

HAIG HOUSING COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Definition of a Complaint

Haig defines a complaint as:

“An expression of serious dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about action or lack of action, the standard of a service or a policy.”

2. Policy

2.1 Haig sees complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve. We will deal with complaints as quickly, positively and fairly as possible. Wherever possible, straightforward complaints will be dealt with within 5 working days of being first reported to an employee or an Agent of the Trust.

2.2 For those complaints that cannot be resolved within 5 days because of complexity or severity, there are three formal stages in the Trust's Complaints Procedure, and they will be dealt with as follows:

Stage 1: Director of Corporate Services or Chief Executive (complaint to be dealt with within three weeks of receipt)

Stage 2: Trustees of Haig Housing Trust (subject to scheduled meetings of Trustees)

Stage 3: The Housing Ombudsman or, if complaint is outside the remit of the Ombudsman, independent mediation.

The Trust's aim wherever possible is to resolve complaints at Stage 1.

2.3 If a tenant needs help completing a Complaint Form it will be provided, and when possible the complaint will be discussed with the Complainant in person or by telephone.

2.4 Tenants will be given a copy of the policy leaflet and whenever changes are made a revised policy leaflet will be uploaded to the website and highlighted in the Tenant Newsletter.

2.5 Justified complaints will be used to improve services, and if something has gone wrong the Trust will apologise.

2.6 Compliments as well as complaints will be recorded to give a balanced picture of the Trust's performance.

3. Legal and Regulatory Duties

3.1 As a registered charity Haig will comply with Charity and Statutory Law.

3.2 Where the reason for a complaint is the subject of legal proceedings, the complaint will not be considered until those proceedings have been completed.

4. Fairness

Complaints will be dealt with impartially, objectively and professionally. Making a complaint will not adversely affect the way in which the Complainant or members of their family are treated by Haig.

5. Confidentiality

All complaints will be dealt with confidentially but in certain circumstances may have to be disclosed in order to carry out a full investigation.

6. The Result

6.1 If at any Stage it is found that things have gone wrong, the Trust will apologise and do what it can to rectify the matter equitably.

6.2 There is no automatic right to compensation, however when a complaint is upheld a reasonable compensatory payment may be made by the Director of Corporate Services if any of the following apply:

- Key services normally provided were absent for an exceptional period of time, and failure to deliver the service was Haig's responsibility.
- The Complainant incurred additional expense due to the failure of the Trust's staff to satisfactorily carry out their responsibilities.
- The Complainant incurred additional expense due to other failures of the Trust's services.
- Failure of a service caused demonstrable distress.
- The Complainant had to spend excessive time and trouble achieving a solution to a complaint which was partially or fully upheld.

6.3 If the Complainant is in rent arrears or has other charges that are due to the Trust, the Trust reserves the right to credit compensatory payments to the Complainant's rent account.

7. If the Complainant is not satisfied

7.1 The Complainant will be advised that they have the right to take the complaint to the next Stage if they are dissatisfied with the way in which the Trust has dealt with their complaint.

7.2 If the Complainant wishes to take their complaint to Stage 2 they will be required to do so in writing within 4 weeks of the date of the decision by the Director of Corporate Services. If requested, help may be given to write the Stage 2 complaint.

7.3 A Stage 2 complaint to Trustees will be considered at the next meeting of the Nomination & Remuneration Committee or at a meeting with one or more Trustees appointed by the Chairman of Trustees. Such meetings are held either in Morden or in Central London and the Complainant will be given the opportunity of presenting their complaint in person.

They may be accompanied at the meeting by one other person and they may ask that person to speak on their behalf if they wish. Legal representation will not be agreed.

If for a good reason such as disability the Complainant is unable to attend the meeting, arrangements may be made for the meeting to be held nearer their home. If this is not possible the panel of Trustees will consider the Stage 2 complaint in the Complainant's absence.

7.4 The Complainant has the right to take the complaint to Stage 3, the Housing Ombudsman, if they are not satisfied with the Stage 2 decision.