

Objectives

To improve the quality of the Tenants experience.

To ensure that all complaints and suggestions are promptly addressed, resolved and shared within the agreed timescales to ensure that lessons are learned and that the learning improves service quality and delivery.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by our organisation, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual or group of tenants.

All information received relating to dissatisfaction is treated as a complaint whether the specific word 'complaint' is used or not.

What is a service request?

A service request is a request LRHS receives from a tenant requesting action to be taken to put something right. This might include:

- A request for a repair to be undertaken
- A complaint regarding anti-social behaviour or noise disturbance
- Contact regarding a maintenance technician or contractor not arriving within agreed timescales

All service requests will be dealt with within 2 working days. It is acknowledged that at any time a service request may, at any point, be raised as a complaint.

Our Policy

- LRHS take complaints and/or dissatisfaction of our service seriously. We will aim to put things right that have gone wrong and learn lessons to avoid the problem happening again.
- LRHS will comply with legislation, national guidelines, regulation and best practice when managing complaints, dissatisfaction and suggestions. A systematic approach will be taken with all aspects of complaints, dissatisfaction and suggestions.
- LRHS will ensure that its complaints process is fair and transparent and does not discriminate directly or indirectly because of the following:
 - Age
 - Being or becoming a transsexual/transgender person
 - Being married or in a civil partnership
 - Being pregnant or on maternity leave
 - Disability
 - Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
 - Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

The complainant will feel free to complain without fear of reprisal and will be treated with courtesy, respect and compassion.

- Staff will undertake training on how to manage complaints in line with their roles and responsibilities
- A full record will be held of all complaints received regardless of the level of seriousness and means of communication. This approach allows an open and transparent culture around raising concerns in the earliest stage to allow resolution. A record of the complaint will also be held by the Property Services Manager and will be reported in line with contractual or regulatory requirements if applicable.
- LRHS understand that a person may be unable or not want to make a complaint themselves. LRHS accept complaints from a representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. LRHS also take complaints from a friend, a relative or an advocate, if the complainant has given their consent to complain on their behalf.
- The complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and the Complaint Handling Code, will be publicised on the landlord's website and included within the tenant handbook to ensure residents know how to access and use the complaints process. www.rustingtonhall.co.uk

What is not considered under LRHS complaints procedure

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

- A routine, first time request for a service for example reporting a problem that needs to be repaired or initial action on anti-social behaviour
- Complaints that are already under a current Ombudsman investigation or cases on which the Ombudsman has previously made a decision
- Complaints that involved legal proceedings, court or tribunal action by or against the Society where documentation has been filed at the Court
- An attempt to re-open a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint re-considered where we have already given our final decision following a Stage 2 investigation
- A complaint where it is more than 12 months since the issue or circumstance has occurred (see further information under 'Time limits for submitting a complaint')
- An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to.

If we feel that your complaint does not fall under our complaints procedure you will be informed of this in writing together with an explanation.

All tenants have the right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service at any time throughout the complaint process. The Housing Ombudsman contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Time limits for submitting a complaint

Complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the incident or concern arising. The time limit, however, can be waived if:

- It is still practical and possible to investigate the complaint (the records still exist, and the individuals concerned are still available to be questioned etc) and
- The complainant can demonstrate reasonable cause for delay in making the complaint. It is at the discretion of the Property Services Manager if the time limit can be set aside.

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint:

- In writing to our registered address: Rustington Hall, Station Road, Rustington, West Sussex, BN16 3AY
- By email to: estates@lrhs.co.uk
- By telephone: 01903 787222
- Information about our policy: www.rustingtonhall.co.uk

Procedure

Stage 1 Formal complaint investigation

For all complaints regarding our Property Management Service are managed, in the first instance, by our Property Services Manager, or deputy if it is felt there is a conflict of interest. You will be kept informed throughout the complaint investigation and notified of the outcome as soon as it is known.

Step 1:

Formal acknowledgement of the complaint received will be sent within 10 working days to the complainant. The acknowledgement will include:

- An invitation to meet and discuss the complaint
- The name of the person who will be investigating the complaint.
- How the investigation will be handled.
- A time limit for the investigation to be concluded. This should be within 10 days of the complaint being acknowledged. However, some complex cases there may be need for an extension of time which may take longer, and the complainant will be made aware and kept informed of this of the expected timescale of the reasons explained. You will be issued contact details again for the Ombudsman at this point.
- Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.

- If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.
- Requests for stage 2 will be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within 5 working days of the escalation request being received.

Step 2:

Requests for stage 2 will be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within 5 working days of the escalation request being received.

Following a full investigation, a response letter will be sent within 20 working days of the stage 2 complaint being acknowledged, and this will include the following:

- A summary of the issue from the complainant's point of view
- Details of the evidence and sources consulted in order to investigate the issue fully and fairly
- A presentation of the findings for each issue clearly and concisely described
- A conclusion, stating clearly whether the issue is 'upheld', 'partially upheld' or 'not upheld', unless it is ineligible, in which case the reason for this will be given, for example out of time or out of jurisdiction
- An explanation of the outcome and whether any remedial action or learning points arise from the investigation of that issue
- An apology where the complaint is upheld and shortcoming or failings have been found
- The complainant's right if not satisfied with the outcome to move to Stage 2
- A signature from the responsible individual

Step 3

The complaint will be closed once confirmation has been received that there is satisfaction with the outcome. In the event of dissatisfaction, LRHS will support the complainant to access further support.

Stage 2 Formal Complaint Investigation

If you are not satisfied with the response at Stage 1, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by our CEO, or a member of our Board of Trustees depending on whether there is a conflict of interest at Stage 2 of our process. In most cases, we will agree to look again at our decision and to consider any additional information provided. In certain cases, we may not be able to do this and, if so, we will explain why. If we decide an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint, the complainant will be made aware and kept informed of this of the expected timescale of the reasons explained. You will be issued contact details again for the Ombudsman at this point.

The Stage 2 formal complaint review is not a repeat of the full investigation. The actions and decisions taken at Stage 1 will be examined to check if they were thorough, reasonable and fair. We aim to give you our decision on the outcome of the view of your complaint within twenty working days.

The outcome of the Stage 2 formal complaint review represents the end of our internal complaint process. We hope we will have been able to resolve your complaint. If this is not the case, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service (contact details at the end of the document) to review our responses to you.

We will always explain the options to you at the end of our internal complaint process.

Please remember you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any stage for guidance about making a complaint about your landlord.

Compensation

Compensation payments may be paid at the discretion of the Property Services Manager, CEO or member of the Board of Trustees.

Compensation payments may be offered where:

- We have failed to deliver a service to the advertised standard
- In recognition of the time and trouble taken by the customer to log the complaint
- In recognition of the distress and inconvenience experience by the customer
- To reflect where a customer has suffered a loss as a result of a service failure by us

We do not pay compensation for loss of earnings

We will not make compensation payments which are:

- The fault of a third party such as a utility company (for example electricity, water or gas)
- Beyond our control (for example severe weather) or where we have told customers in advance a service or function will not be available
- Subject to tribunal or legal proceedings

Damage claims

Claims for damage to your personal belongings should be claimed under your home contents insurance policy. We advise our tenants to insure their home contents.

We always aim to resolve a complaint ourselves within our internal process. We recognise sometimes this is not possible. At the end of the internal process, a customer may choose to ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to investigate their complaint if they remain dissatisfied.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman service is set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with it. The service is free, independent and impartial. It can advise customers at any stage of the complaint process, even if you are unsure about whether to complain.

The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted;

Telephone: 0330 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Address: PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk