



Cassiltoun

Housing Association

**COMPLAINTS PROCESS
SEPTEMBER 2015**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document outlines the process by which complaints are handled by Cassiltoun Housing Association (CHA) and its staff. This complaints handling process should be read in conjunction with the Staff Guidance on Complaint Handling which defines, in greater detail, roles and responsibilities as well as 8 Corporate Appendixes which support our process. The Complaints Policy and Procedure should also be taken into account when handling complaints.

2.0 COMPLAINT PROCEDURE STAGES

- 2.1 CHA Complaints Procedure is comprised of two internal stages, a Frontline Resolution (Stage 1) and an Investigation (Stage 2).
- 2.2 When the two internal stages of the Complaints Procedure have been exhausted staff will instruct the customer that they can contact the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) or Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) whichever is the most appropriate who may carry out an external independent review of the customer's complaint.
- 2.3 Where a member of staff receives a complaint which they are unable to resolve immediately, the complaint is passed to an Area Housing Manager (AHM) or Regeneration Manager (RM) for complaints related to the Regeneration Department for assessment and may if appropriate be escalated immediately to the Investigation Stage.

3.0 RECEIVING A COMPLAINT

- 3.1 Complaints will be accepted by any member of staff and can be written or verbal. Complaints received in all instances must be forwarded to AHM, or RM. A Complaints Process Flowchart is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Staff should try and resolve straightforward customer complaints quickly and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. If the complaint is able to be immediately resolved by the staff member then this should be done at the Frontline Resolution stage.
- 3.3 If the staff member is unable to resolve the complaint immediately then the complaint will be forwarded to the AHM, or RM who will allocate the complaint to a relevant officer for investigation.
- 3.4 Where an expression of dissatisfaction concerns a routine request for a service, this will not be considered under the complaints handling procedure and should be directed to the appropriate officer.
- 3.5 Where an expression of dissatisfaction involves a request for compensation only, this will not be considered under the complaint handling procedure and will be dealt with in reference to CHA's Compensation Policy.
- 3.6 Any attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a previous complaint reconsidered where CHA's definitive decision has been communicated following stage two of the Complaints Procedure cannot be considered. Customers in this instance should be directed to the SPSO.

4.0 FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

4.1 The initial stage in the Complaints Procedure is Frontline Resolution which seeks to resolve a complaint immediately, or within a five working day timescale.

4.2 Any complaint received needs to be recorded. If a complaint is made verbally by a customer then the details of the complaint should be recorded by staff on a Verbal Complaint Form (VCF) (see appendix 2 of Staff Guidance).

4.3 Immediate Resolution

4.3.1 Where a complaint has been resolved immediately staff will record the details of the complaint on a VCF.

4.3.2 Staff will also record the outcome of the complaint and any action taken on a VCF.

4.3.3 Staff will confirm to the customer the actions taken or to be taken and where appropriate will confirm this in writing to the customer.

4.3.4 Staff will also advise the customer that if they remain dissatisfied then they can have their complaint reviewed by the AHM. The customer will also be advised that CHA record all complaints in order to allow learning from complaints which will improve the services CHA provide.

4.3.5 Staff will send a copy of the complaint and outcome to AHM or RM.

4.4 Five Working Day Resolution

4.4.1 Where a complaint cannot be resolved immediately then staff will advise the customer that the details of their complaint will be recorded, a full response will be sent to them within five working days and that if necessary their complaint can be escalated for a AHM to investigate.

4.4.2 If a complaint is received verbally, staff will record the details of the complaint on a VCF and then forward the completed VCF to AHM or RM.

4.4.3 Where appropriate, AHM or RM will write to the customer within three working days to acknowledge their complaint.

4.4.4 AHM or RM will assess the complaint for risk (see Appendix 3 of Staff Guidance), identify an appropriate Investigating Officer and issue all relevant paperwork.

4.4.5 The officer will carry out an investigation into the complaint and respond in writing to the customer within five working days. Any response communicated to the customer will include information on the next stage in the complaints procedure, should the customer remain dissatisfied.

4.4.6 If the complaint cannot be resolved within five working days then an extension of a further five working days may be agreed with the customer and authorised by a AHM or RM. This should only be granted in exceptional circumstances and only if it will facilitate a resolution of the complaint at the Frontline Resolution stage (see appendix 4 of Staff Guidance). AHM or RM will confirm any extension in writing to the customer.

- 4.4.7 The Investigating Officer will forward copies of all final paperwork, including the outcome of the complaint to the AHM or RM.

