



Housing Services Complaints Policy

Last updated April 2024

Complaints

INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out RHP's approach to dealing with complaints, ensuring it is fair, consistent and accessible.

We have a 2 Stage complaints process. We will log and acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of receipt and set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes you are seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, we will ensure we speak to you for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.

We aim to provide a full Stage 1 response, within ten working days of the complaint being acknowledged. If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, the matter will progress to Stage 2, which is our final response. We will acknowledge, define, and log the request within 5 working days of the escalation required being received and aim to provide a full response to Stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

If we are unable to provide a response within these timescales, we will let you know by explaining the reasons for the delay and our extension will not exceed an additional 10 working days at Stage 1 and twenty days at Stage 2 without good reason. We will clearly explain the reasons and when informing you about an extension to the timescales, we will provide you with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

Complaint Definition

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by RHP, our colleagues, or those acting on our behalf, affecting you or a group of customers. Whenever you express dissatisfaction, we will always give you the choice to make a complaint. You do not have to use the word complaint for us to treat it as such.

Who can complain?

The policy is aimed at all existing RHP customers, or anyone directly impacted by the services we provide. We accept complaints on behalf of you through anyone that has your permission.

All customer facing employees are responsible for resolving complaints.

The Director of Operations is responsible for reviewing this policy on an annual basis.

All complaints must be logged on our customer management system and are investigated and resolved by the Complaints Team. If the Complaints Team cannot resolve the complaint themselves, they will work with the most appropriate team to help with their response and investigation.

A named Complaints handler will manage the case from point of acknowledgement through to resolution. This, we feel, works well to rebuild a working relationship with you when things haven't gone as expected and provides an independent investigation and response.

Complaints relating to an RHP employee's conduct will be fully investigated in line with our Human Resources policies, but we cannot divulge the outcome of these investigations for reasons of confidentiality. We will, however, explain what our investigation involved.

The Customer Experience and Quality Team will review all incoming complaints and prioritise a response from the Complaints Team depending on the situation. Whilst always within the agreed timeframes, we recognise that certain types of complaints warrant a far swifter response.

All Stage 2 complaints will be handled by a different person that handled the Stage 1 complaint and all Stage 2 complaints are reviewed by an appropriate manager to ensure an independent review has been carried out and that we have fully addressed all points raised to resolve the complaint at this final Stage of the process.

All Ombudsman complaints will be managed via their online portal for landlords. The Customer Experience and Quality Team will manage this contact and ensure all information is logged on our customer management system.

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RHP'S APPROACH

In line with The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, we recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint.

Service Request- A request from a customer to RHP requiring action to be taken to put something right. These are recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.

Complaint- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by RHP, its employees or those acting on its behalf, affecting a customer or group of customers.

A complaint will be raised where you express dissatisfaction with the response to your service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. We will not stop our efforts to address the service request if you complain.

We know things sometimes go wrong, so we look carefully at complaints and take steps to learn and improve from them where we can. We will respond clearly, discuss what has happened, with no jargon, and set a clear way forward on how we plan to appropriately put things right in partnership with you.

How to Complain:

By Phone: 0800 0322 433 Mon-Fri 8am-5pm

By Letter: 8 Waldegrave Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8GT

Face to face: 8 Waldegrave Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8GT

By Email: customer.services@rhp.org.uk

By Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/MyRHP/

By X: www.twitter.com/RHP_UK

Stage 1 Complaint:

We'll try to fix what's gone wrong, explaining what's happened and giving you an apology for any problems we've caused. We will aim to fully respond in line with our agreed timescales. We will log and acknowledge a complaint within five working days of receiving it, in writing, setting out the details of your complaint and how we will investigate and respond.

If we are unable to meet the agreed time frames, we will let you know by explaining the reasons for the delay. And our extension will not exceed an additional 10 working days without good reason. We will clearly explain the reason for any extension

to you. We will also provide you with the Housing Ombudsman contact details when informing you of any extension.

An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey will be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where we ask for wider feedback about our services, we will also provide details of how you can complain.

Stage 2 Complaint

If you wish to escalate your complaint to Stage 2 of our complaints process, we will acknowledge, define, and log this at Stage 2 within five working days of the escalation request being received. We aim to provide a final response to the Stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. If we are unable to meet these timeframes, we will let you know by explaining the reasons for the delay. Our extension will not exceed an additional 20 working days without good reason. We will provide you with the Housing Ombudsman contact details when informing you of any extension.

Where a response to a complaint falls outside of the above timescales, we will agree with you suitable intervals for keeping you informed about your complaint.

At each Stage of the complaint, we will set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes you are seeking. This is the 'complaint definition'. If we feel any aspect of the complaint is unclear, you will be asked for clarification.

If you wish to raise additional complaints or add points to your complaint during the investigation, these should be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if they are related and Stage 2 if a response has not been issued. Where the Stage 1 response has been issued, and the new issue is unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.

Where the problem is a recurring issue, we will consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this helps to resolve the issue for you.

If you remain unhappy, we'd still like to hear from you so we can try to fix things. You can also contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point for advice.

