



Futures Housing Group Complaints & Compliments Policy

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01.12.12	01.12.2015	1.0	Approved	DDH Customer Service Manager	DDH Assistant Director	FHG Board 11.12.12	New Policy
02.12.15	31.12.16	1.1	Approved			Exec Team June 2016	Renewed for 1 year
31.12.16	31.12.19	1.2	Approved	Customer Experience Manager	Customer Services Director	Group Directors Dec 2016	Revised Policy
31.12.19	31.12.21	1.3		Customer Experience Manager	Director of Customer Services		
31.10.20	31.10.23	1.4		Customer Experience Manager	Director of Customer Services		Revised to incorporate the new Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
07.05.21	07.05.24	1.5		Customer Experience Manager	Director of Customer Services		Revised to add an Ombudsman recommendation
Distribution/confidentiality				All team members, contractors/service providers			
Other relevant documents:				Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure Compensation & Gestures of Goodwill Policy Compensation & Gestures of Goodwill Procedure EIA Complaints (Dated 23.11.12) EIA Compensation (Dated 23.11.12)			

Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Futures Housing Group (the Group) and its subsidiaries aims to provide services that meet customer needs. To provide effortless services, resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity and learn from our mistakes.

Our aim is to make the process of complaining or complimenting as simple and straightforward as possible.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The Group sets out to provide high quality services and satisfaction to our customers. This policy provides information on how the Group actions and resolves complaints when Futures has failed to meet our service standards and customers feel dissatisfied with the service they have received.

We recognise that when things go wrong, we need to respond quickly and instigate actions to put those things right.

Equally should a customer want to compliment the work we do, or compliment an individual, we will take this information to celebrate service or individual success.

This Policy is also intended to assure our customers and the Board that we adhere to the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

3. AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To deliver an effortless and high-quality customer experience.
- To be fair, transparent and consistent in the way we manage complaints.
- To put things right (where agreed) as quickly as possible.
- To learn from complaints and make appropriate changes to prevent the recurrence of preventable issues.
- To keep customers informed of progress throughout the process.
- To maintain customer confidentiality.
- Ensure complaints are assigned to a dedicated Customer Resolution Adviser.
- Enable customers to access impartial support and advice through guidance and signposting.
- To make compliments and complaints easy to raise.
- To adhere to the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 Complaints

A complaint is defined by the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 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.

Complaints from customers will be treated fairly, transparently, and consistently. Where a complaint is registered, the complainant will be encouraged to request what resolution they would like.

We aim to resolve complaints first time, however in rare circumstances a customer may wish to appeal a complaint decision and will be encouraged to follow the Groups appeal process.

4.2 What is not a complaint?

The following will not be treated as complaints:

- The first request for any service from the Group (e.g. a request for a repair, the initial raising of an anti-social behaviour case)
- Where the issue raised meets agreed service standards and policies.
- Where the company can assist but the underlying issue is not within the control or remit of the organisation.
- the issue raised occurred over 3 months ago.

We will decide whether a complaint is valid and reasonable before registering it as a formal complaint and inform customers accordingly.

4.3 Compliments

A compliment is where praise is given for a service, team, or individual.

5. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT OR COMPLIMENT?

The policy is applicable to anyone who receives or requests a service from us.

We accept complaints and compliments from family members, local councillors, or other advocates, providing the customer has given authorisation to do so.

6. HOW CAN CUSTOMERS COMPLAIN OR COMPLIMENT FUTURES.

Customers do not have to put complaints or compliments in writing.

Customers can express their dissatisfaction via:

1. Telephone

2. Letter
3. Email
4. Our online self-service portal
5. Social Media
6. Website
7. In person

Where complaints are made over a public forum, we will message customers privately to obtain the information required to carry out a full investigation.

7. COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Group aims to resolve complaints first time. We recognise that every complaint is different, and therefore every complaint will be investigated in a different way whilst maintaining our commitment to fairness, transparency and consistency. We have adopted a customer focussed approach to support complaint resolution, a summary of the approach is detailed below.

