

Newington Housing Association Complaints Procedure

Policy Statement:

The Association will endeavour to ensure its systems and procedures are adequate to meet minimum standards as set out in the Tenant's Guarantee in providing housing accommodation. The Association will investigate and respond to any complaint raised by an applicant for re-housing or a tenant or service agreement holder, particularly where allegations seek to show unreasonable delay, bias, failure to follow proper procedures or a decision badly made.

Procedures:

- 1. Complaints Procedure:**
- An individual may wish to complain verbally on a service matter to any officer. On such occasions the officer will act diligently and professionally in investigating and answering such. The Association is aware that many such instances are quickly clarified or resolved, but where they are not the formal complaints procedure may be adopted.
- Where an individual wishes to make a formal complaint they will be advised to do so in writing or an officer will facilitate a written signed statement from the individual.
- The complaint will normally be investigated by the General Manager or by the most senior officer in his absence.
- Where the General Manager is directly involved a member of the Management Committee will be appointed. The individual dealing with the complaint will be known as the Investigating Officer (IO).
- Where a member of staff, a committee member, a contractor or any other agent of the Association is directly involved, they will be interviewed by the IO, and may further be asked to give a written account of their involvement.
- The IO may need to interview the complainant, and it is expected that they cooperate and make themselves available for interview throughout the course of the investigation.
- The IO may choose to avail of legal advice during the course of his investigation. Such advice will be acted upon accordingly.

9. Once the investigation has been completed, the Investigating Officer will report to the Management Committee, or the Chairman, should a meeting not be immediately scheduled, if the Association has been guilty of unreasonable delay, bias, failure to follow proper procedures or a decision badly made.
10. Where a complaint is not upheld, a report will not normally be made to the Management Committee.
11. The complainant will receive a written response, ideally not more than 10 working days after the original complaint was made, unless there were extenuating circumstances. Where a delay is experienced, an appropriate holding letter should be sent to the complainant.
12. The IO will not make a final decision in terms of compensation or rectification until the Management Committee has been informed of the investigation's conclusions. The Management Committee will normally follow the recommendations of the IO unless there is sound reason to differ from these.
13. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the Association's response, an appeal to the full Management Committee may be facilitated. Their decision at any such appeal will be the Association's final word on the matter.
14. At this stage, the complainant will be advised to make a formal complaint to the Commissioner for Complaints for Northern Ireland (The Ombudsman) should they wish to pursue the matter further. His office can be contacted for advice on **Freephone 0800 34 34 24**, by writing to the **Ombudsman, Freepost BEL 1478 Belfast BT1 6BR** or email ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk. It should be noted that the Ombudsman normally expects that a complainant will have used the Association's internal complaints procedure before bringing a complaint to him.