage complaints.
- To put things right (where agreed) as quickly as possible.
- To learn from complaints and make appropriate changes to prevent the recurrence of preventable issues.
- To keep customers informed of progress throughout the process.
- To maintain customer confidentiality throughout the process.
- Ensure complaints are assigned to a dedicated complaint handler
- Enable customers to access impartial support and advice
- Recognise those individuals and services who exceed customer expectations

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 Compliment

'A compliment is customer feedback about how we exceeded their expectations when delivering a service'

4.2 Comment

'Customer comments and ideas about how we can improve the way we deliver a service'

4.3 Complaints

'A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with the actions or services provided, which cannot be resolved at initial point of contact and requires a formal response.'

Formal complaints from tenants will be treated fairly, transparently and consistently. Where a complaint is registered, the complainant should be encouraged to request what resolution outcome they would like.

We aim to resolve complaints first time, however in rare circumstances a customer may wish to appeal a complaint decision where they have supplementary evidence to support doing so.

4.4 What is not a complaint?

The following will not be treated as complaints, as they are initial requests for service:

- The first request for any service from the Group, including a repair, a repair defect or anti-social behaviour
- Where the request is beyond agreed service standards
- Where the company can assist but the underlying issue is not within the control or remit of the organisation.

We will make a decision about whether a complaint is valid and reasonable before registering it as a formal complaint.

5. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?

The policy is applicable to anyone who receives or requests a service from us.

We will accept complaints from family members, local councillors or other advocates, providing the customer has authorised them to do so.

6. HOW CAN CUSTOMERS COMPLAIN, GIVE COMMENTS OR COMPLIMENTS

In order to encourage feedback, the Group recognises we must not put barriers in the way of customers wishing to complain. Customers do not have to put complaints in writing.

Customers are able to make Complaints, Comments & Compliments by:

1. Telephone
2. Letter
3. Email
4. Social media
5. Our online self-service portal
6. In person

7. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Group aims to resolve complaints first time. We recognise that every complaint is different, and therefore every complaint will be investigated in a different way whilst maintaining our commitment to fairness, transparency and consistency. We have adopted a customer focussed internal approach to support complaint resolution, a summary of the approach is detailed below. The Complaints, Comments & Compliments Procedure should be referred to for more guidance.

- We aim to acknowledge all complaints either over the phone or in writing within 3 working days.
- We will indicate how long we believe our investigation will take and keep the customer informed of progress throughout.
- We will endeavour to understand what outcome the customer is seeking.
- We will review all available evidence through a formal investigation.
- We will discuss the outcome of the investigation with the customer and provide a written record of this.

In rare circumstances, where a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily and the customer has supplementary evidence they wish to be considered, a single stage appeal process may be invoked.

Appeals will be considered by either the Customer Services Director or Customer Services Manager. Where the complaint directly pertains to one or both of these individuals, the appeal will be considered by an appropriate member of our co-executive team.

8. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

Please note the Housing Ombudsman service is only available to customers who are tenants of the Group.

The Group subscribes to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman has the power to consider complaints and decide what is 'fair in all the circumstances of the case'. When things go wrong they can make orders or recommendations to put things right or to improve services for the future.

If a Customer is still not satisfied with the complaint after going through the complaints procedure, they will be advised how to access the Housing Ombudsman Service for an independent external review.

9. COMPLAINT CLOSURE

If at any stage in our procedure a full response to a complaint has been given and there has not been further contact from the complainant within 14 days, the complaint will be deemed to be satisfactorily closed.

10. MEDIATION

The Group is committed to the idea of using mediation and arbitration as alternative ways of resolving disputes. When dealing with complaints the Manager or Director responsible will consider mediation as an option to try and resolve the matter.

11. PERSISTENT, UNREASONABLE, VEXATIOUS & SERIAL COMPLAINERS

Regrettably, the Group sometimes receives complaints that are vexatious (aggressive, abusive) serial or unreasonable. If we believe this is the case we will contact the customer in writing and explain why we have reached this decision. At our discretion, we may give the customer the opportunity to act in a more reasonable manner or we may refuse to progress the complaint. In these instances we have a separate procedure for staff to follow.

12. COMPENSATION & GOODWILL GESTURES

Goodwill gestures may be offered on a case by case basis dependent upon the nature of the complaint. Goodwill gestures will typically be offered in the form of high street vouchers, chocolates or flowers up to a maximum of £25 per customer.

Where there is a valid claim for reimbursement of financial loss, a compensation payment may be considered. We may require evidence of any such claim.

Where a customer is in arrears with their rent payments, we will make a decision on whether the monetary value of a goodwill gesture will be credited to their rent account.

13. PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND LEARNING'S

The Group recognises that complaints, comments and compliments provide a valuable source of information to help improve and evolve services. The Group will record, analyse and produce quarterly reports pertaining to complaints, along with an annual report for customers. A key performance indicator regarding any complaints upheld by the Housing Ombudsman is monitored by FHG Board. For more detail refer to the Complaints, Comments & Compliments Procedure.

14. LOCALISM ACT 2011 (DESIGNATED PERSON)

Since 1 April 2013, all registered providers have been required to adhere to guidelines as set out in The Localism Act. Tenants of registered providers are able to request their complaints be considered by a 'designated person' once they complete their landlord's internal procedure. Such a person can be an MP, a local Councillor, or a recognised Tenant Panel.

The designated person may help resolve the complaint directly, may refer the complaint to the Ombudsman, or may decline doing either. In the latter case the complainant may approach the Ombudsman for consideration of the complaint. The complainant may also approach the Ombudsman directly if more than eight weeks have elapsed since the completion of the internal procedure of the landlord, without the need to approach a designated person first.

15. TEAM MEMBERS TRAINING

The Group is committed to training and developing its team members and will ensure the appropriate team members have the required training to deliver the service through inductions and regular updates.

16. REVIEW

This Policy is due to be reviewed every three years unless there are any substantial changes to legislation or regulation, or circumstances arise which necessitate an earlier review.