

Customer Complaints Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Our aim is to provide the best possible service to our tenants and all other individuals or organisations that come into contact with the association. We recognise that there may be occasions when we fall short of the standards we have set ourselves, and that improvements come from recognising and addressing these. Our standards of service are set out in the leaflet Customer Care Charter (attached to this policy).

This document details our policy and procedures on dealing with the complaints. We have a clear process for complaints to be made and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

This policy applies to individuals or organisations who:

- receive services from the Association
- are potential recipients of services from the Association
- are providers of services to the Association
- are otherwise affected by the activities of the Association

In this policy the term 'customers' or 'complainants' is used to describe all of the above groups, including tenants.

This policy is in accordance with good practice guidance from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations contained within 'Raising Standards in Housing on Customer Complaints'.

Aim of Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure there is an appropriate process in place for receiving and responding to complaints within set timescales and processes.
- Ensure that complaints are built into monitoring frameworks and inform service development and delivery.

The Complaints Procedure

Stage One – Informal Complaint

In this informal stage, customers will be advised to raise complaints or concerns directly through informal and immediate contact with a relevant member of staff. This may result in the situation being resolved speedily and

to the satisfaction of the customer, either through receiving an explanation for the circumstances leading to the complaint or a satisfactory apology.

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Stage Two – Formal Complaint

Ideally, most complaints should be resolved through informal contact at Stage one. If Stage one does not resolve the issue, or if customers wish to make a formal complaint in the first instance, then complaints will be dealt with through a more formal procedure.

Customers can make a complaint in person, over the telephone or in writing. Equal weight will be given to verbal and written complaints. Complaints may be made by a third person, representing the complainant. Where appropriate, customers will be directed towards organisations that can give them assistance with making a complaint or advocate on their behalf.

Complaints will be:

- recorded using a standard format
- passed on to a senior staff member in the relevant department
- responded to within 5 working days

Complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days. This letter will state the name of the member of staff dealing with the complaint, the process for dealing with complaints and the date by which they can expect a response. The complaint will be treated with confidentiality.

The Association will aim to provide a response to the complaint within 2 working weeks. Where this is not possible, the complainant will be contacted within 2 working weeks and informed of the delay and any circumstances causing a delay.

As part of its procurement policy, the Association will ensure that the organisations it contracts with offer a high level of service.

Where the relevant senior staff member is the subject of the complaint, it will be passed on to the Director of the Association or, if this is inappropriate, a designated representative of the Management Committee.

Customers will be informed that, if they are not satisfied with the outcome, there is an appeals mechanism in place. Customers will be required to make an appeal within four working weeks of receiving a final response at Stage 2.

Customers are advised that ACHA has a Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Complainants. This policy sets out the Associations approach to the relatively few complainants whose actions or behaviour is considered unacceptable

Stage 3 – Appeals Process

If the complaint has not been resolved to the customer's satisfaction during Stage 2, there is an appeals process in place. People who feel that their complaint has not been resolved can put this forward to a panel comprising of one of the Association's Area Committees. The Area Committee should represent a different locality from that lived in by the person making the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint may remain anonymous at this stage if they wish.

Written responses acknowledging the request for an appeal will be sent out within 3 working days. The target for having the hearing will be within 6 weeks of the request for an appeal. The complainant will be informed of this and updated should there be a delay. Complainants will be made aware of the outcome of an appeal within 3 working days of the hearing taking place.

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied they will be advised to contact the Housing Association Ombudsman.

Service Standards

- All complaints will be recorded using a standard form (attached).
- All complaints will be treated in confidence.
- Complainants will be advised of where they can access independent support to make a complaint.
- The Complaints process will be implemented in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policies.

Redress

Where complaints are found to be justified redress may be offered. Redress will be appropriate to the complaint. Examples of redress include an apology, action to address a particular issue, or financial compensation. The type of redress will restore complainants, if possible to the position they would have been in, had there been no problem. Where possible, the customer will be provided with an explanation of the action that will be taken to prevent a recurrence.

Directors and Managers are designated members of staff with the authority to provide redress through financial or other compensation.

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Monitoring Complaints

ACHA's Senior Management Team will have responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the complaints procedure, ensuring that complaints are being recorded and dealt with within set timescales.

All complaints will be recorded and reported to the Management Committee on a quarterly basis, reporting on:

- the number of complaints received
- type of complaint
- stage of complaint
- outcome of complaints

Monitoring will be used to develop improvements in service so that particular complaints do not recur.

