

How we deal with complaints, comments and compliments

Hexagon Housing Association welcomes feedback on our services, whether it is a comment, compliment or a complaint.

Comments and compliments

Comments about the service are where you want us to record your experience but where you are not expecting us to carry out follow up action on your particular case. Our Customer Services staff will record these and pass them onto the relevant manager. Compliments are where you want to praise the staff who delivered a service particularly well; these will be recorded by Customer Services and passed on to the relevant manager.

Complaints

We aim to provide a good service to all our residents and applicants for our housing and others who come into contact with our services. We believe our staff and contractors do a good job, but realise there will be times when things go wrong. If you believe we have done something wrong, you can make a complaint which we will investigate and try to settle as quickly as possible.

We adopt the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint as follows;

A complaint shall be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents

Who can complain?

- Any resident or group of residents, whether leaseholders, or tenants
- The representatives of residents (with written consent).
- In addition we will consider complaints as part of our internal procedure from individual or organisation who has used our service, and applicants for housing. However, they will not be able to have their complaints considered by the Housing Ombudsman.

Neighbours and other members of the public will not be able to use the complaints procedure, but we will respond to correspondence and other contacts as appropriate for a socially responsible organisation.

Using the Complaints Procedure

Our Complaints Procedure cannot consider if;

- The issue is, or has been, subject to legal proceedings
- Liability issue that is subject to an insurance claim (although any other elements of the complaint should still be considered through the complaints procedure)

- The complaint has not been raised within a reasonable time frame
- The complaint has been considered already
- The complaint is being pursued in an unreasonable manner
- The complaint is regarding a policy decision properly arrived at.

Anti-social behaviour

We handle complaints about Anti-Social Behaviour in a different way. We have a separate Anti-social behaviour policy. Please report complaints about Anti-social behaviour to Customer Services.

Making your Complaint

You can make your complaint to any Hexagon staff member. You may telephone, email, write to us, speak to us in person or use the form on our website to report your complaint and all such contacts are logged and monitored. If you telephone, explain your complaint to Customer Services who will log it on our IT system and refer it to the correct team. You need to explain exactly what your complaint is so we can start to look into it. We have a form for this purpose, attached to this leaflet, but you can also write a letter, email us, or phone us, but however you do it, it helps us investigate the complaint if you include the details we ask for on the form.

However, you tell us about your complaint, we will try to sort it out at the first attempt. If we cannot sort out the matter straight away, we will acknowledge your complaint and tell you who is dealing with it within 5 working days of receiving it.

Stages of complaints procedure

Our procedure has several stages and if you are not satisfied with our resolution the first time, you can take it to the next stage. All complaints are logged on our IT system so we can see who is dealing with it and the progress of your complaint.

For all formal complaints (Stage 1 and above) a complaints officer will be identified to investigate and respond to the complainant. In most cases the complaints officer would be the service manager or if stage 2. Where the complaint covers more than one team the manager identified to coordinate the response will act as complaints officer and have the appropriate authority to do so

At each of the formal stages it is normally expected that the complainant would have the opportunity to speak to the Complaints Officer directly if they wish to do so.

Informal resolution Our front-line staff (such as Customer Services advisors, housing officers, and surveyors) will try to resolve your complaint quickly and informally. We log and monitor all complaints and will give you a reference number on request so that you can be sure we have a record of your complaint. If you do send us a written complaint, we will send a written response. This is not a formal stage and complaints will be escalated directly to Stage 1 if the resident request this.

Stage 1 If the response you receive from our front-line staff does not resolve the problem, or you wish to go directly to stage 1 you can escalate your complaint.

Normally, the complaints officer allocated will be the Manager of the service about which you are complaining. They will deal with your complaint. It may be necessary to ask you to supply further information on the telephone or in an interview at our office or in your home.

If your complaint is about the behaviour of an individual, we will ensure that this person is not involved in any investigation of or judgement on your complaint.

Complaints at this stage will normally be responded to within working 10 days, though if the matter is complex, we may extend this by a further 10 working days. We will notify you if extension is required.

Stage 2 If you feel the result is unsatisfactory, you will be able to ask the service Director to the staff member who dealt with the complaint at Stage 1 to try to resolve the matter. The Director will act as complaints officer. We would normally expect you to do this within 30 days of receiving a Stage 1 response. You should tell us why you are not satisfied. You should receive a written response within 20 working days. However, if the matter is complex this may be extended by a further working 20 days.

Stage 3 This stage is optional. If you are dissatisfied with the response you receive at stage 2 you can directly escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. However, if you wish to, up to 30 days from receiving your stage 2 response you have the option of having your complaint heard by a Board Panel. This will not restrict your right to go to the Housing Ombudsman if you are ultimately still dissatisfied. We will aim to complete this stage 3 within 28 days of receiving your request.

