



## **Guide to Making a Complaint or Appeal**

### **Why have a complaints and appeals procedure?**

Clydesdale Housing Association aims to provide a first class service but there may be occasions when you are not happy about something. If this is the case, it is important for you to tell us.

The aim of this complaints and appeals procedure is to give you clear details of what steps you can take to try and get things put right where there is a problem.

The complaints and appeals procedure also gives us the chance to keep an eye on the quality of service we provide so that we can continually work to improve it.

### **Who can use the complaints and appeals procedure?**

Anyone who receives or requests a service from Clydesdale Housing Association can use the complaints and appeals procedure. This includes tenants, people applying for housing, owners or sharing owners and people living in neighbouring property or anyone seeking information from the Association.

The procedure is also open to people who would be acting on your behalf, such as a Councillor, Member of Parliament, advice agency or solicitor (but, as you will see later, we do encourage you to try to sort things out with us first).

If you belong to a tenants' group or residents' association and would prefer to ask them to help you complain we will be happy for them to contact us on your behalf.

### **What can you complain or appeal about?**

You can complain or appeal about any aspect of our service which you are unhappy about, for example:

- Where services provided have not been to an acceptable standard
- Where the behaviour of a member of our Management Committee, staff or another person providing services on our behalf (e.g. a tradesman) has been unacceptable
- Where someone affected by a decision made by the Association disagrees with that decision
- if you feel you have been unfairly discriminated against

Complaints against neighbours will be dealt with under our Estate Management procedures. But if you have a complaint about the way we have dealt with a neighbour dispute, then you can use the complaints and appeals procedure.

We will always try to deal with complaints sympathetically, but there are some things we will not be able to give you information about. For example, it would be wrong for us to discuss with you the detail of someone else's housing application, as this would be a breach of confidentiality, but we can of course talk to you about how our allocations procedure works.

### **Trying to sort things out informally (Stage 1)**

You have every right to make a formal complaint whenever you wish to, but in the first instance it can often be quicker and easier for everyone if the problem can be sorted out informally; the choice is yours.

To try and resolve a problem informally, the best thing for you to do is to talk to (or drop a line to) your housing officer or any other officer if this is appropriate, and let him or her know what you would like to be put right. He or she will look into your complaint and get back to you within 10 working days and hopefully a solution will be reached. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal stage you should proceed to Stage 2.

### **The formal complaints and appeals procedure (Stage 2)**

If the problem has not been sorted out informally, you should make a formal complaint using our complaints form. (A copy will be sent to you on request).

When you make a complaint it is really important for you to let us know exactly what the problem is and how you would like to see it resolved. We would encourage you to provide as much information as possible in the Complaint Form, but if this is not easy, you can complain by telephone or in person. If the officer dealing with your complaint is not available, your complaint will be noted by the person who speaks to you and passed on to the officer.

If you have made a complaint by telephone or in person, the member of staff who notes the complaint will check with you that they have taken a correct record, and you will normally be asked to sign it. In this way everyone is clear on what the complaint is about.

Whether you have complained in writing, by phone or in person, we will write to you within two working days to acknowledge that your complaint is being dealt with.

We will then write to you again within ten working days of receiving the complaint to let you know the outcome or the progress of your complaint. Do please remember that some things may not be within our control and may therefore be less easy to sort out. If this is the case, we will keep you advised of our progress. Our Depute Chief Executive will oversee this part of the process.

If you are not happy with the response, you will be able to appeals against our decision - you should submit your appeal to us within ten working days of receiving our decision letter.

### **Taking your complaint further – (Stage 3)**

If you are unhappy with the outcome of Stage 2, an independent review will be carried out by the Chief Executive. The timescale for this part of the process is ten working days.

You will be informed of the decision and given details of your right of appeal. You should inform us within ten working days if you wish to move onto the next stage of the process.

### **Assessment by the Management Committee – (Stage 4)**

If you are still unhappy after Stage 3, the final internal stage of the process will be dealt with by the Management Committee. You will be told when the next available Management Committee will be held and you can attend this meeting and bring a friend or adviser.

A report will be prepared for the Management Committee and you will be given a copy of this one week before the Committee meets to consider the appeal.

The Management Committee will reach a decision within one week of the meeting and issue its decision in writing to you within 7 working days. If you remain unhappy after Stage 4, you can appeal to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

### **The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman investigates individual complaints against housing associations and co-operatives. This is a free and impartial service and a leaflet about it is available from our office.

The service is available to anyone who receives a service from a housing association or co-operative, or who has applied to one of them for housing. Normally you must have gone through the association's own complaints procedure before the Ombudsman can deal with your complaint. You should also submit your complaint to the Ombudsman within 12 months of making the original complaint.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is based at 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS, tel: 0800 377 7330.

### **Who will know about my complaint?**

We will as far as possible respect the confidentiality of your complaint. Whilst we are looking into your complaint, your name will not be divulged any more than is absolutely necessary within the association, and if your complaint goes to the Management Committee then other Committee Members will not be told who has complained.

You will appreciate, however, that if your complaint involves another tenant or a member of staff it may be very difficult for us to look into this without talking to that tenant or staff member. If you ask us not to talk to the tenant or staff member we will try to respect your wishes, but it will probably not be possible for us to take any action to tackle the problem.

It will not normally be possible for us to deal with anonymous complaints as it is obviously difficult for us to check things with the person making the complaint. However, where these are of a serious nature, we will investigate them and take the necessary action to resolve the problem.

## Getting independent advice

We would always hope that a problem can be sorted out informally.

However, you may feel it is important for you to get independent advice before you decide whether to complain to us formally.

Advice agencies in this area include :

Money Matters  
South Lanarkshire Council  
Council Offices  
South Vennel  
LANARK, ML11 7JT  
Tel : 01555 678539

Clydesdale Advice Centre  
10-12 Wide Close  
Lanark, ML11 7LX  
Monday-Thursday  
10.00 am to 3.00 pm  
Tel : 01555 664301

## How do we record and monitor complaints?

Complaints can help us as well as you! All complaints made to the Association are recorded and reported to the Management Committee with a note of changes or improvements the Association may be taking because of complaints received.

## Improving our service to you

Complaints are not the only way of telling us what you think of the service we provide! We always welcome suggestions on how we can improve things so if you have any ideas about this please let your housing officer or other member of staff know or drop us a line. We will also be issuing you with a Complaints Customer Feedback Form. Your co-operation in filling in this form is greatly appreciated.



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