

Rhondda Housing Association (RHA) Complaints Policy

RHA is committed to dealing fairly, openly, honestly and effectively with concerns or complaints that tenants and service users (customers) raise about our services. If we make mistakes, we will acknowledge this, apologise and, where possible, put things right. We are committed to learning from our mistakes and improving services and service delivery.

When to use this policy

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action or lack of action by RHA, or anyone working on our behalf. This policy applies when a customer requests a service and is not happy with our response, and sets out how we will deal with such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints made to RHA about the behaviour of other tenants unless we have not dealt with issues already brought to our attention. These are covered by our Anti Social Behaviour Policy.

Normally, we will only look at complaints raised about issues which have taken place within the last 6 months.

Informal complaints

Where possible, we want to deal with things straight away. For most complaints this means we will try to resolve them there and then. We will record these incidents and where appropriate, learn any lessons. If we can't help we will explain why and, if necessary, deal with it formally.

How to express concern or complain

Anyone can contact us in the following ways:

- Phone: 01443 424200
- E-mail: complaints@rhondda.org
- Our website: <http://www.rhondda.org/>
- In writing: 9 Compton Rd, Tonypandy, RCT, CF40 1BE
- Speak to any RHA employee

Copies of this policy are available from our staff, our website or our offices

Investigating complaints

Where we have been unable to resolve a complaint informally or it is of a serious nature then it will be dealt with under our formal process. During an investigation we will look at files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails and any other relevant information. In most cases we will talk to the people involved, look at our policies and any legal guidance. We will always try to discuss complaints in person as well as confirming our findings in writing.

Stage 1

We will acknowledge a complaint within 2 working days and aim to complete an investigation and respond in writing within 5 working days.

An investigation will be carried out by an appropriate Manager or Team Leader. They will contact the complainant in a way that suits them to make sure the complaint has been correctly understood and recorded and to discuss the problem in more detail before we respond.

Stage 2

Where a customer is dissatisfied with the outcome or handling of their Stage 1 complaint, they may ask for their complaint to be dealt with at the next stage. If this happens we will acknowledge the complaint has been escalated and, complete any further investigations and aim to respond in writing within a further 10 working days.

Stage 2 complaints will be investigated by an appropriate Director who will review the way we have dealt with the complaint. They will decide whether further investigation is needed.

Stage 3

Where a customer is dissatisfied with the way we dealt with a complaint at Stage 2, they can ask for us to escalate it to the final stage of our process. Once a complaint reaches Stage 3, we will acknowledge this and aim to respond in writing within a further 15 working days.

At Stage 3, customers will be invited to present their complaint to a panel made up of Board Members and at least one Senior Manager. They will review the case, consider the outcome of investigations and any resolutions that have been offered. The Panel will decide whether to uphold the complaint and, if appropriate, suggest appropriate resolution.

Outcome

We will provide clear information to customers when we have completed our investigations:

- If we get something wrong, we will always apologise and explain why.
- If we find there is a fault in the way we do things, we will explain how we will change things to stop it happening again.
- If we failed to provide a service we should have, we will provide it as quickly as possible
- If we did not meet a high enough standard we will aim to put that right.
- If customers lose out as a result of our mistake we will try to put them in the position they would have been in if we had got it right first time.
- If we need more time to complete our investigations and respond thoroughly, we will let you know as soon as possible and explain why

Ombudsman

If we are not able to resolve a complaint, customers may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent and can look into complaints where a customer believes that they:

- have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- have been disadvantaged personally or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact them by:

- Phone: 0845 601 0987
- E-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- Their website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- In writing: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pen-coed CF35 5LJ

Monitoring our performance

We will monitor the number of complaints we receive, how many we resolve and patterns or serious issues we identify through our complaints process. We will report on our performance to our Board on a quarterly basis.

Learning lessons

We take concerns and complaints seriously and learn from any mistakes we make. Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

What if I need help?

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact the Citizens Advice Bureau, Shelter, or any agencies who can help or support you.

Under 18s

If you are under the age of 18 and need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline (phone 080880 23456, www.meiccymru.org) or contact the Childrens Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

- Phone: 01792 765600
- Email: post@childcomwales.org.uk
- Their website: www.childcom.org.uk
- In writing: Oystermouth House, Phoenix Way Llansamlet Swansea SA7 9FS

Copies of this policy are available in other languages and as audio, large print etc. Please let us know if you require a copy in another format.