

Resolving Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1. Auckland Home Solutions CIC (AHS) aims to provide a positive customer experience, however, we acknowledge that sometimes things go wrong, and tenants complain. When this happens, we aim to be as helpful as possible to those tenants and provide a process which is simple and easy to follow.
- 1.2. AHS take all complaints about our service seriously, because they make it clear to us where we need to improve. We work hard to resolve them quickly and fairly and use them as opportunities to learn and improve the service we deliver.
- 1.3. This policy governs how AHS resolves Expression of Dissatisfaction (EOD) and complaints received.

2. What is a complaint?

- 2.1. The Housing Ombudsman Service's definition of a complaint is *"any expression of dissatisfaction with a landlord's action or omission"*.
- 2.2. A complaint is about service failure. If there is no evidence of a service failure it will not be dealt with as a complaint.

3. Who can make a complaint?

- 3.1. This policy applies to all customers of AHS.
- 3.2. AHS view customers as:
 - Tenants living in our homes
 - Their families, informal and formal carers and visitors
 - Stakeholders
 - Advocates
 - Anybody using our service(s)

4. How can a customer make a complaint?

- 4.1. AHS encourage complainants to initially contact the member of staff dealing with the delivery of the service area, to allow them to resolve the matter quickly where possible.
- 4.2. Complainants can also make complaints in the following ways:
 - Email: info@ahscic.co.uk
 - Tel: 0191 5870848
 - In person: with a member of staff
 - By Letter: Glendale House, Rose Avenue, Blackhall Colliery, TS27 4JQ.

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4.3. A copy of this complaints policy can be found:

- In our office(s)
- On line: www.aucklandhomesolutionscic.co.uk (summary of policy)
- Within new tenant sign up pack

4.4. If a tenant needs help to make a complaint, they can ask a family member, friend, carer or advocate to help. We will request confirmation that the complainant is comfortable with a 3rd party dealing with the complaint on their behalf at onset. This may be given verbally or in written format.

5. Expression of Dissatisfaction (EOD)

5.1. There is a difference between an initial request for a service (e.g. reporting a repair) and expressing dissatisfaction with the service received (e.g. complaining that a reported repair has not been carried out).

5.2. An initial request for a service is not a complaint. If a tenant reports something for the first time we will deal with it as a service request rather than a complaint, these are not logged formally or given a complaint reference number.

5.3. Firstly we will ask tenants to discuss their concerns with a member of staff; it may be possible to sort things out quickly, If we cannot resolve the EOD within 5 working days, we will progress it to a complaint and at this stage log within the complaints process, detailed below.

6. Complaint Process

6.1. By informing AHS what has gone wrong, we can help put things right; at AHS we aim for a first-time fix approach.

6.2. To deal with complaints efficiently we have a 3-stage process. We will deal with a complaint at Stage 1 initially and pass through to Stage 2 and 3 if this is needed.

6.3. Complaints should be made within 2 months or as close as possible to the time the issue arose.

6.4. **Stage 1** - After making a complaint, your feedback will be passed to the relevant member of staff and/or manager to investigate and resolve. They will then contact you to discuss the problem / issues raised with you and ask you how you would like your problem / issue to be dealt with and resolved. Wherever possible, we will try to resolve your problem immediately. At the very least, we will aim to send you a full response within 10 working days.

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- 6.5. **Stage 2** - If you are unhappy with the response from Stage 1, you can then escalate your complaint to Stage 2 by contacting the Housing Manager to request that your complaint is reviewed. The Housing Manager will then look at how your problem / issue has been managed and decide whether there is more we could do. The Housing Manager's will send you a full response within 10 working days of you asking for your complaint to be reviewed.
- 6.6. **Stage 3** - If you are still dissatisfied following Stage 1 and Stage 2 you can ask us to arrange for a special appeals panel to review your case. The Panel will be heard by the Director and an independent member of staff, you will be offered the opportunity to meet with the panel personally, so that you can explain why you are still unhappy. The Panel will be arranged within 15 days of you notifying us that you wish to proceed to stage 3. A full response will be sent to you within 5 working days of the meeting.
- 6.7. The appeals panel will provide our final response to the concerns that you have raised.

7. Housing Ombudsman Service

- 7.1. The Housing Ombudsman Service normally investigate a complaint after an organisation's internal complaints process is exhausted, however the Housing Ombudsman Service has the discretion to take on a complaint if there is reason to believe a registered provider is causing unnecessary delay in handling it.
- 7.2. The Housing Ombudsman Service is contactable via:
- www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/
 - Tel: 0300 111 3000 (Monday – Friday 9:15 to 17:15)
 - info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
 - [Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London E14 9GE](#)

8. Compensation

- 8.1. Once a complaint has been investigated it may be appropriate to offer service recovery and/or discretionary compensation.
- 8.2. In response to the complaint, we will write to the customer informing them why we are offering compensation and what form this will take.
- 8.3. Customers will be made aware that acceptance of compensation offered, and any other action agreed, is acceptance of resolution of the issue.

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9. Unacceptable Behaviour / Unreasonable Complaints and/or Persistence

- 9.1. AHS believe that all tenants have a right to be heard, understood and respected, we also believe that staff have these same rights. AHS expect our tenants to be polite and well-mannered when contacting us. We do not tolerate aggressive or abusive (challenging) behaviour.
- 9.2. If tenants are unnecessarily aggressive or abusive, we reserve the right to refuse to deal with the complaint and will consider further action, where required, to protect our staff from unacceptable behaviour.
- 9.3. Where possible we will give the customer time to change their behaviour before implementing any contact restrictions.
- 9.4. A very small number of complaints may be unreasonable because of the way or frequency that complaints are raised with staff, or how complainants respond when they receive feedback about the complaint. These may include tenants who make frequent complaints which are not valid; who persistently make the same complaint; who request a complaint to be escalated when we have fully responded to all points; or are seeking an unreasonable or unrealistic outcome. In these circumstances we reserve the right to refuse to deal with the complaint.
- 9.5. Some complainants will not or cannot accept that AHS is unable to assist them further or provide a service or level of service other than that already provided. Some complainants may persist in disagreeing with the actions or decisions taken about their complaint or contact the office persistently about the same issue. In these circumstances we reserve the right to refuse to deal with complaints that are pursued unreasonably or in an aggressive or abusive manner.

10. Compliments

- 10.1. Compliments provide valuable positive customer feedback, enable AHS to develop services and raise staff moral and motivation. We share compliments across the Association to learn from best practice.

11. Recording

- 11.1. Administration with regards to the complaints will be handled by the designated staff lead. This includes ensuring all correspondence / information is stored within the complaint database file.
- 11.2. To minimise reoccurring complaints of the same nature, the staff lead will ensure that any lessons learnt are captured within the complaints database and shared within the Association as appropriate.

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11.3. AHS will report annually to Board on all aspects of complaints handling performance.

12. Policy Review

12.1. This policy will be reviewed periodically and every three years. It can also be updated at any time to incorporate suggested improvements, lessons learnt, best practice guidelines and changes to legislation.

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