

Complaints

Management Policy 8

Keniston Housing Association

1 Introduction

Keniston aims to provide an excellent service to tenants, leaseholders and other people who come into contact with the organisation. We recognise that when things go wrong we need to respond quickly and take action to put those things right. The Association aims to learn from its mistakes by reviewing complaints received, in order to improve services.

2 What is a complaint?

A complaint is 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.

Keniston aims to follow our values of:

- **Respect:** we will be courteous and considerate, treat everyone as individuals and value diversity
- **Openness:** we will listen, be accessible and communicate clearly
- **Accountability:** we will take responsibility for our actions and decisions
- **Honesty:** we will say what we mean, accept our mistakes and learn from them
- **Excellence:** we take pride in what we do and go beyond what is expected.

3 What is not a formal complaint?

The following will not be treated as a complaint:

- Where legal proceedings have been started or are pending
- The first request for any service from Keniston (e.g. a repair request or the initial raising of an anti-social behaviour case)
- Where the issue raised meets agreed service standards and policies
- Where the issue occurred more than 6 months previously, unless the complaint concerns a safeguarding or health and safety issue.
- Where the issue has already exhausted the complaints process, or where it is being pursued in an unreasonable manner.

4 Complaints process

Customers may raise a complaint through a range of channels including email, phone, letter, face to face, website or social media. We will explain how the complaint will be dealt with and will keep the customer informed of the progress of the complaint, managing their reasonable expectations.

We will make reasonable adjustments to our complaints process where necessary, ensuring that customers with a specific need are not at a disadvantage when accessing the service. Examples of the reasonable adjustments we may make include using a customer's communication preference for the duration of the complaint and providing information in alternative formats e.g. Braille or large print.

We will operate a simple two stage process as follows:

- Acknowledge complaints within five working days and Complaints Officer will record as stage one of the process. The manager of the relevant service area

will contact the customer to discuss the nature of the complaint and their desired outcome or remedy will be confirmed for clarity. Where the complaint cannot be resolved at this point the customer will be advised of their right to access Housing Ombudsman services, who can assist customers throughout the life of the complaint.

- All complaints will be referred to the next Complaints & Resolutions meeting, which is a group made up of officers and managers from housing management and property services. It also includes members of the Management Team. Dealing with all complaints at this forum ensure that managers become aware of all complaints and that matters are dealt with consistently.
- Stage 1 response will be within 10 working days from the receipt of the complaint. Where this is not possible, we will notify the customer why there is a delay and a full reply will be no later than 20 working days from receipt.
- Where a complaint has not been resolved to the customer's reasonable satisfaction, the customer may request to progress to stage 2. The complaint will be considered by the Complaints Panel, which is a sub group from the Association's Board and a member of our resident panel.
- Stage 2 response will be within 20 working days from the escalation request. Where this is not possible, we will notify the customer why there is a delay and a full reply will be no later than 30 working days from escalation.

5 Housing Ombudsman Service

The Association will maintain its membership of the Housing Ombudsman Service scheme. The Association will co-operate fully and promptly with any enquiries from the Housing Ombudsman Service.

In the event that a complaint has not been resolved through the two stages of Keniston's own procedure, a tenant may refer the matter direct to the Housing Ombudsman Service. However they cannot do so unless they have referred the matter to a "designated person" (by definition of the rules set by the Ombudsman this is a Member of Parliament, a local councillor or a tenant panel); However, in any event, if eight weeks have passed since the matter was completed at stage 2 the complainant may take the matter to the Ombudsman without going through a designated person.

6 First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber - residential)

If a leaseholder is not satisfied with the outcome of his or her complaint at stage 2, they may take that complaint to the First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber - residential). Generally the Housing Ombudsman Service will not deal with complaints from leaseholders, although they will deal with some types of service delivery issues.

7 Monitoring

Performance of complaint handling will be annually reviewed, enabling lessons to be learned to avoid similar complaints arising in the future. This information is provided

to the Management Team and the Board. Information concerning our performance is also available to our customers via our Annual Report or on our website.

The minutes of Complaints Panel meetings are to be included at the next Board meeting, and where complaints are referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service, progress will be reported to the Board quarterly until the matter has been concluded.

8 Other feedback

When something goes wrong it will not always result in a complaint. Managers should be aware of the need to learn from situations which have or could have resulted in a complaint from all types of feedback which the Association collects, so that wherever possible lessons can be learnt for service improvement.