



# REIDVALE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

## Complaints Policy

Policy Approved	31.03.21
Due for Review	March 2024
Author	Housing Manager

<b>Purpose:</b>	To set out Reidvale Housing Association's approach to handling complaints.
<b>Guidance:</b>	Statutory Guidance The Scottish Social Housing Charter Requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 SPSO Guidance
<b>Regulatory Compliance</b>	<p><b>Standard 1:</b> The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.</p> <p><b>Standard 2:</b> The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.</p> <p><b>Standard 4:</b> The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.</p> <p><b>Standard 5:</b> The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.</p>
<b>Financial Impact</b>	Low
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Low
<b>Date Reviewed:</b>	March 2021
<b>Date approve by Management Committee:</b>	31.03.21

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Reidvale Housing Association's (RHA) Complaints Policy reflects the commitment to valuing genuine complaints, to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.

This policy relates to RHA's Complaints procedure. We recognise the importance of complaints, in enabling us to identify areas where we need to make changes to or improve our approach. This brings a requirement to have in place robust systems and effective procedures to ensure complaints are properly managed and acted upon.

## **2. REGULATORY AND GOOD PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS**

- 2.1 This policy has been written using best practice guidance and aims to comply fully with these and the requirements of legislation.
- 2.2 This policy reflects the Association's commitment to fully comply with Outcome 2 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter which states social landlords manage their businesses so that, "tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides".
- 2.3 With regard to statutory requirements the Association has taken into account the following legislation:
  - Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
  - Equality Act 2010
  - Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
  - Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
  - Data Protection Act 2018
  - General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 ("the GDPR")

## **3. POLICY OBJECTIVES**

Reidvale Housing Association aims to provide a first class service to all our tenants and customers. This policy details how complaints should be handled if a tenant or customer is unhappy with the standard or quality of our service, action or lack of action they have received and they are encouraged to make a complaint.

Having a good complaints handling service is a vital part of ensuring that tenants and customers receive the service to which they are entitled. It demonstrates that we actively strive for continuous improvement in all that we do and that we treat people with respect and are responsive to their views and priorities.

#### **4. DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT**

Reidvale Housing Association's definition of a complaint is:

'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about RHA's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of Reidvale Housing Association'

#### **5. POLICY CONTEXT**

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 provided the basis for standardised complaints handling across the public sector. It empowered the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), to develop a series of sector specific Complaints Handling Procedures (CHP) models. The overall aim was to improve how complaints are handled across the public sector, and provide a consistent process for customers to follow.

In legislative terms, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are defined as one of the "listed authorities" over which SPSO can exercise its powers. SPSO developed a model CHP for the RSL sector which was first published in April 2012, revised in 2019. The model applies to and requires to be adopted by all Scottish RSLs.

#### **6. COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE**

Reidvale Housing Association has adopted the model CHP for the RSL sector in full. We have developed and maintained appropriate business support systems to enable us to record, manage and respond to complaints.

We shall ensure all staff are fully aware of the procedure and receive appropriate training on its use and our associated management systems. As part of this, we have been embedding an organisational culture of valuing and learning from complaints, in the context of identifying service improvements.

We will promote our complaints procedure to ensure, as far as possible, that all tenants and customers are aware of their right to complain and the arrangements for doing so. We make it clear to customers that they can complain to other organisations about us e.g. Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, the First Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing & property Chamber) and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

## **7. SPECIFICS**

The model CHP aims to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process for resolving complaints. In adopting the model we acknowledge its key features, including;

- A single, clear definition of a complaint, with guidance on and examples to aid identification.
- A defined two stage internal process for resolving complaints at either the 'frontline' (as close to first point of contact as possible) or through 'investigation' where the matter is more complex, serious or high risk.
- Defined timescales for resolution at either stage; including examples of the limited circumstances under which these can be extended.
- Detailed guidance on handling and processing complaints and communicating with complainants during the process.
- Definition of the scope for customers to approach the SPSO if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
- Definition of the roles and responsibilities, including those relating to the Management Committee, Director and senior staff.
- Minimum requirements for recording complaints, their outcome and any resulting action.

## **8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 8.1 Our CHP sets out detailed arrangements for the governance of complaints handling. This includes distinct roles and responsibilities for both Management Committee and staff members. The Management Committee is responsible for approving and adoption of the CHP and this Policy; monitoring our performance in handling complaints and approving changes to any of our other policies to reflect learning from complaints.
- 8.2 The Director shall oversee implementation and on-going operational deployment of our Complaints Handling Procedure. This will include ensuring management systems are in place and working effectively to properly record all complaints; investigation processes are suitably robust and performance reports are produced and submitted to the Management Committee. The Director will have a direct role in reviewing and signing off investigation stage complaints, and in handling complaints that are identified as being high risk or high profile.
- 8.3 The Housing Manager will implement a system of reviewing complaints and their outcomes and capturing learning from these. They will also be responsible for proposing policy changes required as a result of complaints and for putting these into practice.

8.4 A complaint may be made to any relevant member of staff. All staff are aware of the Policy, how to handle and record complaints at the frontline stage in accordance with our CHP. They are also aware of whom to refer a complaint to, in case they are unable to personally handle the matter. Reidvale Housing Association encourage all staff to try to resolve complaints early, as close to the point of service delivery as possible, and quickly to prevent escalation.

## **9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Reidvale Housing Association is an equal opportunities organisation. We are committed to providing an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination. No person or group of persons making a complaint will be treated less favourably than any other persons or groups of persons because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

In implementing the Complaints Policy and Procedures we will ensure we achieve fairness throughout our operations. We will support our tenant and customers to ensure they can have access to, and enable them to progress their complaint e.g. interpreter, large print, braille etc.

## **10. RISK MANAGEMENT**

This policy and the CHP contain no inherent risks however we acknowledge that non-compliance with any aspect of the CHP, including to properly implement its provisions may potentially result in increased regulatory intervention and the associated reputation risk this may bring.

Reidvale Housing Association has considered the potential risks of failing to make customers aware of their right to make a complaint. If people do not let us know about the dissatisfaction we are unaware and unable to rectify the issues. This could also potentially damage the reputation of the Association so we will ensure that the customer complaints policy is widely advertised throughout all aspects of the Association's publications.

## **11. REDRESS**

We acknowledge the role of complaints in providing customers with a form of redress, where we fail to meet their expectations. We note the SPSO guidance on redress, which advises service providers to, where possible, seek to re-instate an individual to the position they were in prior to the event which is the subject of the complaint.

## **12. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The Director is responsible for ensuring that the system is understood by all members of staff and properly implemented. The Housing Manager will provide a performance report to the Management Committee on a quarterly basis.

### **13. GDPR**

Reidvale Housing Association will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current General Data Protection Regulation and our Privacy Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in our Fair Processing Notice.

### **14. POLICY REVISION**

The Association undertakes to carry out a comprehensive review of all aspects of this policy at least every three years. The review will take account of legislative changes, new policy guidance, best practice advice, the views of service users and our performance in managing complaints.