

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to providing an excellent resident service and welcome feedback from all our residents. If you are pleased with our services, please let us know by emailing our Soho office at [housing@sohoha.org.uk](mailto:housing@sohoha.org.uk). We will use this information to thank our staff members. We recognise, however, that sometimes things go wrong. If you are dissatisfied with something we have done or not done, or with the level of service you received, we want to know so we can investigate what has happened and try and put things right. This will also give us the chance to learn and improve our services.
- 1.2 To ensure that this policy meets the needs of our diverse resident base it has been written in accordance with the Complaint Handling Code published by the Housing Ombudsman.
- 1.3 This policy is available on the Soho website and can also be requested from any member or staff, or via the [housing@sohoha.org.uk](mailto:housing@sohoha.org.uk) contact inbox.
- 1.4 Soho Housing accepts complaints from tenants, leaseholders, and shared owners or third parties who have a connection to a Soho Housing resident or property. If a complaint is being made on the complainant's behalf by an advocate, for example family, friend, advocate, or MP, written or expressed permission may be required from the complainant to allow us to communicate with this person directly.

### 2 What is a complaint?

2.1 A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

2.2 This could include:

- Failure to follow up or notify the resident about appropriate follow up action following initial contact,
- Failure or lengthy delay in providing a service or take an action which Soho Housing said they could provide or take,
- Failure to comply with a policy,
- The inappropriate behaviour of Soho Housing employees or contractors which would bring Soho Housing into disrepute.

### 3 What is not a complaint?

3.1 There are some circumstances in which we will not consider a formal complaint.

3.2 These include:

- A policy decision that has been properly arrived at.
- Where a complaint is made more than twelve months after the matter has come to the resident's attention. We do understand that there may be circumstances that mean this time scale is not possible, and we will consider individual situations and adjust as appropriate.
- A matter already fully considered through relevant stages of the complaints process described below, the courts, or another legal process.
- A matter directly linked to legal or enforcement proceedings already started by the resident or Soho Housing.
- An initial request for service, e.g., a repair which Soho Housing has not yet had an opportunity to put right.
- A claim for damages that should be handled as an insurance claim.
- Anti-social behaviour. Reports about anti-social behaviour are handled in a different way. Soho Housing has a separate Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Please report complaints about anti-social behaviour to your Housing Officer on 020 7557 7400. We will investigate complaints about anti-social behaviour handling.

3.3 Where we decide not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be provided setting out the reasons why and that the decision may be escalated to the Housing Ombudsman for review.

#### **4 Reasonable adjustments**

4.1 Soho Housing commits to making reasonable adjustments to this policy in line with the Equality Act 2010. These could include but are not limited to changes to timescales and methods of communication, such as large print.

4.2 If you would like to request a reasonable adjustment, please let your Housing Officer or the complaint handler know.

#### **5 Making your complaint**

##### **5.1 Immediate resolution**

Where a resident is unhappy with the service they have received, we ask that they inform Soho Housing about the problem so that we can try and resolve it as quickly and effectively as possible.

Please consider two important things before submitting a formal complaint:

- Have you already told your Housing Officer or another member of the Soho Housing team about this issue?
- Have you allowed adequate time for the team to put right the situation?

## **6 Formal Complaints and the two-stage process**

- 6.1 If we cannot resolve the issue immediately and you would like to make a formal complaint, we will advise you of the complaints procedure and give any help you need. Once a formal complaint has been made, Soho Housing follows a two-stage complaints process.
- 6.2 Formal complaints can be made via any of our Soho staff members by telephone, email, in person, or by post to the office address. The quickest and easiest way is to use our [housing@sohoha.org.uk](mailto:housing@sohoha.org.uk) email address which is managed between 9am and 5pm every day.
- 6.3 We will need to know:
- What service you are unhappy with
  - What you have done so far to deal with the problem
  - What you are seeking as a solution or outcome to the complaint.
- 6.4 All complaints will be logged on the complaints records system and acknowledged prior to referral to the correct internal department to look into.

## **7 The First Stage (Stage 1)**

- 7.1 The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt. You will receive a complaint reference number, details of the lead handler, and confirmation of the timescales we will be working to.
- 7.2 The full response will be in writing and will include any resolutions agreed between you and the manager. It will state that this is a Stage 1 complaint, outline the complaint, set out the response and the reasons for the response, and where a resolution is offered, a timeframe for that resolution.
- 7.3 We aim to respond to your complaint within ten working days from acknowledgement of your complaint. If this is not possible, we will give reasons for the delay and provide a new timescale with regular updates. This extension will not exceed a further ten days.
- 7.4 Following the response there may be actions outstanding, for example a repair to be completed. Any outstanding actions will be followed up within an agreed timeframe.
- 7.5 If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, you can request to go to the second stage of the complaints process. This needs to be done within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.
- 7.6 We will consider escalation requests outside of this deadline in extenuating circumstances. Please advise the complaint handler or your Housing Officer of any required reasonable adjustments.
- 7.7 We will ask for details on why you are dissatisfied and for additional information and evidence.

## **8 The Second Stage (Stage 2)**

- 8.1 The request to proceed to Stage 2 can be addressed to any staff member, however the fastest way to do this is to email us on [housing@sohoha.org.uk](mailto:housing@sohoha.org.uk).
- 8.2 The Stage 2 complaint will be handled by a different staff member, more senior than the handler of the Stage 1. They will contact you to acknowledge the escalation and confirm the timescales.
- 8.3 In some circumstances, there may be a reason why we decide not to escalate your complaint to Stage 2. Where this decision is made, we will clearly outline the reasons why and explain your right to approach the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 8.4 Stage 2 is a review of the Stage 1 decision, and any further evidence supplied.
- 8.5 The Stage 2 response will be acknowledged in 5 working days.
- 8.6 A full response to a stage 2 escalation will be provided in writing within 20 working days of the acknowledgement of receipt of the stage 2 escalation. If this is not possible, we will give reasons for the delay and provide updates at agreed intervals. Any extensions to this response should not exceed a further 20 working days.
- 8.7 In exceptional circumstances where this deadline must be exceeded, we will agree the new timescale with the resident.
- 8.8 Stage 2 reviews will only review points and decisions made in the Stage 1 complaint.
- 8.9 Stage 2 is the final stage of the internal complaints process and will involve all suitable staff members to enable this final review.
- 8.10 Soho Housing provides no appeal process for these decisions.
- 8.11 If you feel that a satisfactory resolution has not been reached, you may apply to the Housing Ombudsman and will be given details on how to do so.

## 9 Putting things right for you

9.1 Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge it, and clearly set out the actions already taken, or we intend to take, to put things right. This can include:

- Apologising
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- Taking action if there has been a delay
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- Providing financial remedy
- Changing policies, procedures or practices

## 10 Housing Ombudsman

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman directly.

The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

Online complaint form: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/)

Phone: 0300 111 3000

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

Postal address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

## 11 Persistent, Abusive, or Unreasonable Behaviour

Soho Housing may manage the complaints process and communication regarding complaints differently according to our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy. We will still investigate your complaint.