

**FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED**  
**COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Code: GOV05

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Next review: As required by SPSO

Cross reference: GOV24 Whistleblowing

GOV10 Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

GOV06 Customer Care Policy

GOV07 Tenant Participation Policy



This document can be made available in alternative languages or formats (such as large print, audio etc). Please contact staff as required.

# **FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED**

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **1 Policy Statement**

- 1.1 We aim to deliver high quality, responsive services to all our customers, but there may be times when we do not provide the level or quality of service that we have promised or that customers can reasonably expect.
- 1.2 We aim to deal fairly and effectively with anyone complaining about any of our decisions or activities, in line with the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman's (SPSO).
- 1.3 Our **Complaints Handling Procedure** gives clear details of who can raise a complaint, what steps will be taken to resolve issues and what we will do to ensure we use complaints information to improve services for the longer term. We follow the SPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) for registered social landlords. <https://www.spsso.org.uk/the-model-complaints-handling-procedures>

### **2 Scope of the Policy**

- 2.1 We have defined a complaint, in line with the SPSO guidance, as:  
**'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about Forth's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of Forth.'**
- 2.2 Our Complaints Handling Procedure provides a range of examples of complaints we may receive, and how these will be handled. This is based on the SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure.
- 2.3 Our complaints procedure has 2 stages. We expect the majority of complaints will be handled at stage 1, also known as a Frontline complaint. If the customer remains dissatisfied after stage 1, they can request that we look at it again, at stage 2, also known as an Investigation complaint. If the complaint is complex enough to require an investigation, we will put the complaint into stage 2 immediately and skip stage 1.
- 2.4 Complaints about neighbours are dealt with under our separate Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. However, if the complaint is about the way in which the dispute or neighbour complaint has been handled, then it is appropriate to complain under this Complaints Policy. Please note that target timescales and

template letters for anti-social behaviour complaints will differ from those outlined in this policy.

### **3 Principles**

- 3.1 We aim to provide high quality, responsive services. Complaints are only one way of receiving feedback on our services. We conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys, encourage customer engagement in improving our services, and actively seek customer feedback on our performance in key areas such as maintenance.
- 3.2 Our Tenants View Forum examines our performance and our success in meeting customer expectations.
- 3.3 However, there will be occasions when a user of our services is not happy with the level or quality of service. We recognise that complaints provide an opportunity for us to improve our services and actively promote this to employees and customers.
- 3.4 All employees are aware that customers have a right to complain. Any employee who receives and deals with a complaint should do so in a positive manner, whatever their initial view about the validity of the complaint.
- 3.5 Complaints can be made by any customer, or prospective customer. Complaints can also be made by any person with reason to, even if they are not a customer, for example, they may be a friend or family member of one of our customers or they may be acting as an advocate.
- 3.6 Customers will also have the opportunity to offer suggestions, where they do not wish to make a formal complaint.
- 3.7 We recognise that some of our customers may need help or support to make a complaint and will offer guidance and assistance.
- 3.8 All complaints should be treated sympathetically and in confidence.

### **4 Who Can Use the Complaints Policy?**

- 4.1 Anyone who receives or requests a service can use the Complaints Policy. This includes:
  - Tenants and sharing owners (or someone acting on their behalf, such as a relative or support worker).
  - People applying for a house.
  - People acting on behalf of the person, such as a solicitor, advice agency, local councillor, MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament) or MP (Member of Parliament) – although we do encourage that people try and resolve their complaint with us directly first.

4.2 If someone is acting on behalf of the person who has a complaint, depending on the issue and the complexity of the complaint, we may need to seek permission from the complainant to discuss the issue with his or her nominated representative.

## **5 Complaints About Employees**

5.1 All complaints about employees are processed through the Complaints Policy in the first instance. Where necessary, each party involved may be contacted to find out more information about the issue and to agree a resolution.

5.2 Our Complaints Handling Procedure outlines the full procedure for investigating and responding to complaints about employees.

## **6 Unacceptable Behaviour by Complainants**

6.1 People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. If there have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint, in a small number of cases this can lead to a customer acting in an unacceptable way. We have a separate policy to deal with instances such as this. This is called the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

## **7 Independent advice**

7.1 We will always try to resolve problems directly with those who are dissatisfied. However, complainants may feel it is important to get independent advice before deciding to make a complaint. This advice is available from Citizens Advice Bureau, Law Centres, Solicitors and Tenants' organisations.

## **8 Confidentiality and data protection**

8.1 As far as possible all complaints will be treated in confidence. The name of the complainant will not be made known any more than is necessary.

8.2 However, complainants must appreciate that if their complaint involves another tenant, service user or an employee, it may be very difficult to look into this without talking to those people. If the person asks our employees not to do so, then that will be respected, but it may mean it will not be possible to take any action to tackle the problem.

8.3 We recognise the importance of data protection legislation in protecting the rights of individuals in relation to personal information that we may handle and use about them. We will ensure that our practices in the handling and use of personal information during the processes outlined in this policy comply fully with data protection legislation. More information is available from our Data Protection Officer.

## **10 Monitoring, reporting and learning**

- 10.1 All employees who use the complaints system have a responsibility for ensuring it is managed and kept up to date. It is essential that enough detail is documented to ensure complaints can be processed accurately and in a timely manner.
- 10.2 The complaints system will be monitored by Managers. It is the responsibility of the Managers to review the information provided by the complaints system. They should carry out the following:
- Monitoring of response times in relation to agreed target timescales.
  - Identify common themes of issues and take action to improve.
  - Identify learning points for either the team or the organisation as a whole, and ensure that good practice is shared.
  - Monitor customer satisfaction with the complaints process.
- 10.3 Quarterly complaints performance reports, including customer feedback, are provided to the Management Committee. These reports are co-ordinated by the Project & Communications Co-ordinator. The complaints performance is also reported quarterly on our website and in our Tenants Newsletter in a You Said We Did format.

## **11 Equal Opportunities and Access to Information**

- 11.1 A summary of this Complaints Policy, and associated Complaints Handling Procedure is provided to all customers in the form of a leaflet. It is also included in the Tenants Handbook.
- 11.2 Information is made available on our website and is available at the Reception Area.
- 11.3 Information on the Complaints Policy, and associated Complaints Handling Procedure will be highlighted to all new tenants.
- 11.4 All employees should receive a copy of the policy and be aware of and receive training in their responsibilities in its implementation. This is included in the induction process for new employees.
- 11.5 A copy of the policy and procedure and summary information leaflet sheets will be made available on request on tape, in large print, or in other languages. Tenants and applicants with particular needs will be assisted to make a complaint where necessary.

## **12 Policy Review**

12.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier if required.