

Complaints and compliments policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Hill Homes recognises that providing a high standard of service delivery is essential. The proper handling of complaints is one of our priorities.
- 1.2. We are committed to working proactively with customers to resolve concerns and complaints in a consistent, fair, impartial and transparent way.
- 1.3. We are keen to find ways of improving the service we provide. We recognise that both complaints and compliments are a valuable source of information about services and process that, handled in the correct manner, can assist us with continuous improvement.
- 1.4. We are committed to delivering high-quality, client-centred services, in line with our corporate plan, vision and values, that promote best practice in all areas of performance, value-for-money and satisfaction. If we fail to do this, we will:
 - apologise to you;
 - accept responsibility where we have failed;
 - put things right when they are in our control; and,
 - listen to your concerns and take effective action to prevent recurrence and learn from outcomes.
- 1.5. This policy outlines how we will resolve your concern or complaint and, if you are not happy with our decision, how you can escalate the matter further.
- 1.6. This policy should be read alongside the “Unreasonable & Vexatious Complaints” policy.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Hill Homes refers to the group of companies comprised of Hill Homes Housing Association, Hill Homes Care Ltd and Hill Homes Care Services Ltd.
- 2.2. For the purposes of this policy, “staff” refers to all employees, including full-time, part-time and bank, agency staff, freelancers and contractors.
- 2.3. For the purposes of this policy, “customer” refers to all tenants of Hill Homes Housing association and all clients of Hill Homes Care Ltd and Hill Homes Care Services Ltd.
- 2.4. A concern is an issue you raise with us that we endeavour to resolve very quickly.

- 2.5. A formal complaint is where we fail to resolve your concern informally and is an expression of dissatisfaction with a service received or a service failure by us.
- 2.6. A compliment is an expression of praise, encouragement or gratitude for a positive experience.
- 2.7. A 'Designated Person' is a Member of Parliament (MP), Local Councillor or Designated Tenant Panel (where one exists). You can involve an MP or Councillor at any point in pursuing your complaint; however, they do not take up their formal designated role until you have exhausted our formal complaints process. You can contact your MP or Local Councillor at www.writetothem.com
- 2.8. The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent body that deals with disputes between social landlords and their tenants. You can wait the statutory eight weeks from the date of our final decision and then refer your complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Once the Housing Ombudsman has reviewed the complaint, their decision is final. You can contact the Housing Ombudsman at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or on 0300 111 3000.
- 2.9. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) looks at individual complaints about all adult social care providers, including care homes and home care agencies. The LGO can be contacted at www.lgo.org.uk or on 0300 061 0614.
- 2.10. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. You can refer your complaint to them but the CQC does not deal with complaints from customers directly; it simply takes these into account in its planning programme. You can contact the CQC at www.cqc.org.uk or on 03000 616161.
- 2.11. This policy covers complaints we receive from:
 - customers; or,
 - advocates acting on behalf of a customer. If you authorise an advocate to act on your behalf, you must inform us in writing. If your chosen advocate is by profession, or training, a solicitor, they can advocate on your behalf but not in a legal capacity as our complaints process is not a legal process.

We will only investigate complaints from ex-tenants if the issue was raised as a concern whilst they were living in a Hill Homes' property.

2.12. This policy covers:

- complaints regarding dissatisfaction with the standard of housing or care and support services;
- complaints about our failure to fulfil statutory, contractual, policy or procedural responsibilities;
- complaints about the behaviour of Hill Homes' staff or contractors;
- complaints where the customer believes a decision is not fair or clear to them; or,
- complaints about unfair treatment on the grounds of equality.

2.13. This policy does not cover:

- services for which Hill Homes is not responsible e.g., complaints regarding local authority decisions about housing benefit or nominations should be raised with the local authority – we will endeavour to signpost you to the most appropriate body;
- complaints submitted anonymously, although we will attempt an investigation wherever possible;
- complaints regarding issues that are currently subject to on-going legal proceedings. In these instances, you must use the legal process to challenge our decisions;
- complaints from individuals who are not customers. These will be acted on but are not covered by this policy;
- crimes such as theft or damage to personal property in an individual's home or left in communal areas;
- complaints about anti-social behaviour as these are covered by Hill Homes' "Anti-Social Behaviour" policy, although a complaint will be accepted if a customer is dissatisfied with how their case was handled once it has been concluded;
- complaints relating to serious incidents or safeguarding concerns will be investigated in accordance with Hill Homes' "Incident Management" or "Safeguarding Adults" policies;
- complaints about rent increases or the level of service charges or their reasonableness. Please refer to Hill Homes' "Rent and Service Charges" policy. We will accept complaints if we fail to follow the processes associated with the management of service charges;
- complaints about maintenance issues or repairs in your home. Please refer to Hill Homes' "Repairs and Maintenance" policy. We will accept complaints if we fail to follow the processes outlined in the policy;
- complaints by staff about their employment. There are separate procedures covering these;
- matters that have been referred to our insurers; or,



