



Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy (Also Available in Easy Read)

VERSION

05

AUTHOR

Governance Officer

APPROVED BY

Management - A Bax

NEXT REVIEW DATE

Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

This Policy sets out Halo Housing Association's (HHA) approach to offering a simple and accessible process for providing feedback and ensures that any complaints are dealt with in a fair, impartial, and consistent manner if things go wrong. It also sets out our approach for welcoming, responding to and learning from any other form of feedback we receive.

1.1 We aim to:

- Engage with our Tenants and Stakeholders and Encourage feedback, both positive and negative.
- Resolve complaints fairly.
- Resolve complaints as quick as reasonably possible.
- Be held accountable.
- Be Transparent.
- Learn from comments, complaints, compliments to help us improve our service to our Tenants.
- Make reasonable adjustments and produce an easy read version of this policy.

1.2 Complaints Handling Code

Halo Housing has legal obligation to adhere to The Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code at all times when dealing with a complaint. The key areas of this code include:

- universal definition of a complaint
- providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- the structure of the complaint's procedure - only 2 stages necessary and clear times set out for responses
- ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process
- taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies
- creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement
- demonstrating learning in annual reports
- annual self-assessment against the Code

2. Definition of a Complaint

The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code defines a complaint as:

'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 resident or group of residents.'

The complainant does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must still be handled in line with the complaints policy.

The Policy applies to all feedback received from any person using or directly affected by a service we deliver.

2.1 Making a Complaint

Halo welcome all comments, compliments, and complaints. We accept feedback in several different ways. You can:

Telephone us (01254-676677)

Email us info@halohousing.co.uk

Complete the online form on our website www.halohousing.co.uk/complaints

Write to us:

FAO: Complaints Officer, Halo Housing Association, Oakfield House, 93 Preston New Road, Blackburn, BB2 6AY

2.2 How we deal with complaints

We are committed to providing you with an excellent quality of service, always treating your views with respect and fairness. If you are not happy with any part of service, you can complain to us, and we will try to put it right.

You may want to complain if you feel we have:

- Failed to follow our policies or procedures.
- Done something that we should not have done.
- Failed to deliver a service in line with our agreed standards.

We will make all efforts to resolve a complaint or express of dissatisfaction promptly whilst continuing to address a service request.

HHA manage the majority of complaints internally, however on occasion it may be necessary for a third party to handle this. Where this is the case HHA will make sure the independent adjudicator operates within the guidelines of the Complaints Handling Code and handles the

complaint in an appropriate manner. The complaints process will remain the same where a third party is involved.

2.3 However, a complaint is not:

- An initial request for a service, such as a first report of a repair or reporting Anti-Social Behaviour.
- A request for information or an explanation of policy or procedure.
- An appeal against an action resulting in court proceedings or matters subject to ongoing court proceedings.
- A report about a neighbour dispute, a report of Anti-Social Behaviour, or harassment, all of which are covered by a separate Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- Or matters we consider to be legal claims.

We will be unable to investigate complaints over twelve months old, unless there are exceptional or extenuating circumstances.

3. Stage 1 - Initial Contact & Investigation

- 3.1 We ask complainants to get in touch with us straight away if something has gone wrong and give us the opportunity to put it right.
- 3.2 Your complaint will be referred the Complaints Officer, who will then contact you within five working days to acknowledge the complaint, your views and to agree a timescale. We will check whether any support is required, and we will explain the procedure.
- 3.3 It is expected that most complaints can be resolved within ten working days but there may be times when it is necessary to agree a longer timescale. We will agree this with you. We won't delay responding to you where an investigation has concluded and the response is known.
- 3.4 Where an additional complaint is raised during an investigation and is connected to the original complaint we will include this as part of our stage 1 response if this has not been issued already. Where the additional complaint is not related, it will be treated as a new complaint.
- 3.5 We will provide a full and thorough response within the agreed timescale and confirm:
 - a) the complaint stage;
 - b) the complaint definition;
 - c) the decision on the complaint;
 - d) the reasons for any decisions made;
 - e) the details of any remedy offered to put things right;
 - f) details of any outstanding actions; and

- g) details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.

4. Stage 2 – Review

- 4.1 Our aim is always to deal with your complaint thoroughly and to your satisfaction. If you feel that we have not properly considered the complaint, you may ask for a further review by contacting us and requesting the matter to be considered again. HHA will make efforts to understand why there are issues that are outstanding, the tenant will not be expected to explain why they would like to proceed to stage 2 of the complaints procedure.
- 4.2 When we receive a request to review a complaint, we will acknowledge it within five working days and your complaint will then be considered and reviewed by the Head of Operations. We will aim to provide you with a full response within twenty working days, where there is an expected delay we will agree a timescale and this delay will be no longer than 20 working days.
- 4.3 As part of our response at Stage 2 we will confirm;
 - a) the complaint stage;
 - b) the complaint definition;
 - c) the decision on the complaint;
 - d) the reasons for any decisions made;
 - e) the details of any remedy offered to put things right;
 - f) details of any outstanding actions, including how we plan to track these; and
 - g) details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.
- 4.4 We will only progress a complaint to Stage 2 at the request of the Complainant.
- 4.5 In all responses to complaints we will include (where applicable);
 - Apologising;
 - Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
 - Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
 - Taking action if there has been delay;
 - Reconsidering or changing a decision;
 - Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
 - Providing a financial remedy;
 - Changing policies, procedures or practices.

