



Adactus Housing Association Ltd



## **COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Introduction**

Adactus Housing Association Ltd aims to learn from all customer feedback. The Association encourages compliments, comments and complaints and views them all as opportunities to improve the quality of its services.

This document is a statement of the Association's policy and procedure for dealing with compliments, comments or complaints about the Association's housing practices, activities or services, and appeals against decisions made by the Association.

The Association is committed to the relevant codes of good practice, recommendations and performance expectations produced by The Housing Corporation and the Housing Ombudsman Service and has consulted with its tenants and stakeholders on this policy and procedure.

This document is freely available from the Association's offices and website ([www.adactushousing.co.uk](http://www.adactushousing.co.uk)) and will be produced in other formats such as large print, audio, or in other languages on request.

### **Definitions**

*Compliments* are defined as expressions of satisfaction received from the Association's customers.

*Comments* are defined as ad hoc suggestions for improving services received from customers.

*Complaints* are defined as expressions of dissatisfaction from people who feel they have been aggrieved by the Association and require a response to provide some kind of redress.

*Appeals* are defined as requests for the Association to reconsider a decision it has taken.

### **Policy aims**

The Association aims to provide a quality housing service to tenants, leaseholders, residents of special needs projects, partnership agencies and applicants for housing.

In its dealings with contractors, sub-contractors, consultants, suppliers and anyone affected by the Association's activities, the Association wishes to conduct its affairs in a fair and ethical manner.

The Association will feedback compliments and comments received from its customers to managers. Our primary aim is to resolve customer concerns at the first point of contact, however where this is not possible the Association will follow a staged procedure to address complaints and appeals about its services or activities. The procedure aims to remedy faults within a reasonable time and ensure that comments, compliments and complaints are recorded and monitored to help the Association to learn and continually improve.

### **Comments and compliments**

Comments on methods of improving service delivery or compliments regarding the quality of service provided are always welcome. Please feel free to share your views with our customer care staff on the telephone, in person or by writing/email.

Compliments and Comments will be recorded by our customer care staff and fed back to the relevant manager.

Comments on methods of improving service will be passed to the manager of the service you are commenting on, and will be fed into our plans for improving services.

### **Who Can Complain Or Appeal?**

The Association's complaints and appeals procedure is available to anyone who receives a service from the Association, is affected by a decision or action taken by the Association, or anyone who represents such a person.

For example: -

- Tenants, leaseholders, licensees and ex-tenants of the Association.
- Applicants for rehousing.
- Partnership agencies managing property in conjunction with the Association.
- Neighbours of the Association's properties.
- Contractors or consultants.
- Applicants for employment.

The above may be represented by, for example: -

- Citizens Advice Bureau, law centres, solicitors or other advisors.
- Members of Parliament, and local authority councillors.
- Members of the Association's Board.

The Association will need to be satisfied that representatives have permission to act on the behalf of the complainant. In cases where the representative could access potentially sensitive information about the complainant, the Association will seek written confirmation from the complainant that they have agreed to be represented.

### **What Issues Are Covered?**

The areas intended to be covered by the Association's Complaints and Appeals Policy are set out below: -

- Any failure in a service provided by the Association, such as a failure to complete a repair.
- The way in which staff or other representatives of the Association have conducted themselves.
- The way an application has been handled.
- Any practices that discriminate against individuals or groups of people.
- The failure to respond to a reasonable request for information or for an explanation.
- Appeals against any decision made by the Association.

The following items will not be treated as complaints or appeals: -

- Requests for a service, such as the first report of a repair or reports of neighbour nuisance / anti-social behaviour.
- An initial request for information or an explanation.
- An appeal against action resulting in Court proceedings or matters subject to on-going Court proceedings.