5.0 INVESTIGATION STAGE

- 5.1 Where it has not been possible to resolve a complaint at Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution, or where a customer remains dissatisfied then staff will advise DOO that the complaint is to be escalated to the Investigation Stage.
- 5.2 DOO acknowledge the escalation of the complaint to stage two of the Complaints Procedure in writing to the tenant within three working days of receipt and advise that an investigation into the complaint will be carried out and a response to their complaint will be communicated within a twenty working days timescale.
- 5.3 DOO will identify an appropriate investigating officer and provide details of the complaint and all paperwork from stage one to the relevant officer.
- 5.4 The officer carries out a thorough investigation into the customer's complaint, including a review of actions taken at stage one and interviews with relevant staff members and the customer where appropriate. A response to the complaint will be communicated to the customer within twenty working days.
- 5.5 If the complaint cannot be resolved within twenty working days due to extenuating circumstances or operational difficulties, or where the complaint involves very complex issues (see Appendix 4 of Staff Guidance), an extension to timescales may be authorised. This should be discussed with the customer and authorised by the DOO. The DOO should set the time limits on any extended investigation.
- 5.6 The customer must be kept updated on the reason for the delay and give them a revised timescale for completion. DOO will confirm any extension to the timescale in writing to the customer.
- 5.7 The investigating officer will have the complaint signed off by DOO before the response is issued to the customer. The response must include advice to the customer of their right to contact the SPSO or FOS to undertake an independent external review of their complaint.
- 5.8 The investigating officer will forward copies of all final paperwork, including the letter notifying the customer of the outcome of the complaint, to DOO.

6.0 EXTERNAL REVIEW STAGE

- 6.1 Where it has not been possible to resolve a complaint at the Investigation stage, or where a customer remains dissatisfied, the customer will be advised that they can take their complaint to the SPSO/FOS who would undertake an independent external review of their complaint. Details of the appropriate Ombudsman will be included and if applicable a copy of the FOS leaflet "Your Complaint and the Ombudsman" will be sent to the customer. This represents the final stage in the complaints procedure.

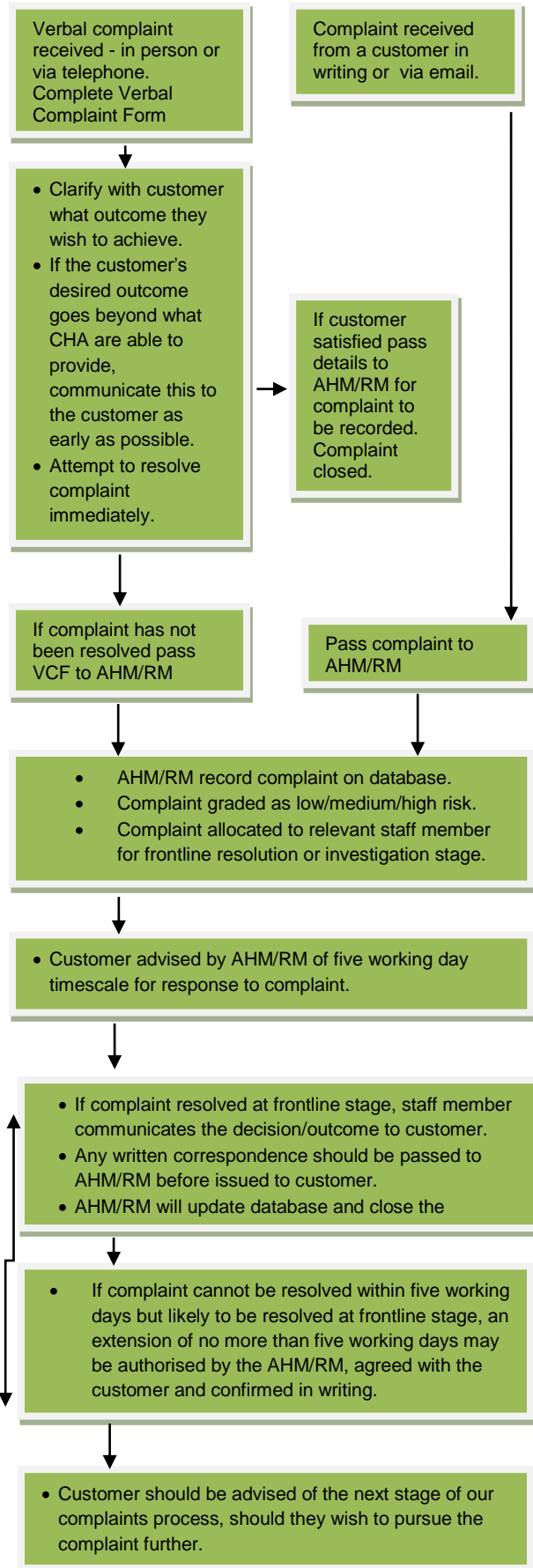
6.2 The contact details for the SPSO are as follows:-
FREEPOST SPSO
0800 377 7330

The contact details for the FOS are as follows:

Financial Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
London
E14 9SR
0300 123 9123

APPENDIX 1 COMPLAINTS PROCESS FLOWCHART

STAGE ONE



STAGE TWO

