

COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS PROCEDURE

Habinteg Housing Association provides homes and services to over 2000 tenants in England and Wales. The Association has two main offices, a head office and southern regional office in London and a northern regional office in Bradford. Most estates have a small local office where our scheme based community assistants and community housing assistants work during normal office hours.

Who can use this procedure?

Any tenant, applicant, customer who receives a service from Habinteg or member of the public who is dissatisfied or pleased with any aspect of the service they have received. In addition external individuals and organisations can make a complaint or appeal against a decision taken in relation to service provision on behalf of a service user.

What is a complaint?

A working definition is “any expression of dissatisfaction that needs a response” this may be in relation to an action we have taken, or lack of action, or about the standard of service.

1. We have not followed a published policy or procedure
2. We have failed to deliver or meet an expected standard of service
3. Our staff or contractors have been unhelpful or acted in an inappropriate manner
4. An appeal against a decision made when carrying out our policies

What is a compliment?

We want to know when a job is well done and be able to congratulate our staff. You can compliment any member of staff personally or you can contact us using any of the methods detailed below to let us know that you appreciate what an individual, team or the association as a whole has done.

How to contact us

Complaints and compliments may be received in person, over telephone, by letter, on a complaints & compliments form, fax, email or via text. In other words, Habinteg will accept a complaint via any medium which allows the customer to express their dissatisfaction.

What is the purpose of this procedure?

The Association aims to provide the highest possible standard of service. However, we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. When this happens we want to hear about it so that we can explain and put things right. We accept that everyone has the right to make a complaint or a compliment and we can learn valuable lessons from this process. Your feedback may well improve things for everyone.

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The procedure aims to:

- Make it easy for you to complain / compliment
- Make sure you get a quick response
- Give you the right to a second opinion
- Keep you informed of progress in dealing with your complaint

We will use information received as a management tool to continually improve our performance and service. We therefore encourage staff and customers to be open and honest and operate a non blame culture with the opportunity to put things right.

How your complaint will be treated?

The Association takes all complaints seriously and will in no way penalise you for making a complaint. Your confidentiality will be protected.

In certain circumstances where there is a pattern of persistent complaints which are deemed unfounded or malicious in nature then the Association may need to assign one liaison officer (Area Manager or above) who will deal directly with the individual customer.

Initial Complaint

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the service you have received the first step is to contact the member of staff providing the service you want to complain about. Tell them your concerns and they will try to sort it out. The officer responsible should, in most, instances, be able to resolve the matter to your satisfaction and on the spot.

Members of your estate's residents' association or committee or your local tenant representative may be able to provide you with advice or assistance at any stage. If you are not sure how to contact them your community assistant will be able to provide you with this information.

If you still remain dissatisfied with the service provided or the response you have received to your initial complaint the next step is to make a formal complaint to the Regional Operations Manager.

Your complaint can be made in writing, by telephone, in person or by using the internet. Please state clearly that it is a formal complaint. If in writing you may complete the associations complaints and compliments form, write a letter or send an email to direct@habinteg.org.uk. If you contact us by telephone or in person, a member of staff will complete the form with you.

If an individual is in receipt of support services funded via Supporting People or wished to complain / appeal against a decision regarding support services they may

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wish to use an advocate. The advocate can make the complaint on behalf of the service user and they can be involved at any stage of the procedure.

There are three stages to a formal complaint:

Stage 1

Upon receipt of your complaint an acknowledgement will be sent out within two working days. An investigation will be carried out by the Regional Operations Manager who will try to complete the investigation and respond to you within 10 working days (where there is a delay you will be notified the reasons why). Where the complaint / appeal is against a decision we have taken when carrying out a policy, it must be reviewed by someone not involved in the original decision. The Regional Operations Manager should complete a Complaints Checklist.

Stage 2

If you remain unhappy with the response to your stage 1 complaint you can ask for the complaint to be reviewed by the Head of Operations, who again will respond within 10 working days and should complete a Complaints Checklist.

Stage 3

If you still remain unhappy you can ask for the complaint to be reviewed by a complaints panel consisting of a board member and two tenant representatives from the national tenants forum. Both the complainant and their advocate can attend the complaints panel.

Note: There is a time limit for escalation of complaints between stages of two calendar months.

General Advice

You must not skip any of the stages within the procedure as the complaints panel will only consider a complaint that has proceeded through the earlier stages. The Independent Housing Ombudsman will only consider a complaint from you if you have exhausted the association's internal complaints procedure. The attached flowchart details the above procedure in diagrammatic form. You are, at any time, entitled to seek advice from a citizen's advice bureau, local solicitor or other advice agency. If you are in receipt of support services funded via Supporting People you also have the right to complain to the Supporting People Team at your local authority.