5. Unreasonable and Frequent Complaints

- 5.1 If complaints that we may receive, become frequent and unreasonable, after we have exhausted all avenues to resolve them, HHA reserves the right to stop responding. Of

course, this will only be in extreme and unusually circumstances. HHA endeavours to handle all complaints until a resolution can be sought.

6. Compensation and Expense Payments

- 6.1 Compensation and expense payments, may be considered, where appropriate and reasonable to do so. Each request will be assessed based on it's merits.

7. Housing Ombudsman

- 7.1 If you are not satisfied with the resolution of your complaint, once we have exhausted our internal process, you may choose to refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, the details of which are noted below:
- 7.2 If we at Halo Housing Association decide not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman.
- 7.3 The Housing Ombudsman details will be provided at every stage of the complaints process. However, The Housing Ombudsman will only investigate once HHA have completed their own internal investigation.

Housing Ombudsman Service,
Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London, E14 9GE
Tel: 0300 111 3000
Minicom: 020 7404 7092
Fax: 020 7831 1942
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

8. Learning from the outcome of complaints

- 8.1 We aim to learn from the outcome of complaints to improve the services we provide to our Tenants. We will do this by.
- Having systems in place to record and analyse complaints and their outcomes.
 - Capturing and recording satisfaction levels on our complaints process and how complaints have been handled.
 - Reporting to our board, leadership team and tenants – Quarterly

9. Compliments and Suggestions

- 9.1 Halo Housing Association aim to provide the best possible customer experience to you and when we get it right, we would like to know what worked well or who is excelling.
- 9.2 Halo welcome all comments, compliments, and complaints. We accept feedback in several different ways. You can:

Telephone us (01254-676677)

Email us info@halohousing.co.uk

Complete the online form on our website www.halohousing.co.uk/complaints

Write to us:

FAO: Complaints Officer, Halo Housing Association, Oakfield House, 93 Preston New Road, Blackburn, BB2 6AY

In line with our commitment to inclusion and diversity, our documents can be made available in a variety of formats, including large print, translated into another language or other media. Reasonable adjustments will also be made to assist individuals who have a disability in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Appendix 1

1. How can we help you make a complaint if you need support?

We want to make sure everyone is treated equally when they make a complaint. For this reason, we will make reasonable adjustments for anyone who may need them.

We cannot explain how we will approach every situation, but this is as a general statement that confirms:

- our commitment to improving accessibility.
- the basic principles we will follow to provide reasonable adjustments for anyone who needs them.
- what we will consider in dealing with requests for reasonable adjustments.

2. What are reasonable adjustments?

The Equality Act 2010 says we must provide reasonable adjustments. We must make reasonable adjustments if the way we do things puts anyone at a big disadvantage.

Reasonable adjustments are not defined by the Act but there is a Code of Practice to help. Depending on the individual's needs, these might include:

- using larger print, or a specific colour contrast.
- giving more time than usual to provide information or comments on a complaint.
- using the telephone rather than written communication.
- communicating with a person through their representative or advocate.
- arranging a single point of contact.
- having an 'easy read' version of the complaint process or decisions.

3. Asking for reasonable adjustments

We will let people know that they can request reasonable adjustments by:

- publishing this guidance on our website.

- asking people if they have a disability and if they need reasonable adjustments.
- making sure employees are aware of their responsibilities.
- making sure our procedures say people can ask for reasonable adjustments.
- making sure our Tenants can access support and opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord where this is reasonable.

4. Our response to requests for reasonable adjustments

We will not assume what reasonable adjustments anyone may need. But we will consider any request and discuss this with the person to agree to any possible changes.

Before making reasonable adjustments, we need to consider some important factors:

- what the disadvantage would be if the change was not made.
- whether the change will be effective in reducing the disadvantage.
- how practical it is to make it.
- whether it would disrupt our other activities.
- the cost and availability of resources, including external help and finance.

We will agree reasonable adjustments without delay. But, in some cases we may need to consider the request in more detail.

There may be circumstances where we decide not to meet the request. The law says we should adjust if they are 'reasonable'. We will test this against the resources available to see how easy it will be to put into place.

We will record the reasonable adjustments requested and the decision made.

5. Complaints about the failure to provide reasonable adjustments

If someone is unhappy about how we looked at their request. Or are unhappy about the reasonable adjustments provided, they can complain directly to Halo Housing Association or to The Housing Ombudsman who's details are provided at every correspondence.

Relevant Regulation or Legislation

- Localism Act 2011 (legislation.gov.uk)
- Housing Act 2004 (legislation.gov.uk)
- Tenant_Involvement_and_Empowerment_Standard.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Data Protection Act 2018 (legislation.gov.uk)
- Equality Act 2010 (legislation.gov.uk)
- The Housing ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)