Optional Stage 3 review

This is not another investigation. It is a review of how your complaint was dealt with at Stage 2. The review panel comprises two Board Members, one of whom will be a Hexagon tenant, and a Director. We would aim for one of the Board members at least to be a resident. None of the panel will have been involved in the complaint. The review panels meet in the evenings at set dates at least once a month. You may wish to come to the meeting, but you do not have to. We will pay reasonable travel and child-care expenses for you to attend the meeting. You will be notified at the time of referring your complaint to Stage 3 when the meeting date is.

At the meeting, you will be invited to state your case and you may bring a friend with you, but not a legal representative. You will be able to ask questions of the manager (who will also be present) and you should expect to be asked questions by the panel members and by the manager.

The decision of the review panel hearing the complaint will be reported to you within 10 working days.

Complaints from residents of co-operatives and Supported Housing managing agents

If you live in a property managed by an agency such as a co-operative rather than Hexagon directly, you should first contact the agency about your complaint so they have the chance to investigate and if necessary put things right first. (If you are not sure who manages your property, please ask us). The only exception to this would be where the complaint relates directly to Hexagon or a member of its staff. In this case it would be treated as a normal complaint to Hexagon. Once the complaint has been considered under the complaint policy of the managing agent of co-operative it will join Hexagon's complaints procedure at stage 2. Residents of Cooperatives will not have the option of stage 3 as they will have already had the opportunity to make their case to the management committee of their own Cooperative.

Complaints from groups of residents

If a group of Hexagon residents wants to complain about the same issue, you can organise a petition and we will consider your complaint in a very similar way to that used for individual complaints.

How we learn from your complaints to help us improve our services

Hexagon continuously analyses the reasons for complaints, comments, and compliments. We identify lessons we can learn from positive feedback and from individual complaints or a number of complaints and as a result make changes to the way we deliver our services.

We will on an annual basis.

Review and publish our learning on complaints, including sharing this information with residents via our website and Annual Report

We will aim to continuously improve our handling of complaint via surveying residents on their experience of making a complaint and resolution.

Monitoring and reporting on complaints

We monitor all complaints from the initial stage onwards in the same way and report in the Annual Residents' Report how many complaints we have received in different areas of the service, how many were responded to within our target time and what the outcomes were. Complaints performance is also discussed every three months by our Residents' Performance Review Group.

We will want to ensure our complaints process is fair. To do this we will monitor complaints by diversity strand. As part of this residents may be asked to provide additional information. Residents are free to decline if they do not wish to do this.

Variations to the procedure

Hexagon reserves the right to omit stages in the procedure or refer a case for mediation or arbitration if we believe it will resolve the problem more efficiently. We may also refer to earlier stages new issues raised by a complainant which we have not had the opportunity to properly investigate. We also reserve the right to vary the procedure to be able to manage complaints from serial or vexatious complainants. Hexagon also reserves the right to seek advice from an external complaint resolution expert.

Referral of your complaint to a local “Designated person”

Since 1 April 2013, you can ask an independent “designated person” in your local area to help resolve your complaint. These are local councillors and Members of Parliament. You can ask them for help at any stage. We can supply details of how to contact them. If a designated person contacts us about your complaint, we will work with them to try to resolve your complaint. The designated person may refer your complaint to the Ombudsman (see next section) but they can only do this if you have exhausted our internal procedure.

Ombudsman Service

If we have not resolved your complaint, you may take the case to the Housing Ombudsman Service after 8 weeks has elapsed, (but within 6 months) after the end of our internal procedure, This service is completely independent of the Association and is free to tenants.

(Alternatively, you may want to approach a designated person for help to try to resolve the complaint and you can do this straight away - see also previous section.) The address of the Ombudsman is: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ. Telephone No: 020 7421 3800, Fax No: 020 7831 1942, Locall: 0845 7125 973, Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk. You should be aware that the Ombudsman may decide to refer your case to a designated person to see if they can resolve it locally. They may also decline to investigate it if they judge any failure in service does not have a serious adverse effect on the complainant.

Please do use our feedback mechanisms. Feedback really helps us improve the service.

COMPLAINTS FORM

Please fill in all the sections of the form in as much detail as possible. Our Customer Services staff or other members of staff can help you complete the form. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary and enclose any relevant documents, which you think would help the investigation. Please return this form via email to complaints@hexagon.org.uk or in an envelope marked "COMPLAINT" to Customer Services, Hexagon Housing Association, 130-136 Sydenham Road, London SE26 5JY

Your name

Your address

Telephone: Home

Mobile

Email

What is your complaint about? Please provide the details here.

If this is not the first time you have reported the problem to Hexagon, who did you report it to (give name if possible)?

How would you like the matter resolved?

Please sign here

Date

To ensure everyone gets a fair response, we ask you the following:

- Are you: Male Female

- Age of Complainant:
 - Under 24 years
 - 25-34 years
 - 35-44 years
 - 45-54 years
 - 55-59 years
 - 60+

- Ethnic origin of complainant - tick one box

White:

- British
- Irish
- Other

Mixed:

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Other

Asian or Asian British:

Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Other

Black or Black British:
Caribbean
African
Other

Chinese:

Gypsy/Romany/Irish:

Other ethnic group:

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? Yes No