



COMPLAINTS: OUR POLICY

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Harrison Housing aims to provide residents with the best possible service. However, we recognise that sometimes things go wrong and there may be times when a resident feels that they have not been treated fairly, or where we have failed to provide an acceptable level of service.
- 1.2 If that happens, we follow the Housing Ombudsman dispute resolution principles. These are high level good practice guidance developed from the Ombudsman's experience of resolving disputes, for use by everyone involved in the complaints process.
- 1.3 There are only three principles driving effective dispute resolution:
 - Be fair - treat people fairly and follow fair processes
 - Put things right
 - Learn from outcomes

If it is found that a mistake has been made by Harrison Housing, we will apologise and do what we can to put things right.

- 1.4 All complaints will be treated as confidential and will be dealt with impartially and objectively. Please note that the Charity cannot consider anonymous complaints.
- 1.5 This policy is available on our website and will be publicised as required through other means, eg Harrison Herald. The policy will be provided when requested.
- 1.6 Staff will help complainants and make reasonable adjustments, in line with the Equalities Act 2010, as necessary to enable residents to access the complaints process.

2. Definition – what is a complaint?

- 2.1 A complaint is 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.
- 2.2 A complaint can be about something that has been done incorrectly or badly, including:
 - Failure to follow our procedures
 - Giving inaccurate information
 - Lengthy delays in dealing with matters
 - Unclear or incomplete replies to enquiries
 - The way your application for a transfer or rehousing has been graded.
- 2.3 A complaint can be about something that Harrison Housing should not have done, including:

- Discriminating against you
- The attitude of behaviour of our staff or contractors
- Breaking appointments without prior notification

2.4 A complaint can be about failure to do something that we should have done, including:

- Taking too long to answer your letters or queries
- Not returning phone calls
- Failing to have procedures for dealing with your query

2.5 Our complaints procedure cannot deal with

- Anything that happened over 6 months ago and which you did not report as a problem at the time
- A policy decision which has been properly arrived at
- Anything already considered by a Court or the Independent Housing Ombudsman
- Any issue where the resident has started legal action on the same matter

3. Making a Complaint

3.1 You should, in the first instance, speak with your Scheme Manager, if you have one, about your concerns. We will always try to resolve your query the first time you report it to us. If there is not a Scheme Manager where you live, your first point of contact should be the Housing Director.

A complaint or concern about a member of staff should be made directly to their Manager. You can find out who this is by referring to the organisation staff structure chart which is displayed on the noticeboards of all of the properties we manage, or on the website.

You can contact us in person, by telephone, in writing or by email.

3.2 We will try to resolve any issues informally as quickly as possible the first time you report it to us. If you are not satisfied with our response or our efforts to resolve your query, you can ask us to treat the matter as a formal complaint.

3.3 If at any stage of the process you wish to have a representative or advocate act on your behalf or accompany you to a meeting with us, we will not unreasonably refuse this.

3.4 There are 2 stages to our formal complaints procedure.

At each stage:

- you will be told who is dealing with your complaint and when you should expect a full response;
- we shall clarify and agree with you the issues involved and the outcomes that you are seeking;
- you will be given the opportunity to set out your position, and comment on any adverse finding before a final decision is made.

The 2 stages are as follows:

- **Stage 1**
We will acknowledge your complaint in writing and log it within 5 working days of receipt. The person responsible for your complaint (your Complaint Handler) will

investigate where necessary and respond to you in writing. We would expect to do so within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. If you feel the outcome is still unsatisfactory, you will be able to ask a more senior manager to resolve the matter.

If further investigations are required, this timeline may be extended, usually by no more than a further 10 working days. We will let you know if this is the case and seek to agree a new timescale with you.

If you raise additional complaints during the investigation, where possible these will be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if they are relevant and the Stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the Stage 1 response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, we shall log the complaint as a new complaint.

- **Stage 2**

If all or part of your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, it will be progressed to Stage 2 unless an exclusion ground applies as set out in paragraph 2.5 above.

At Stage 2, you have a choice of having your complaint escalated either to a member of the Senior Team (who will not be the same person who considered your complaint at Stage 1) or to a panel of Trustees.

- **Option 1 (Senior Team response)**

A member of the Senior Management Team will review your complaint and respond to you in writing.

- **Option 2 (Trustees response)**

Your complaint will be considered by three of the Trustees and you will be invited to attend a meeting to state your case. Relevant staff may also attend the meeting.

In either case, we shall endeavour to respond to you within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated.

If further investigations are required, this timeline may be extended. It may also be necessary to extend it if you wish your complaint to be considered by three Trustees as it will also depend upon their availability. It will usually be extended by no more than a further 10 working days. We will let you know if this is the case and will seek to agree a new timescale with you.

4 **Appropriate Remedy**

4.1 Any remedy offered should reflect the extent of any and all service failures, and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. These can include:

- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- Apologising
- Taking action if there has been a delay
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Providing financial remedy
- Changing policies, procedures or practices

Any compensation will be given in accordance with Harrison Housing's Compensation Policy.

5. Ombudsman Service

5.1 If you are not satisfied after the Charity's Complaints Procedure has been exhausted, you have the right to take the case to the Housing Ombudsman Service. This service is completely independent of Harrison Housing and is free to residents. You must do this within 6 months of Stage 2.

5.2 You should contact:

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square
London
E14 9GE

Tel: 0300 111 3000

E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

5.3 The Ombudsman would normally expect you to have exhausted the landlord's Complaints Procedure before they start to investigate your case.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 Complaints will be monitored annually and analysed as follows:

- By scheme
- Reason for the complaint
- Protected characteristics (previously known as equality strands)
- Escalation

6.2 On a quarterly basis the Senior Management Team will review the complaints reporting and discuss ways to mitigate any trends discovered. The Chief Executive Officer will submit a

6.3 report on this analysis to the Board at quarterly meetings.

Once the complaint has been concluded, the Manager of the service will undertake a full review of the complaint and consider what action could be taken to prevent a similar complaint in future.

6.4 Any learning points identified, such as changes to policy and/or procedures, will be formally notified to staff and residents.

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