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Social Media Complaints:

We accept complaints from residents across all channels, this includes our social media accounts, Facebook and X. These are captured and administered in the same way as detailed above. We will however ask that you send a private or direct message to us to protect the anonymity of others involved, where appropriate.

We will regularly inform you of your rights of escalation throughout your complaint with us.

Housing Ombudsman Service:

We are committed to following the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (the Code) to support a positive complaint handling culture, we support the Housing Ombudsman's key areas in the Code which are:

- ▶ Universal definition of a complaint.
- ▶ Providing easy access to the complaints policy and ensuring customers are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- ▶ The structure of our complaints policy - only 2 Stages necessary and clear time frames set out for responses.
- ▶ Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a customer-focused process.
- ▶ Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies.
- ▶ Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement.
- ▶ Demonstrating learning in annual reports.
- ▶ Annual self-assessment against the Code.

We carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with its requirements and we will publish results.

The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) can independently and formally review your complaint if you've been through all Stages of our complaints process. That said, you have the right to engage with the HOS at any Stage during your complaint investigation with us.

The HOS is an independent body set up by law to review housing complaints. Visit their website for more details:

Phone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Postal address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Complaints to RHP may be resolved in a number of ways. Any resolution to a complaint will be in partnership with you and reflect the extent of the situation based on its own merit, and the impact caused to you as a result.

When considering a resolution, we will use the guidance set out by the Housing Ombudsman Service when deciding on appropriate remedies which may include-

- ▶ Apologising.
- ▶ Acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
- ▶ Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons.
- ▶ Taking action if there has been delay.
- ▶ Reconsidering or changing a decision.
- ▶ Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum.
- ▶ Providing a financial remedy.
- ▶ Changing policies, procedures, or practices.
- ▶ Signposting to other agencies.
- ▶ Settlement for the complaint, alongside any discretionary payment to acknowledge service failure more broadly.

Any discretionary payment will be offset against any rent arrears you may have. Compensation for financial loss will be reimbursed directly to you.

Any remedy offered will reflect the impact on you because of any fault identified. We will look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made because of any learning from the complaint.

Any remedy offer will set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with you where appropriate. Any remedy proposed will be followed through to completion.

There will be some instances where we won't accept a complaint for investigation or escalate the complaint.

We will not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints and will consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.

If we are not accepting a complaint, we will clearly set out the reasons why, and provide you with the Housing Ombudsman Service details for further advice or support.

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If you or us have started legal proceedings we may not be able to respond to the complaint, if this is the case we will inform you of this.

We will not respond to matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.

A complaint will need to be received by us within 12 months of the problem occurring. We will always review any request outside of this timeframe and discretion may be applied. If it does fall outside of this time we may decide, after understanding your personal circumstances, to investigate.

UNREASONABLE OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS / COMPLAINANTS REPRESENTATIVE

There may be occasions where we will not investigate a complaint and may consider taking action against you or your representative. This may happen when you or your representative refuses to speak with us or allow appropriate employees to investigate and resolve complaints, without:

- ▶ providing sufficient evidence or reason to do so.
- ▶ you or your representative is considered to be malicious, unsubstantiated, discriminatory, or deliberately Repetitious.
- ▶ you or your representative shows unacceptable behaviour towards our employees or other customers by behaving in a threatening, aggressive, violent, or abusive manner.
- ▶ you or your representative's actions or behaviours take up a disproportionate amount of our time and resources, or adversely affect our ability to provide services to other residents, we may exercise our right to restrict or change contact arrangements.

We will consider and review whether there are any matters that may be contributing to the way you are choosing to engage with us. We may consider appropriate reasonable adjustments and review whether you are being appropriately supported. We will take this into consideration in deciding whether to refuse to investigate your concern.

We know you may have difficulty in accessing our services to appropriately express your dissatisfaction with us. We will support you, and any approved representative acting on your behalf, who require assistance and will make reasonable adjustments (in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and our vulnerable customers policy) where practical. This may include if your first language is not English, or you have a learning or physical disability such as a visual or hearing impairment. We can also signpost you to external agencies for independent

support or advocacy where appropriate. This may include, but not limited to reasonable adjustments to complaint management and resolutions, customer documentations and communications.

We know that it's not just about putting things right when things have gone wrong. It's key to us to learn from any mistakes by us, to ensure we learn from them in the hope of preventing the same issue from occurring again. Complaints are a real opportunity to drive long term service improvements for you and for us as a business.

We will seek to involve you to scrutinise our complaints performance and service. Complaints are monitored and reported within RHP. We regularly monitor compliance with this policy.

Tenants and Leaseholders are appointed as directors of RHP and are members of the Board's Service Delivery & Transformation Committee (SDTC) which routinely reviews our complaints performance and action taken.

We will produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which will include:

- ▶ annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure our complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.
- ▶ a qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints we have refused to accept;
- ▶ any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman.
- ▶ the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
- ▶ any annual report about our performance from the Ombudsman; and
- ▶ any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to our performance.

We have an appointed member of our governing body who has lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC'). The MRC is responsible for ensuring RHP's Board receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on our complaint handling performance.