

# HJALTLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### **Why have a complaints procedure?**

Hjaltland Housing Association aims to provide a first class service but there may be occasions when you are not happy about something, and if this is the case it is important for you to tell us.

The aim of this complaints procedure is to give you clear details of what steps you can take to try and get things put right where there's a problem.

The complaints procedure also gives us the chance to keep an eye on the quality of service we provide so that we can continually work to improve it.

### **Who can use the complaints procedure?**

Anyone who receives or requests a service from Hjaltland Housing Association can use the complaints procedure. This includes tenants, people applying for housing, owners or sharing owners and people living in neighbouring property.

The procedure is also open to people who may be acting on your behalf, such as a councillor, Member of Parliament, (or MSP), advice agency or solicitor (but as you will see later, we do encourage you to try to sort things out first).

If you belong to a tenants' group or residents' association and would prefer to ask them to help you complain we will be happy for them to contact us on your behalf.

### **What can you complain about?**

You can complain about any aspect of our service which you are unhappy about, for example:

- if a repair has not been carried out properly
- if you have not received information you have been asked for
- if you feel that a member of staff, a committee member or a contractor has not behaved reasonably towards you
- if you feel your housing application has not been handled properly
- if you feel you have been unfairly discriminated against

Complaints against neighbours will be dealt with under our neighbour disputes procedure. But if you have a complaint about the way we have dealt with a neighbour dispute then you can use the complaints procedure.

We will always try to deal with complaints sympathetically, but there are some things we will not be able to give you information about. For example, it would be wrong for us to discuss with you the details of someone else's housing application, as this would be a breach of confidentiality, but we can of course talk to you about how our allocations procedure works.

### **Trying to sort things out informally**

You have every right to make a formal complaint whenever you wish to, but in the first instance it can often be quicker and easier for everyone if the problem can be sorted out informally; the choice is yours.

To try and resolve a problem informally the best thing for you to do is to talk to (or drop a line to) your housing officer and let him or her know what you would like to be put right. He or she will let you know how long it should take for the problem to be sorted out, and hopefully a solution will be reached.

If you live in sheltered housing, you may be happy to try and resolve things informally by letting the warden know what the problem is. She will let you know how long it will be before the problem can be sorted out. But if you do not feel comfortable about involving the warden you should contact your housing officer.

## **The formal complaints procedure**

If the problem has not been sorted out informally, you should in the first instance complain to your housing officer at the Hjalmland office. If you have a complaint against a member of staff you should write to the Director. Complaints about the Director should be sent to the Chairman of the Management Committee.

When you make a complaint it is really important for you to let us know exactly what the problem is and how you would like to see it resolved. We would encourage you to do this in writing wherever possible, but if this is not easy you can complain by telephone or in person. If the housing officer is not available your complaint will be noted by the person who speaks to you and passed on to the housing officer.

If you have made a complaint by telephone or in person, the member of staff who notes the complaint will check with you that they have taken a correct record, and you will normally be asked to sign it. In this way everyone is clear what the complaint is about.

Whether you have complained in writing, by phone or in person, we will write to you within three working days to acknowledge your complaint and will start investigations within fourteen days.

We will then write to you again within four weeks of receiving the complaint to let you know the outcome. Do please remember that some things may not be within our control and may therefore be less easy to sort out.

If you are not happy with the response you may be able to use the appeals procedure.

## **Taking your complaint further - the appeals procedure**

If you don't feel the staff have resolved your complaint satisfactorily, you can appeal to the Association's Management Committee.

After you have written to the Chairman of the Management Committee, he, or she, will write to you within three working days to acknowledge receipt of your letter.

If in addition to your written complaint you are keen to talk to the committee, you can do this and if you want to bring along a friend or adviser (for example from the Shetland Islands Citizens' Advice Bureau, or Advocacy Shetland) then this is fine.

The Chairman of the Management Committee will write to you within three working days of the meeting to let you know the decision. If you are not happy with it you will normally be able to contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

## **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman investigates individual complaints against housing associations and co-operatives. This is a free and impartial service, and a leaflet about it is available from our office.

This service is available to anyone who receives a service from a housing association or co-operative, or who has applied to one of them for housing. Normally you must have gone through the Association's own complaints procedure before the Ombudsman can deal with your complaint.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for Scotland is based at 2 Belford Road, Edinburgh EH4 3BL Tel: 0131 220 0599

## **Who will know about my complaint?**

We will respect the confidentiality of your complaint. Whilst we are looking into your complaint your name will not be divulged without your consent within the Association, and if your complaint goes to the Chairman of the Committee then other Committee Members will not be told who has complained.

You will appreciate, however, that if your complaint involves another tenant or a member of staff it may be very difficult for us to look into this without talking to that tenant or staff member. If you ask us not to talk to the tenant or staff member, we will try to respect your wishes, but it will probably not be possible for us to take any action to tackle the problem.

### **Getting independent advice**

We would always hope that a problem can be sorted out informally.

However, you may feel it is important for you to get independent advice before you decide to complain to us formally. Advice agencies in this area include:

**Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)** is the only housing agency in Scotland that works for both landlords and tenants. It provides independent expertise and development for tenant and community groups in initiatives with landlords and other outside agencies. TPAS can be contacted at 20/24 St Andrews Street, Glasgow G1 5PD. (Tel 0141 552 3633) Membership is open to tenant groups and individuals.

### **Shetland Islands Citizens Advice Bureau**

45 Commercial Street, Lerwick ZE1 0AN  
Tel. 01595 694696

### **Shetland Tenants' Forum**

1a Water Lane, Lerwick ZE1 0AG  
Tel 01595 695197

**Tenants Information Service (TIS)** provides information to tenants only  
Suite 335, Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow. G2 6HJ  
Tel. 0141 248 1242

### **Shelter**

47 Belmont Street, Aberdeen  
01224 645586

### **How do we record and monitor complaints?**

Complaints can help us as well as you! All formal complaints made to the Association are recorded and reported to the Director, who will regularly advise the Committee of changes or improvements the Association may be making as a result of complaints received.