- We will acknowledge all complaints either over the phone or in writing within 5 working days.
- We will endeavour to understand what outcome the customer is seeking.
- We will review all available evidence through a formal investigation to ensure that the investigation is thorough and fair.
- We will discuss the outcome of the investigation with the customer and provide a written record of this.
- We will complete this within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date by which the above will be completed. This will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

In rare circumstances, where a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, a single stage appeal process may be invoked. The appeal process can only be instigated where the complainant has supplementary evidence they wish to be considered.

Appeals will be managed by the Customer Services Team Leader. Where the complaint directly pertains to the Customer Services Team Leader the appeal will be considered by the Customer Experience Manager.

A written response to the appeal will be provided within 20 working days from receipt of the appeal. If this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date by which a decision will be reached on the appeal. This will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

8. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

The Group subscribes to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman has the power to consider complaints and decide what is 'fair in all the circumstances of the case'. When things go wrong, they can make orders or recommendations to put things right or to improve services for the future.

Information regarding utilising the Housing Ombudsman Service is available on the website. Customers will be advised throughout the process of their option to access the Housing Ombudsman Service for an independent external review.

Please note that the Housing Ombudsman service is unable to hear all complaints as some fall out of their remit, however any FHG customer can contact the Ombudsman for advice and guidance.

9. COMPLAINT CLOSURE

If at any stage in our procedure a full response to a complaint has been given and there has not been further contact from the complainant within 14 days, the complaint will be deemed to be satisfactorily closed.

10. PERSISTENT, UNREASONABLE, VEXATIOUS & SERIAL COMPLAINERS

Regrettably, the Group sometimes receives complaints that are vexatious (aggressive, abusive) serial or unreasonable. If we believe this is the case, we will contact the customer in writing and explain why we have reached this decision. At our discretion, we may give the customer the opportunity to act in a more reasonable manner or we may refuse to progress the complaint. In these instances, we have a separate procedure for team members to follow.

12. COMPENSATION & GOODWILL GESTURES

Goodwill gestures may be offered on a case by case basis dependent upon the nature of the complaint. Goodwill gestures will typically be offered in the form of high street vouchers, chocolates, or flowers.

Where there is a valid claim and evidence for reimbursement of financial loss, a compensation payment may be considered in line with the Compensation Policy.

Where a customer is in arrears with their rent payments, we will decide whether the monetary value of a goodwill gesture will be credited to their rent account.

13. PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND LEARNING'S

The Group recognises that complaints and compliments provide a valuable source of information to help improve and evolve services. The Group will record and analyse complaints and publish the volume of complaints and lessons learnt on our website and in our Annual Report. Data will also be shared with our Insight Committee acting on behalf of the Board.

We will utilise the information to drive service improvement / change.

14. LOCALISM ACT 2011 (DESIGNATED PERSON)

Since 1 April 2013, all registered providers have been required to adhere to guidelines as set out in The Localism Act. Tenants of registered providers are able to request their

complaints be considered by a 'designated person' once they complete their landlord's internal procedure. Such a person can be an MP, a local Councillor, or a recognised Tenant Panel.

The designated person may help resolve the complaint directly, may refer the complaint to the Ombudsman, or may decline doing either. In the latter case the complainant may approach the Ombudsman for consideration of the complaint. The complainant may also approach the Ombudsman directly if more than eight weeks have elapsed since the completion of the internal procedure of the landlord, without the need to approach a designated person first.

15. COMPLIMENTS

A summary of the approach when a compliment is received is detailed below.

- We will acknowledge compliments at the time they are made.
- We will disseminate the compliment to the individual/team and Group detailing what the compliment is.
- We will use compliments to evidence Group, service, team or individual success.

16. TEAM MEMBERS TRAINING

The Group is committed to training and developing its team members and will ensure the appropriate team members have the required training to deliver the service through inductions and regular training programs.

17. REVIEW

This Policy is due to be reviewed every three years unless there are any substantial changes to legislation or regulation, or circumstances arise which necessitate an earlier review.