



**ORE VALLEY HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

# **Complaints Handling Policy**

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## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Complaints handling – Principles	3
Definitions and Stages	4
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, (SPSO)	5
Recording Complaints	5
Publicising Outcomes	5
Redress	5
Confidentiality	6
Training	6
Monitoring and Review	6

## INTRODUCTION

This policy document describes our arrangements for handling complaints and reflects our commitment to valuing complaints.

We recognise that complaints can:

- Provide our staff with a first hand account of the service users views and experience
- Give us valuable information which we can use to improve customer satisfaction and prevent the same problems that led to the complaints from happening again
- Highlight problems we may otherwise miss.

We also recognise that resolving complaints quickly, and sorting them out as close to the point of service delivery:

- Can save costs and create better customer relations
- Means they are less likely to escalate to the next stage of the procedure
- Can minimise the overall workload involved in dealing with complaints
- Can improve relationships with our service users
- Can enhance the public's perception of Ore Valley Housing Association.

Our aim is to ensure that customer dissatisfaction is resolved as close to the point of service delivery as possible and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so that is supported by detailed procedures and staff guidance documents. Our complaints handling procedures and guidance documents for staff comply with the SPSO Model Complaints Procedures and Complaints Handling guidance for the Housing Sector.

Underpinning our procedures is our support of the SPSO Statement of Complaints Handling Principles, which states what an effective complaints handling procedure be. The table outlines these principles.

Principle	Description
User Focussed	It puts the customer at the heart of the process
Accessible	It is appropriately and clearly communicated, easily understood and available to all
Simple and Timely	It has as few steps as necessary within an agreed and transparent timeframe
Thorough, Proportionate and Consistent	It should provide quality outcomes on all complaints through robust proportionate investigation and the use of clear quality standards.
Objective, Impartial and Fair	It should be objective, evidence based, and driven by the facts and established circumstances, not assumptions, and this should be clearly demonstrated.
Seek Early Resolution	It aims to resolve complaints at the earliest

	opportunity, to the service user's satisfaction wherever possible and appropriate.
Deliver Improvement	It is driven by the search for improvement, using analysis of outcomes to support service delivery and drive service quality improvements.

## Reference

- *The Statement of Complaints Handling Principles produced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) under the Public Services reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and published in January 2011.*  
<https://www.spsso.org.uk/news-and-media/model-complaints-handling-guidance-published>
- *The SPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure for registered Social Landlords, published in April 2012*  
<http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/handling-complaints/complaints-procedures/registered-social-landlord>
- *A public information leaflet giving those who wish to complain advice on what is and what is not a complaint, how to complain and how we deal with and respond to their complaint is also available and will be sent with all complaint responses as well as being available in our reception and on our website.*

## WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us, or on our behalf.

This may include:

- Delays in responding to enquiries and requests
- Failure to provide a service
- Inadequate standard of service, such as repair not carried out properly
- Dissatisfaction with a policy or a decision (but only if there is no other way of dealing with the matter such as a formal appeal process)
- Provision of misleading, unsuitable or incorrect advice or information
- Unacceptable behaviour by, or attitude of, a member of staff, Committee member, volunteer or contractor's staff
- Unfairness, bias or prejudice in service delivery
- Our failure to follow proper procedure.

**For further details and information on what is not a complaint, see procedures supporting this policy**

We recognise that while in most cases it will be clear if the individual is making a complaint which should be dealt with in accordance with this policy, there will be occasions when this is not initially clear. We will provide staff who deal with members of the public with relevant training to help them identify complaints that should be recorded and followed up in accordance with this policy.

Once a complaint has been identified we will handle complaints under the following definitions

There are two types of complaints Frontline Complaints (handled under stage 1 of the Complaints Handling Procedure) and Investigations (handled under stage 2 of the Complaints Handling Procedure)

Complaint Type	Description
Front Line Complaints (Stage 1 Complaints)	Front Line complaints can be dealt with at the 'front line', i.e. by a staff member who can deal with the complaint quickly  Issues that are straightforward and easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation  Replied to with an 'on the spot' apology, explanation or other action to resolve the complaint right away, or in the majority of cases within 5 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances and an extension is agreed with the complainant.
Investigations (Stage 2 Complaints)	Complaints that are complex, serious or high risk, normally requiring thorough investigation such as complaints against the attitude or behaviour of staff, Committee members, volunteers or contractors are called Investigations or Stage 2 Complaints  Complaints that cannot be resolved within 5 days or appealed by the complainant will be defined as a Stage 2 complaint.

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Handling Front Line Complaints**

All staff will take responsibility for complaints that they become aware of and do all that they can to help customers and deal with problems as fully as possible.

### **Handling Complaint Investigations**

### **Supporting Complaint Handlers**

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Director is responsible for ensuring that all staff comply with this policy and the procedures that support it.

The Corporate Support Manager is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for recording the information required to monitor the receipt, progress and outcome of each complaint.

The Corporate Support Manager will ensure that the Complaints Procedure is publicised as widely as possible to all who need to be aware of it.

On a monthly basis, the Management Team will monitor the progress with dealing with current complaints and will consider any action required as a result of emerging trends.

The Corporate Support Manager will ensure that a report is provided to the Management Committee quarterly summarising all complaints received in that period, the outcome and any resulting changes to internal procedures or other action, plus summary totals for the year to date.

The Corporate Support Manager will ensure that this policy and related procedures is reviewed at least every 5 years.

Tenant Satisfaction  
Lessons Learned  
Feedback to Staff

### **Recording Complaints**

We will ensure that the appropriate details of each complaint and the outcome are recorded at each stage in the process, so that the details are available should the customer remain dissatisfied and further investigation etc. is required, and also to provide information on trends etc., that may require us to review standards, policies or procedures. For full details, refer to the procedure supporting this policy.

### **Publicising Outcomes**

We will publish summary information on complaints received, their outcome and any resulting action on our website and in our Newsletter.

**Redress**

Where the complaint is upheld, in whole or in part, and we accept that we have not achieved the desired standards, we will offer appropriate redress. This may be in the form of an apology or recompense for actual loss or damage, or a goodwill payment in compensation for inconvenience or distress.

Where a goodwill payment is offered, the Director will have delegated authority from Committee up to £500; over this amount will require the approval of the Management Committee.

**Confidentiality**

Wherever possible we will respect the confidentiality of customers that make complaints and those being complained about. Where it is necessary to reveal a name, we will only do so with the individual's agreement.

**Training**

We will provide the relevant training required by all staff who have to deal with complaints in the course of their duties.