Mediation

Mediation is a different way of resolving complaints. It involves an independent person and both sides sitting down to talk to each other about the problem. The Association may offer to resolve your complaint using mediation at any stage in the complaints process. We will cover the cost of the mediator. It will be your decision whether or not to accept or reject the use of mediation.

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The Independent Housing Ombudsman

The Independent Housing Ombudsman exists to consider complaints about registered social landlords. You may take your complaint to the Ombudsman at the following address:

Norman House

105-109 Strand

London

WC2R 0AA

Telephone: 020 7836 3630

Lo-call Tel: 0845 7125 973

Email: ombudsman@ihos.org.uk

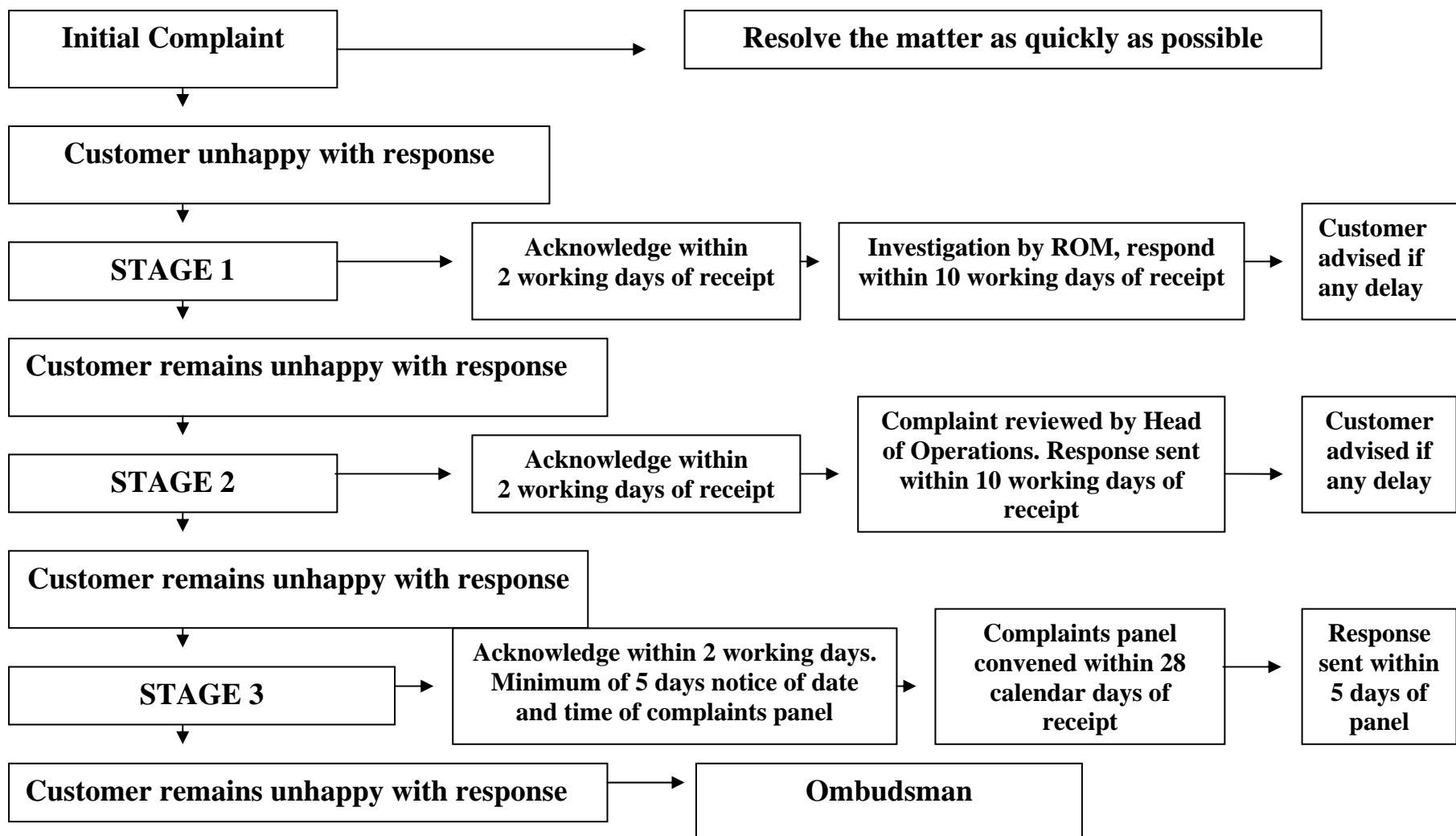
Website: www.ihos.org.uk

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**SUMMARY OF KEY STAGES IN COMPLAINTS
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