

Complaints Policy

Objective

Homes for Lambeth is committed to providing a high-quality service for its residents, and to working in an open and accountable way which builds trust and respect. The organisation will always endeavour to respond positively to complaints and put mistakes right where failings are identified.

This policy aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To provide Homes for Lambeth residents with clear guidance on how to submit a complaint, and how their complaint will be processed
- To set out Homes for Lambeth's approach to responding to complaints in a manner which is compliant with all relevant legislation and regulations, and which ensures that a timely and satisfactory outcome is achieved

Homes for Lambeth will operate its Complaints Policy in compliance with the Housing Regulator's Standards as set out in "The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012" as updated in 2015 and 2018 and associated guidance documents.

Definition of a complaint

Within this policy and associated procedures, a complaint is defined as an issue reported by a recipient of Homes for Lambeth services where the recipient is unhappy with the service and wants Homes for Lambeth to put it right. Examples of complaints include:

- Where Homes for Lambeth has failed to provide a service or where there has been a delay in providing one
- Where Homes for Lambeth has failed to adhere to its policies and procedures, or has been inconsistent in applying them
- Where Homes for Lambeth has failed to keep a tenant informed through lack of, or insufficient information
- Where a Homes for Lambeth staff member has behaved in an inappropriate manner
- Where a resident is in any way unhappy about the way in which Homes for Lambeth has delivered a service

Homes for Lambeth expects that a complaint is received within 6 months of the issue taking place, or of the complainant discovering that they have cause to complain. After this time limit has passed, Homes for Lambeth may still accept a complaint in exceptional circumstances – the complainant must provide evidence to support the view that the limit should not apply.

Anyone who is entitled to receive a service from Homes for Lambeth, or anyone who is affected by that service provision, is entitled to make a complaint. A family member, friend or advocate may act on a complainant's behalf if desired; the complainant must provide written consent for this.

Approach to complaints

Homes for Lambeth follows a two-stage complaints process:

- **Stage 1 (Complaint)** – Homes for Lambeth will investigate the complaint and provide a written response within **10 working days** of receiving the complaint. Homes for Lambeth aims to fully resolve the complaint within **30 calendar days** (where the resolution of the complaint is the responsibility of an employee of Homes for Lambeth). If longer is required, the complainant will be informed as soon as possible.
- If the complaint needs to be addressed by a third party (e.g. developer, managing agent or contractor), we aim to fully resolve the complaint within **60 calendar days**.
- **Stage 2 (Complaint Review)** – If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage One, the complaint will be reviewed by a board member of HFL Homes. The complaint details and relevant correspondence will be carefully reviewed, and Homes for Lambeth will provide a written response within **10 working days** detailing how the organisation intends to resolve your complaint. If longer is required, the complainant will be informed as soon as possible.

If a complainant has escalated their complaint through the two-stage process and the issue has still not been resolved to their satisfaction, they can contact the following:

- **Designated Person** – A Designated Person can be a Councillor or an MP. The Designated Person will help resolve the complaint themselves or refer the complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- **Housing Ombudsman Service** – If a complaint has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction eight weeks after the completion of the Homes for Lambeth two-stage process, the complainant can contract the Housing Ombudsman Service directly, or can be referred to the service by a Designated Person. The Housing Ombudsman Service can be accessed here: <http://www.housingombudsman.org.uk/home/>

Complaints relating to Homes for Lambeth contractors

This policy requires any contractor providing services on Homes for Lambeth's behalf to:

- Record and respond to customer complaints within the timescales detailed in Homes for Lambeth's internal complaints process
- Provide Homes for Lambeth with any information relating to a complaint upon request
- Assist Homes for Lambeth with investigating complaints where appropriate

Learning from complaints

Homes for Lambeth views complaints as opportunities to learn about how it can improve its services. Homes for Lambeth will record and monitor every complaint, including details such as the subject of the complaint, resolution time and any learning points. Homes for Lambeth will regularly review this register of complaints received in order to identify recurring subjects and continuously improve how the organisation handles complaints.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every two years in accordance with any future legislative changes as and when they occur.

In addition, Homes for Lambeth will proactively monitor the effects of its complaint's procedure. Areas to be monitored will include:

- Total number of complaints
- Nature of complaints (e.g. ASB, repairs issues, contractor issues)
- Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage of the internal process
- Percentage of complaints resolved at the second stage of the internal process
- Percentage of complaints escalated beyond the internal process

Equalities and Diversity

Homes for Lambeth does not discriminate against tenants or residents regardless of their race, religion, language, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, health or disability, location, political or immigration status.

Homes for Lambeth recognise that vulnerable tenants have housing related support needs and will work with agencies to meet those needs.

Homes for Lambeth work in accordance with the organisation's Equality and Diversity Policy, ensuring that appropriate advice and assistance is given to those disadvantaged in the community, and that adequate translation and interpretation facilities, large print material, Minicom, induction loops etc are available. All actions carried out are in accordance with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Training and Promotion

We will publicise this policy to staff and tenants through:

- Our website
- Policy briefings and training

HFL Policy Name:	HFL Complaints Policy
HFL Policy Owner:	HFL Operations Manager
Applies to:	All HFL Group Companies
Policy Compliance:	Annual Review
Policy Review Cycle:	Every two Years (min or as per legal/regulatory requirements). Next review March 2021
Version Control/Audit Trail:	
	<p>DRAFT v1.0 Prepared for HFL Board approval February 2019.</p> <p>Based on policy examples from other organisations in the sector.</p> <p>Approved by Board on 18 March 2019</p>