

## **PROCEDURE: Complaints Handling**

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### **1.0 PROCEDURE STATEMENT:**

1.1 Complaint handling performs an important strategic role for PHA Homes, providing vital intelligence on its health, performance, and reputation. Data on complaint handling should be considered alongside other management information to provide assurance, assess risks and improve performance.

1.2 PHA Homes is committed to upholding the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, introduced in July 2020, which promotes the progressive use of complaints, providing a high-level framework to support effective handling and prevention alongside learning and development. The Code took effect from April 2022 to ensure complaint handling data is being used consistently across landlord members, promotes engagement at different levels within a landlord and sets out expectations for Boards or equivalent governance, senior executives, and frontline staff. This was updated as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

1.3 The Code acts as a guide for tenants setting out what they should expect from their landlord when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide tenants with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the landlord's internal complaints process. The Code supports the regulatory approach to complaints ensuring that a landlord's approach to complaints is clear simple and accessible and ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely, and fairly.

1.4 Complaints will not be held against complainants and/or affect the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement in any way. Complaints are seen as a positive point to improve our services and our relationship with complainants will not be affected by complaints being reported.

1.5 All staff should be aware of this procedure and the linked Complaints Policy.

### **2.0 PROCEDURE:**

2.1 If PHA Homes decides not to accept a complaint then a detailed explanation will be provided to the tenant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. A tenant has the right to challenge this decision by bringing their complaint to the Ombudsman. Where appropriate the Ombudsman will instruct the landlord to take on the complaint

2.2 PHA Homes has a 2 stage complaints process. It is open to anyone who receives or requests a service from PHA Homes or people acting on their behalf. This includes tenants, neighbours of PHA Homes' properties, committee or Board members, councillors, and other similar advocacy agencies.

2.3 **Stage 1** The complainant will be advised to contact the Head of Services who will try to resolve the problem within 10 working days and will confirm their response in writing (Appendix 1). If the complaint is about the Head of Services or should the Head of Services be absent for a prolonged period, the first stage complaint must be investigated and responded to by the Director of Assets/Deputy CEO.

Where relevant, the complainant(s) will be asked to put their complaint in writing and evidence with any photos, as this helps us to deal with the complaint. Although, the complaint will still be raised without the matter being put in writing.

A full response will be made, in writing, within 10 working days of the acknowledgement being received.

2.4 **Stage 2** The complainant's identity will be kept confidential unless they give their permission for it to be known. A confidential interview at their home or in the office will be offered where possible.

The complaint will be dealt with by the senior leadership, predominantly by the Director of Assets/Deputy CEO, but in their absence then the Chief Executive, or chair of the Board. A full response will be made in writing within 20 working days of the acknowledgement being received (Appendix 2).

2.5 If the complainant is still not satisfied, they should be made aware they have the right to contact:

The Housing Ombudsman Service  
PO Box 152  
Liverpool L33 7WQ  
**Telephone:** 0300 111 3000

**Email:** [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk) or by using their online complaint form.

2.6 If a complaint needs further investigation which takes longer than the 10 or 20 days response time, then a letter must still be sent detailing the reason why and the new expected response date (Appendix 3).

2.7 The response letters used are amended sample copies from the Housing Ombudsman site.

### **3.0 RECORDING & MONITORING:**

3.1 All complaints will be acknowledged and recorded in the Complaints Log located on the existing housing management system and updated accordingly by the Housing Assistant (HA) within 5 days. This system allows all information to be included and offers a chronological tracking system, so progress of each complaint can be monitored.

3.2 At PHA Homes the designated officer for handling complaints is the Director of Assets / Deputy Chief Executive, supported by the Head of Services as the first point

of contact for all complaints. It is the responsibility of the designated complaints officer to monitor all complaints regularly. All complaints will be reported to the Board via the quarterly performance report and the MRC is also the tenant board member.

3.3 A copy of the 'Making a Complaint' information leaflet is given to every new tenant in the sign-up pack, is available in reception and is also displayed on PHA Homes' website.

3.4 A copy of the information leaflet is included in the initial response to any complaint.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Stage 1 Complaint response letter – outstanding repairs – template only

Appendix 2: Stage 1 or 2 Complaint response letter – template only

Appendix 3: Further completion response letter (stage 1 or 2) – template only

## For outstanding repairs

Tenant name  
Tenant address

Date:

Dear .....

### **Stage 1 Response to your complaint ref: 123456**

I have reviewed your complaint at stage 1 of our complaints procedure and am writing to provide you with PHA Homes' response to your complaint.

You complained to PHA Homes on *(date/s)* about:

- xxx *(list each issue from the original complaint plus any that the landlord has since agreed to include in the complaint)*
- xxx

I understand that, to resolve your complaint, you are seeking;:

- *(list any outcomes sought by the complainant e.g. repairs, apology, compensation, change in procedure)*

To investigate and review your complaint I have *(set out steps taken e.g. documents reviewed, staff and contractors consulted etc)* and have made the following findings:

- Findings and conclusions *(for each element of the complaint, referencing any evidence relied upon and any relevant policies, procedures, or legislation)*
- Apologies and explanations *(if appropriate, include a genuine apology and an explanation for any service failure)*
- Redress *(if warranted, provide details of appropriate redress such as compensation, repairs and/or other actions. If offering compensation, explain what it is for, provide a breakdown and refer to any compensation policy – but also use your discretion)*
- Learning *(explain what you have learnt from the complaint and what changes and improvements will be put in place because of that learning)*
- Signposting *(if appropriate, signpost the resident to other services or sources of advice or support).*

This concludes Stage 1 of our internal complaints process. I am sorry that you had cause to complain to PHA Homes. I hope that this letter shows that your feedback has been fully considered and that you are satisfied with this response.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you should reply within 14 days explaining why you remain dissatisfied and what you are seeking as an outcome. Your complaint will then be reviewed by our senior leadership team at stage 2 of the internal complaint procedure.