### **Complaint & Appeals Procedure**

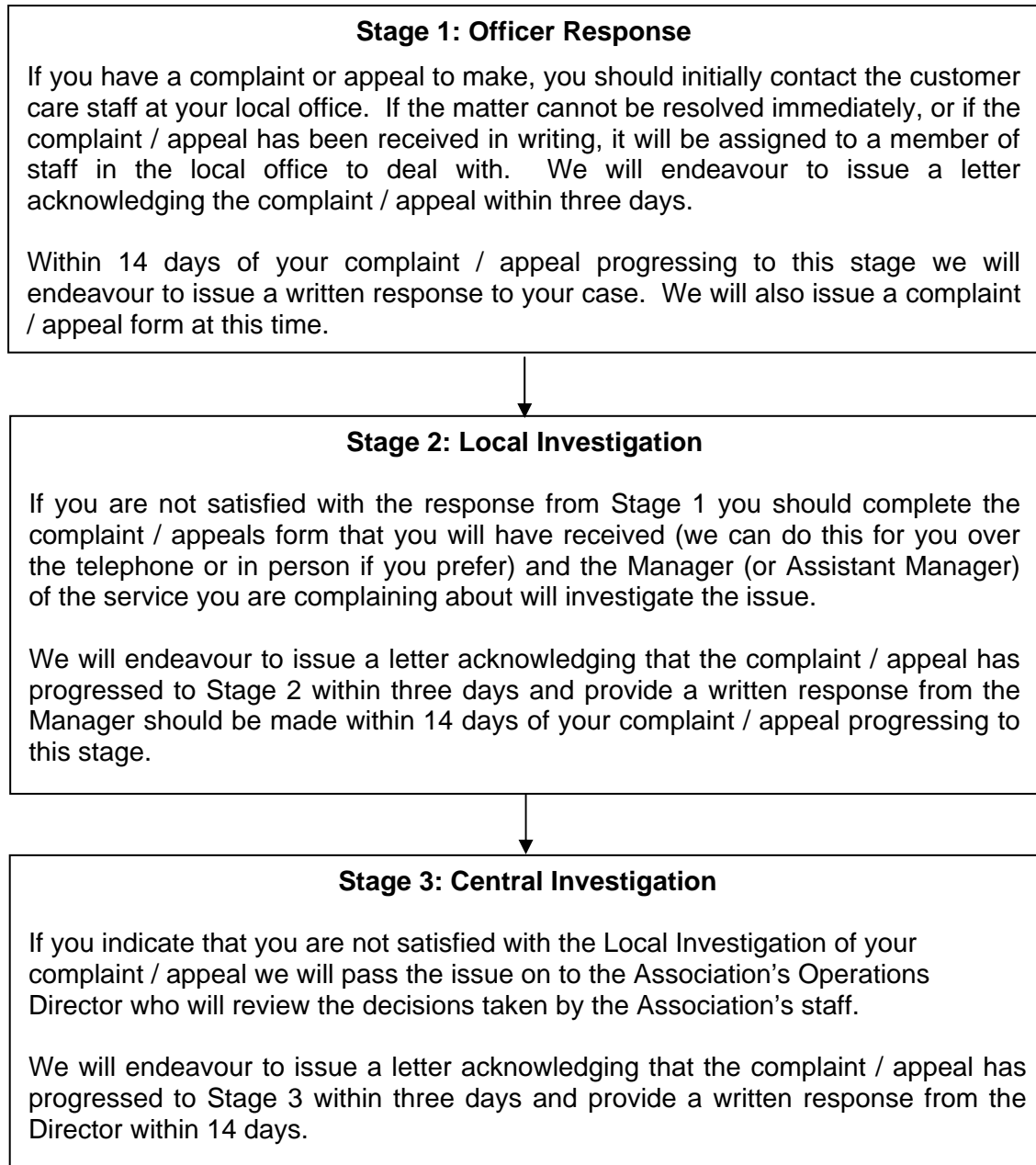
There are a small number of exceptions (see section below), but in most cases, the Association will respond to complaints and appeals using the four-stage procedure outlined in the chart below.


At the end of each stage of the procedure the Association will inform the complainant / appellant of its findings in writing. If a complaint or appeal is found to be valid the Association will remedy the situation as soon as possible and apologise in writing stating how and when the defect will be remedied. A compensation payment may also be offered in accordance with the Association's Compensation Policy.

At the end of each stage of the procedure the Association will ask the complainant / appellant whether they are satisfied with the response given and whether they wish to progress their complaint / appeal to the next stage in the procedure.

Complainants or appellants who correspond directly with senior staff at early stages of the complaint procedure will be redirected to a more appropriate member of staff and informed of this redirection. Any further correspondence with senior staff will be disregarded at early stages in the procedure.

## Procedure flowchart





#### Stage 4: Appeal

If you indicate that you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Central investigation of your complaint / appeal we will arrange for the issue to be considered by our Appeals Panel. This gives you an opportunity to put your case to at least one member of our board of management.

You will receive a letter within three days acknowledging the complaint / appeal has progressed to Stage 4 and an invitation to the Appeal Hearing will follow within seven days. On receiving an appeal the Appeals Panel may do one of the following: -

- Request another formal investigation led by the Director into the matter.
- Disagree with the complainant / appellant and dismiss their appeal.
- Agree with the complainant / appellant and uphold their case in part or in whole.
- Seek the services of a mediator to help resolve the matter between the Association and the aggrieved person.
- Agree to the appointment of an independent arbitrator acceptable to both parties whose findings would be binding.
- Refer the matter for consideration at a future meeting of the Board of Management.

The Appeals Panel will issue a written response to your complaint / appeal within 28 days.



