



Complaints Handling Procedure

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Knowes housing Association is committed to providing high-quality customer services.

We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also provides information about how we handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about our standard of service, or the actions or lack of action, from our staff, or those acting on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- ✚ failure or refusal to provide a service
- ✚ inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- ✚ delays in responding to enquiries or requests
- ✚ unfairness, bias or prejudice in service delivery

- ✚ lack of provision, or the provision of misleading, unsuitable or incorrect advice or information
- ✚ a repair that has not been carried out properly or in an agreed timeframe
- ✚ dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual
- ✚ failure to properly apply the law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- ✚ failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- ✚ conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contactor (**except** where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
- ✚ disagreement with a decision (**except** when there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the section).

Your complaint may involve more than one of Knowes Housing Association's services or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- ✚ a routine first-time request for a service
- ✚ a request for compensation only
- ✚ issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process)
- ✚ disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector.
- ✚ a request for information under the data protection or freedom of information (Scotland) acts
- ✚ a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
- ✚ a concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)
- ✚ a concern about a child or an adult's safety
- ✚ an attempt to re-open a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- ✚ abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our unacceptable behaviour policy; or

- ✚ concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (**except** where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf.)

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

Who can complain?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our service can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate, or adviser). If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent. Please also read the section on **Getting help to make your complaint** below.

How to make a complaint

You can complain in person at our office, by phone, in writing, by email to info@knowes.org or via our website <https://knowes.org/make-a-complaint-to-Knowes-HA/>

It is easier for us to address complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff in the department you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve the issue.

When complaining, please tell us:

- your full name and contact details
- as much information as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong; and
- what outcome you are seeking.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- ✚ the event you want to complain about; or
- ✚ finding out that you have a reason to complain.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What happens when I have a complaint?

Your complaint will be passed to the relevant department. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

Stage 1: Frontline Response

1. We aim to respond to complaints quickly (where possible, when you first tell us about the issue). This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem.
2. We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
3. If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next.

4. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to Stage 2. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2 either:
 - Within six months of the event, you want to claim about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
 - Within two months of receiving your Stage 1 response (if this is later).
5. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a Stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

Stage 2: Investigation

1. Stage 2 applies to complaints that remain unresolved after Stage 1, require investigation from the outset, or involve a staff member. If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at Stage 1, you can ask us to handle it at Stage 2 instead.
2. When using Stage 2 we will:
 - acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
 - confirm our understanding of the complaint, we will investigate and what outcome you are looking for
 - try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation); and
 - where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we inform you of the new timeframe and provide progress updates.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

1. After we have given you our final decision, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to further investigate.
2. There are some complaints about housing that have an alternative route for independent review. We will tell you how to seek independent review when we give you our final response to your complaint.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

The SPSO is the independent Ombudsman for public service complaints in Scotland, and they act impartially. Please note they are not an advocacy or support service (though other organisations can provide that support). You can contact the SPSO to review your complaint if:

- You have gone all the way through Knowes Housing Association's complaints handling procedure
- It is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and
- The matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

It's best to use the SPSO's complaint form if possible. You can find this on their website at **www.spsso.org.uk** where you can fill it in online or print it off to complete. You can phone their freephone helpline number on **0800 377 7330** and they will send you one.

More information can be found here:
<https://www.spsso.org.uk/how-to-complain-about-public-service>

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint. See the section **Getting help to make your complaint**.

The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO

Bridgeside House 99

McDonald Road

Edinburgh, EH7 4NS

(If you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment first)

Freephone: **0800 377 7330**

Online: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

Factored Owners

If you are a **factored owner** and you have gone all the way through Knowes Housing Association's complaints handling procedure, but you remain dissatisfied about the outcome, you can ask the First-Tier Tribunal to look at your complaint.

First-Tier Tribunal

The First Tier Tribunal's contact details are:

Housing and Property Chamber
First-tier Tribunal for Scotland
Glasgow Tribunals Centre
20 York Street
Glasgow
G2 8GT

Telephone: 0141 302 5900

<https://housingandpropertychamber.scot/contact-us>

Reporting a significant performance failure to the Scottish Housing Regulator

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) can consider issues raised with them about 'significant performance failures'. A significant performance failure is defined by the SHR as something that a landlord does or fails to do that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, and which the landlord has not resolved. This is something that is a systemic problem that does, or could, affect all of a landlord's tenants. If you are affected by a problem like this, you should first report it to us. If you have told us about it but we have not resolved it, you can report it directly to the SHR.

A complaint between an individual tenant and a landlord is not a significant performance failure. Significant performance failures are not, therefore, dealt with through this complaints handling procedure. You can ask us for more information about significant performance failures. The SHR also has more information on their website: www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from representatives of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance:

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: 0131 510 9410

Website www.siaa.org.uk

You can find out about advisers in your area through Citizens Advice Scotland:

Citizens Advice Scotland Website:

www.cas.org.uk

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities' duties, we will always make sure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as a large font, or Braille, please tell us in person, contact 01389 877752, email us at info@knowes.org.

Our Contact Details

Knowes Housing
Association
10 Field Road
Faifley
Clydebank
G81 5BX

Tel: 01389 877752

Email: info@knowes.org

Website: www.knowes.org

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, audio or Braille, please tell us in person, contact us on 01389 877 752, or email us at info@knowes.org.

Quick Guide to our Complaints Procedure

Complaints Received

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email or in writing. We have a two-stage complaints procedure. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage 1 – Frontline Response

For issues that are straightforward and simple, requiring little or no investigation. An 'on-the-spot' apology, explanation, or other action will be provided to put the matter right.

We will aim to resolve your complaint or provide a response in **five working days** or less (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

These complaints can be addressed by any member of staff, or alternatively referred to the appropriate point for frontline response. You will receive a response by email, telephone, letter or face-to-face. We will provide more information on how to escalate your complaint to stage 2.

Stage 2 – Investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1, if the customer refuses to engage at the frontline or if the complaint is complex, serious or 'high-risk'.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days**.

We will confirm the points of complaint to be investigated and what you want to achieve (where these are already clear, we will confirm them in the acknowledgement).

We will investigate the complaint and give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be provided within **20 working days** *unless* there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman or First Tier Tribunal

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it. The SPSO will assess whether there is evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the service provider.

Please note that if you are a factored owner and you remain dissatisfied, you will need to contact the First-Tier Tribunal.

There are some complaints about housing that have an alternative route for independent review. We will tell you how to seek independent review when we give you our final response on your complaint.

Reporting, Recording and Learning

Action is taken to improve services on the basis of complaint findings, where appropriate.

We record details of all complaints, the outcome and any action taken, and use this data to analyse themes and trends.

Senior management have an active interest in complaints and use complaints data and analysis to improve services.

Learning is shared throughout the organisation.



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