

SUBJECT:	APPROVAL DATE:	July 2010
COMPLAINTS & APPEALS	EFFECTIVE DATE:	July 2010
	REVIEW DATE:	July 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

For ease of reading this Policy is written with “we” referring to THA and “you” referring to the complainant usually but not always a tenant.

THA recognises that many of the decisions we make can have a real impact on the lives of our tenants, leaseholders and applicants for our housing. We try to provide a good and fair service but mistakes can happen. When mistakes are made we want to know about it and we have this procedure to enable you to get any grievances remedied. The aims of our complaints policy and procedure are as follows:

- Complaints are dealt with promptly, efficiently, courteously and fairly
- The complainant is kept informed of the progress of the complaint
- Complaints are recorded and monitored with the ultimate aim of improving services
- Progress chasing methods are incorporated into complaints procedures to ensure that complaints are dealt with within a reasonable period of time.
- Complaints are seen in a positive light as an opportunity not only to improve our relations with tenants but also to improve efficiency by providing, where possible, a constructive and effective response.

The Association has a Tenants Service Charter which reinforces our commitment to maintaining and where possible improving our reputation for service. We will continue to consult tenants about our service and seek further improvements. Complaints help to provide us with valuable information about how we can improve our service.

A summary of this Policy and Procedure is in the Tenants Handbook Section 15 “What happens when things go wrong?”

2. WHO CAN COMPLAIN?

Our Complaints and Appeals procedure is available to everyone who receives or requests a service from THA and people acting on their behalf. This includes:

- Tenants
- Leaseholders
- Applicants for housing
- Neighbours of THA properties
- Councillors and MPs
- Solicitors
- Citizens Advice Bureau and other similar advocacy agencies.

3. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

You can complain about any act or omission by THA that has disadvantaged you. Any level of dissatisfaction is treated as a complaint. This may include:

- dissatisfaction with our policy or practice
- a failure by us to meet our legal duty as a landlord
- dissatisfaction with the way THA has reached a decision with the actions taken in implementing that decision
- staff or contractor attitudes and complaints against individual staff or contractors
- delay in responding to, or complaints about our administrative process
- failure to provide a service
- failure to achieve standards, or quality of service.

We will not treat the following as a complaint:

- requests for a service, like the first report of a repair
- requests for information or explanation of THA policy or practice

4. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

To make a complaint, please contact either your Scheme Manager, local Caretaker or a member of Head Office staff. They will try to sort out the problem. In very serious cases (for example when you are making a complaint against a member of staff) we will not expect you to talk to local staff first. In these cases you may ask us to deal with your complaint straight away.

If you wish to complain you can do so in a way that suits you, by phone, email or writing a letter.

Anonymous complaints will be treated in the same way as any other complaint subject to the constraints imposed by the complaint being anonymous.

Please note that if you have difficulty writing you should contact us so that we can arrange assistance for you in submitting your complaint.

5. HOW COMPLAINTS OR APPEALS ARE DEALT WITH

The section on The Complaints Procedure explains the stages of making a complaint. If we fail to respond to you within the response times stated, then you have the right to go to the next stage of the procedure.

Complaints and appeals are treated seriously. All complaints are recorded centrally and monitored by THA's Housing Management & Maintenance Committee. An annual report on complaints throughout the year is also provided and any policy changes arising from complaints received would be highlighted in the Housing Services Director's Annual Report.

In certain circumstances, THA's Management Board will consider compensating tenants. This is dealt with under our separate Compensation Policy.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

All complaints and appeals are treated in the strictest confidence. If you wish, we will be pleased to provide you with a confidential interview at your home or at one of our offices.

7. IF YOU ARE STILL DISSATISFIED

We want to solve any problems that you have as quickly as possible. We would hope that you contact us in the first instance to discuss any difficulties you are facing and allow us to sort the problem out as quickly as we can. We believe that normally this will be the quickest and most effective way of resolving matters.

We will respond positively to any request for a translation service whether this be written or verbal.

MEDIATION

The Association will consider the use of authorised mediators, such as the service provided by the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

ADVICE

You can seek advice at any Advice Centre (such as a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or Law Centre). A CAB might, for example, help in putting what may be a complicated situation down on paper for you.

THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Initial Contact

This is the stage when we hope to resolve the majority of our complaints. When you call the office or contact us in person you will be asked if you wish to record your dissatisfaction. The member of staff dealing with your complaint will complete an 'Initial Contact - Complaints Form' (Appendix 1). Your complaint will be dealt with within 10 working days and the outcomes reported back to you. You will be asked at this stage if you are satisfied with the conclusion and if so your complaint will be closed.