#### End of procedure

If you remain dissatisfied after our complaint procedure has been exhausted, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to investigate the matter on your behalf: -

Housing Ombudsman Service, Norman House, 105-109 Strand, London WC2R OAA

Tel: 020 7836 3630/ Lo-Call 0845 7125 973

Minicom: 020 7240 6776

Fax: 020 7836 3900

Email: [ombudsman@hos.org.uk](mailto:ombudsman@hos.org.uk)

Residents receiving supported housing services, who have a complaint about their support service, may also wish to take their complaint to the local authority Supporting People Team. Please contact one of our local offices for contact details.

## **Exceptions From Typical Procedure**

- 1) Consultants, Contractors and Partnership Agencies may have additional features and steps to the complaints procedures contained in their "Agreement of Practices" and "Management Agreements". These will take precedence whenever they conflict with the procedure contained in this document.
- 2) Complaints about a member of staff will be fast-tracked to a stage in the procedure after the one that they would normally supervise.
- 3) Complaints about the Chief Executive will be considered by the Chair of the Board of Management.
- 4) Appeals against decisions to end a Starter Tenancy, to demote a tenancy, or to end a demoted tenancy will be fast-tracked to Stage 4 of the procedure.
- 5) Anonymous complaints will be treated on a case-by-case basis according to the severity of the allegations made.

## **Responsibility For Implementation**

The Association's Board is responsible for monitoring the policy and managers of the Association are responsible for its implementation. All employees of the Association have a responsibility to ensure the positive application of the policy.

## **Monitoring**

All complaints and appeals are recorded on a database. The database provides management information and encourages compliance with the procedure by calculating target times for response at each procedure stage and by prompting investigating officers to record their findings. Further guidance is available on the company intranet to explain how staff should use the database.

At regular intervals progress on the effectiveness of the policy together with feedback on how the policy is operating will be reported to the Board, residents and to The Housing Corporation.

## **Ensuring Equality Of Access To This Service**

The Association will ensure that there is equal access to this service by meeting all reasonable requests to address specific needs resulting from a complainant's disability or cultural background. The Association will always respect requests for confidentiality. This document is available in other languages, in large text and in audio formats on request.

## **Jargon Buster**

*Agreement of Practices:* Methods of working agreed between two or more people, groups or organizations as part of a contract.

*Appellant:* The person, group or organization appealing to the Association.

*Arbitrator:* An independent person, group or organization that both the Association and complainant / appellant agree can make a final decision about their dispute.

*Board of Management:* The group of people who have overall responsibility for the running of the Association.

*Board Member:* Someone who is a part of the Board of Management.

*Complainant:* The person, group or organization making a complaint to the Association.

*Consultant:* A person, group or organization providing professional advice.

*Contractor:* A person, group or organization contracted to provide materials or labour for a job.

*Housing Corporation:* Sets rules for how housing associations should provide services.

*Housing Ombudsman:* Makes sure that housing associations deal with complaints fairly.

*Management Agreement:* An agreement between a person, group or organization that sets out the responsibilities of each.

*Mediator:* An independent person, group or organization who will help the Association and the complainant / appellant reach agreement on resolving a dispute.

*Operations Director:* the member of staff who controls the day-to-day running of the Association's services.

*Partnership Agencies:* Organizations working together to achieve a common aim.

*Stakeholder:* A person, group or organization who holds an interest or is affected by the actions of the Association.

*Starter Tenancy:* A tenancy that runs initially for twelve months and becomes a normal tenancy if the tenant's conduct is satisfactory during this time.

*Supplier:* A person, group or organization that provides goods or services.

*Supporting People Team:* Part of the local authority that regulates and pays for support services.

## Contact Details

To raise a complaint, contact any of the following offices: -

### Registered Office

Turner House  
56 King Street  
Leigh  
Lancs WN7 4LJ  
T: 01942 608715  
F: 01942 261538

### North Area Office

Elisabeth House  
Off Victoria Street  
Openshaw  
Manchester M11 2NX  
T: 0161 230 4070  
F: 0161 231 6248

### South Area Office

2 Great Southern Street  
Moss Side  
Manchester M14 4EZ  
T: 0161 226 5384  
F: 0161 232 9591

### West Area Office

82 Railway Road  
Leigh  
Lancs WN7 4AN  
T: 01942 263630  
F: 01942 677567

### Miles Platting Office

Varley Street  
Miles Platting  
Manchester  
M40 8EE  
T: 0161 203 2900  
F: 0161 205 8111

To raise a complaint confidentially, or to progress a complaint at Stages 2, 3 or 4 in the Association's procedure, contact: -

### Private & Confidential

Group Admin Manager  
Adactus Housing Association Ltd  
Turner House  
56 King Street  
Leigh  
WN7 4LJ  
T: 01942 608 715 F: 01942 261 538 E: [complaints@adactushousing.co.uk](mailto:complaints@adactushousing.co.uk)