Please note you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point during the complaint process. It cannot investigate your complaint whilst your complaint is going through our internal complaints procedure however the Ombudsman may be able to help you and your landlord reach a resolution.

Thank you for the time you have taken in bringing your complaint to our attention.

Yours sincerely

**Name**  
**Job Title**

**Appendix 2**

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Tenant name  
Tenant address

Date:

Dear .....

## **Stage 2 complaint – subject**

I have reviewed your complaint at stage 2 of our complaints procedure and am writing to provide you with PHA Homes' response to your complaint.

You complained to PHA Homes on *(date/s)* about the following issues:

- *xxx (list each issue from the original complaint plus any that the landlord has since agreed to include in the complaint)*
- *xxx*

Our Head of Services sent you our previous *stage 1* response to your complaint on *(date)*. I am sorry to hear that you remain dissatisfied. I understand *(from our phone call/your email/ letter of x date)* that your reasons for dissatisfaction and your outstanding concerns are:

- *(summarise outstanding issues and reasons for dissatisfaction)*
- *Xx*

I also understand that, to resolve your complaint, you are seeking the following outcome/s:

- *(list any outcomes sought by the complainant e.g. repairs, apology, compensation, change in procedure)*

To investigate and review your complaint I have *(set out steps taken e.g. documents reviewed, staff and contractors consulted etc)* and have made the following findings:

- Findings and conclusions *(for each element of the complaint, referencing any evidence relied upon and any relevant policies, procedures, or legislation)*
- Apologies and explanations *(if appropriate, include a genuine apology and an explanation for any service failure)*
- Redress *(if warranted, provide details of appropriate redress such as compensation, repairs and/or other actions. If offering compensation, explain what it is for, provide a breakdown and refer to any compensation policy – but also use your discretion)*
- Learning *(explain what you have learnt from the complaint and what changes and improvements will be put in place because of that learning)*
- Signposting *(if appropriate, signpost the resident to other services or sources of advice or support).*

This now concludes *Stage 1/2* of our internal complaints process. I am sorry that you had cause to complain to PHA Homes. I hope that this letter shows that your feedback has been fully considered and that you are satisfied with this final response.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you

**(applicable at early stages)** should reply within X days explaining why you remain dissatisfied and what you are seeking as an outcome. Your complaint will then be reviewed by (name and position of staff member) at the next stage of the internal complaints procedure. Please note you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point during the complaint process. It cannot investigate your complaint whilst your complaint is going through our internal complaints procedure

however the Ombudsman may be able to help you and your landlord reach a resolution.

**(applicable at final stage)** are entitled to refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. *The contact details are: Tel 0300 111 3000, Email [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk), [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) and Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ).*

Thank you for the time you have taken in bringing your complaint to our attention.

Yours sincerely

**Name**  
**Job Title**

Tenant name  
Tenant address

Date:

Dear .....

**Stage 1 Response to your complaint – subject**

I have reviewed your complaint at stage 1 of our internal complaint procedure and am writing to provide you with PHA Homes response.

You complained to PHA Homes about:

- xxxxxxx

I understand that to resolve your complaint you are seeking:

- xxxxxx
- xxxxx

[ EDIT AS REQUIRED To investigate your complaint, I have looked at our xxxxx records as well as the correspondence that has passed between you and our contractor / staff member /etc . I have also spoken with the XXXXX who agrees that the service you have received on this occasion has fallen below what would normally be expected.

I can see that a commitment was made at the beginning of DATE to complete the repairs to your bathroom by DATE. As it currently stands, this is now five weeks overdue and repairs to the tiles, shower and bathroom ceiling and floorboards remain outstanding.

This delay has partly been caused by the job being incorrectly recorded as 'completed' on our records. Any delay has been compounded by our contractors failing to turn up on at least 4 occasions without notifying you. I also note that you have chased this up with us on five separate occasions and that we failed to respond on two of those occasions.

Our Compensation Policy provides discretion to make offers of compensation where our service may have fallen below expected levels. In line with that policy, I would like to apologise for the sub-standard service you have received and make you a discretionary offer of £200 compensation in recognition of your time and trouble in pursuing this matter as well as the distress and inconvenience caused. I would also like to offer you an additional £40 for the missed appointments in line with our Compensation Policy.

Further to the above, PHA Homes commits to complete the outstanding repairs to your bathroom within the next six weeks. I have attached a schedule of works outlining the order in which these repairs will be completed, together with the target completion dates.

As a result of your complaint, further staff training has been carried out on record-keeping and staff have been reminded of the importance of maintaining clear, accurate and up to date records. I have also spoken to our contractor about the



missed appointments and have reinforced the service levels that we expect from them and the obligation they have to provide a good service to our residents.  
*I have appointed an experienced supervisor, Jenny Jeans, to oversee the remaining work and make sure it is completed to a good standard within the timeframe in the attached schedule. Jenny will act as your point of contact until the work is completed and can be contacted on 12345 678989 should you have any queries.]*

This concludes Stage 1 of our internal complaints process. I am sorry that you had cause to complain to PHA Homes. I hope that this letter shows that your feedback has been fully considered and I hope that you are satisfied with this response.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you should reply within 14 days explaining why you remain dissatisfied and what you are seeking as an outcome. Your complaint will then be reviewed PHA Homes senior management team at the next stage of the internal complaint's procedure.

Thank you for the time you have taken in bringing your complaint to our attention.

Yours sincerely,

**Name**  
**Job Title**