Stage 1

Contact the Housing Services Director

If you cannot resolve matters with the relevant member of staff at the initial contact stage please contact the Housing Services Director via letter, phone, fax or e-mail. You must provide full details of what you are actually complaining about and what you want the Association to do about it. You will need to do so within 3 weeks from your initial contact form being completed.

A copy of your 'Initial Contact Form' will also be passed to the Housing Services Director. The Housing Services Director will then investigate the complaint and provide you with a written response normally within 15 working days from receipt of your complaint to them at our Head Office. If it seems likely that your complaint will take more than 15 working days to reply to, you will be written to giving the reasons for the delay and when you can expect a full reply.

Stage 2

Contact the Chief Executive

If you are not satisfied with the Housing Service Director's decision you can complain in writing to the Chief Executive which you will need to do within 3 weeks from receiving the Housing Services Director's decision.

You need to set out all of the relevant points and provide documentation, photos etc. where appropriate. The Chief Executive will investigate all of the points you raise and consider the Housing Services Director's response and may contact you to discuss them in detail.

You will receive a written response, normally within 15 working days, if it seems likely that your complaint will take more than 15 working days to reply to, you will be written to giving the reasons for the delay and when you can expect a full reply.

Stage 3

Contact the Board of Management

If you are not satisfied with the Chief Executives decision an appeal can be made to the Board of Management which you will need to do within 3 weeks from receiving the Chief Executives decision.

You should put all details of the complaint in writing along with copies of relevant documentation, photos etc and mark the envelope for the attention of The Chairperson, (Complaint), THA Board of Management and send it to the Head Office address.

The Board Members will form an Appeals Panel of three members and each is given copies of all the relevant paperwork prior to the appeal hearing, which you will also receive a copy of.

We will contact you to arrange a convenient hearing date, if you do not wish to attend a decision will be made in your absence. The appeal hearing will be composed of the Appeals Panel, the Chief Executive and yourself, if you wish to attend. You can also bring a friend or advocate to the hearing if you want to.

After the hearing we will let you know their decision within 15 working days, where the reply is likely to take longer than 15 working days you will be advised.

Stage 4

Contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service

Ombudsman Scheme

If you are not satisfied with the Appeals Panel decision you may contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service which you must do so within 12 months of Appeals Panel decision. The Ombudsman will not consider your complaint unless all the stages of the complaints procedure have been completed. The address is:

81 Aldwych
London WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 020 7421 3800

Lo-call: 0845 7125973

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Web site: www.ihos.org.uk

Where do you Complain?

You can contact us at the Association's registered office at:

THA
Rugby Chambers
2 Rugby Street
London
WC1N 3QU

Telephone: 020 7440 9440
Fax: 020 7404 3322
Email: enquiries@teachershousing.org.uk

Recording and Monitoring of Complaints

All complaints will be recorded on the initial contact form. The Board will receive a quarterly report on the number of complaints that have gone through the complaints procedure. This will cover all stages. Equal Opportunities monitoring of our complaints also takes place. A form is attached as Appendix 2.

Appendix 1 - Initial Contact – Complaints Form

TEACHERS' HOUSING ASSOCIATION	
COMPLAINTS LOG	
Ref No.	
Staff Details	
Name:	
Date:	(to be resolved 5 working days from this date)
Tenant Details	
Name:	
Address:	
Complaint Brief details:	
Person responsible for resolving complaint:	
Action Taken Brief details:	
Date:	
Resolved	Yes / No
Date:	<p>If not resolved, date passed to Housing Services Director:</p> <p>If resolved pass this form to Nuala O'Hagan – Housing Assistant. If not pass to Housing Services Director.</p> <p>Any further comments:</p>
Signed:	
Date:	

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING OF COMPLAINTS

POLICY

Our services are open to everyone. We want to make sure that everyone is being treated equally. To help us to do this, we need to know your ethnic origin. Please tick below that which best describes you. We can then ensure that everyone is treated fairly.

COMPLAINANT'S DETAILS

(please tick appropriate box)

- Sheltered Housing
- General Needs Housing

HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ETHNIC ORIGIN?

(Please tick appropriate box)

White	British	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed	White & Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	White & Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	White Asian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caribbean	African		
.....						
Asian or						
Asian British	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>					Other	
.....						
Black or						
Black British	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....						
Chinese or other						
ethnic group		Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	
.....						
Refused		<input type="checkbox"/>				

ARE YOU REGISTERED DISABLED? YES/NO
 If yes, please state your registered disabled number

SEX: MALE/FEMALE

MARITAL STATUS:
 SINGLE/ENGAGED/MARRIED/SEPARATED/DIVORCED/WIDOWED