Access to the Complaints Procedure

This policy, the Customer Care Charter and standard Complaints Form will be available from all ACHA offices and are also available on the ACHA website (www.acha.co.uk).

Equal Opportunities

Argyll Community Housing Association is committed to equality of opportunity. All complainants will receive the same high quality of service irrespective of race, gender, sexual or political orientation, religious belief, disability, age or other personal attribute. Services will be provided in the way which best meets the individual needs of the complainant, for example through the provision of interpretation or signing services, availability of large print information, and information in minority languages. Every area of this policy will be undertaken with regard to equality of opportunity, and will comply with the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy which is available at all ACHA offices.

Review

This policy will be reviewed one year after transfer and thereafter at least every three years. In accordance with our Tenant Involvement Strategy we

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Approved – Management Committee – 7 December 2006

Approved – Trade Unions – 23 March 2007

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will consult with tenants on the review of our Complaints Policy and Procedure and our Customer Care Charter.

G McInnes 28-11-06



Complaints Form - CONFIDENTIAL

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

Name of complainant:	
Address of complainant: please include postcode:	
Contact telephone number:	
Has the complaint been made: please tick one	in person - by telephone - in writing -
Has the complaint been made on behalf of another person? if yes, please detail	Yes / No
Date and time complaint received by ACHA:	
Deadline for written acknowledgment of receipt of this complaint :	(within 5 days from above date)
Nature of complaint: (please include as much detail as possible – dates, times, names, places etc)	
Name of ACHA staff member recording this complaint:	
Name of ACHA staff member who will deal with complaint :	
<i>I confirm that I have given the complainant a copy of ACHA's Complaints Policy and advised them of the procedures</i> ACHA staff signature

<i>contained there in:</i> please tick one	Handed to complainant - Posted to complainant -
Date and time passed to senior staff member for action:	

Telephone Calls

- We will answer promptly
- We will identify ourselves
- We will call you back within 24 hours, if the member of staff you require is unavailable or if we cannot answer your enquiry immediately

Letters

- We aim to provide a reply within 10 working days
- Our reply will be accurate and in plain English
- Our reply will include the name and telephone number of the sender

Meetings with Staff

- We would encourage tenants to make appointments to talk to senior members of staff
- We will provide you with written confirmation of what was discussed and any follow-up action to be taken.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Argyll Community Housing Association is committed to providing a high quality, professional and caring service to everyone. This service will be provided to everyone without discrimination of any kind.

This leaflet is available in other formats such as large print, audio cassette, braille and community languages – please ask your local ACHA office.



Customer Care Charter

Argyll Community Housing Association aims to deliver a high quality and caring service to its tenants and others in the community.

This Charter sets out the standards of service you can expect when contacting your local ACHA office and reflects our commitment to providing high quality services focussed on your individual needs.

ACHA's Customer Care Charter

ACHA staff and Management Committee are committed to providing a high quality service which is fair, open, accessible and responsive to all customers.

By customers, we mean not only tenants but also everyone who uses, or seeks to use, our services.

Your Rights

We believe you have the right to:

- be treated courteously and with respect
- clear and correct information
- services delivered to agreed standards
- be advised of our obligations to you
- equality of access to services
- have your confidentiality respected
- quick and effective redress via our Complaints Procedure if you are unhappy about our services

Our Standards

In order to provide and maintain services of the highest standard we will:

- Develop performance targets for all aspects of the service in consultation with our customers
- Regularly review our standards, taking into account the views and needs of our customers
- Monitor and report on our performance against agreed targets

Our Staff

In providing our service to you our staff will:

- Behave professionally and courteously at all times
- Be well informed and trained in their duties
- Identify themselves at all times
- Aim to minimise queuing by seeing you within 5 minutes of your arrival

Our Offices

- Will be convenient, accessible and welcoming
- Will be easily accessible by people with disabilities
- Will provide a full range of up-to-date information leaflets
- Will have facilities to ensure interviews are held in private

Our Services

- We shall ensure local access to services wherever possible
- We shall try to ensure that services we deliver are effective, efficient and provide good value for money
- We shall ensure that information about all our services and your rights is widely available
- We shall maintain an emergency out of hours service
- We shall offer you an appointment with a senior member of staff if you are dissatisfied with, or wish further information on our services