- complaints submitted six months, or more, after the issue occurred where this is the first time it is being brought to the attention of Hill Homes.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. Our customers should expect to receive the best customer experience from us. The objective of this policy is to explain what we will do when customers do not receive the level of customer experience they expect.
- 3.2. The aim of this policy is to ensure we are accountable in our handling and management of complaints.
- 3.3. This policy aims to facilitate the timely, effective and early resolution of concerns and complaints.
- 3.4. This policy aims to support us to work collaboratively internally, with partner organisations and other agencies, where necessary, to co-ordinate comprehensive outcomes to complaints.
- 3.5. This policy helps to ensure we use the data we gather analysis of complaints to help Hill Homes Group improve services and reduce the level of complaints

4. POLICY STATEMENT

- 4.1. Hill Homes recognises that providing a high standard of service delivery is essential.
- 4.2. Hill Homes recognises that both complaints and compliments are a valuable source of information about services and process that, handled in the correct manner, can assist us with the continuous improvement we strive for.
- 4.3. Hill Homes is committed to working proactively with customers to resolve concerns and complaints in a consistent, fair, impartial and transparent way.
- 4.4. Hill Homes is committed to delivering high-quality, client-centred services, in line with our corporate plan, vision and values.
- 4.5. Hill Homes will promote best practice in all areas of performance, value-for-money and satisfaction. If we fail to do this, we will:
 - apologise to you;
 - accept responsibility where we have failed;
 - put things right when they are in our control; and,



- listen to your concerns and take effective action to prevent recurrence and learn from outcomes.

4.6. Hill Homes will not discriminate against any customer who raises a complaint.

4.7. Hill Homes respects the rights of its customers to complain to statutory bodies and will work openly with partner agencies to resolve any legitimate concerns that customers raise. We will cooperate fully with the relevant Ombudsman Service during any investigation and comply fully with the resulting decisions, which will be binding on us.

5. LEGISLATION, REGULATION & GUIDANCE

5.1. Hill Homes' policy and procedures for dealing with complaints take into account the main legal and regulatory requirements, including:

- The Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards
- Housing Ombudsman Service's principles
- CQC's regulations
- Localism Act 2011
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Equality Act 2010

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

6.1. Hill Homes will comply with data protection legislation when handling complaints. All personal and sensitive organisational information, will be treated as confidential, including:

- anything of a personal nature, that is not a matter of public record, about a customer, staff member or board member; and,
- sensitive organisational information

6.2. Hill Homes will only involve other agencies, and share information, with the consent of the complainant involved, unless:

- it is required by law; or,
- the information is necessary for the safeguarding of children and/or vulnerable adults.

7. MONITORING & REPORTING

7.1. Hill Homes seeks continuous improvement through analysing themes and trends and using feedback and lessons learned from concerns, complaints and



compliments to improve service design and delivery. This is in line with the principles of dispute resolution recommended by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

- 7.2. All feedback is monitored and reported on to the Management Team, Finance Risk and Audit Committee and Board on a regular basis.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

1. You can raise a concern in a number of ways:
 - in writing – via letter to:
Hill Homes
Unit A, Trees
2-4 Broadlands Road
London
N6 4AN;
 - via email to info@hillhomes.co.uk;
 - by telephone on 020 8347 3680;
 - by completing a complaints form; or,
 - in person to any member of staff.
2. Any complaints raised via a petition will be treated as a group concern and will be responded to in line with the process outlined below. To help us manage group complaints efficiently, we will ask the group to nominate a single point of contact and we will work with this person to resolve the complaint.
3. When you first let us know you are unhappy about a service, your concern will be forwarded to a senior staff member within the service you have a concern about. The allocated staff member will contact you to discuss your concerns and work with you to agree a satisfactory outcome. We aim to do this within three working days.
4. If, following this meeting, you are still unhappy, the manager will forward your concerns to the Executive Officer, who will treat the concern as a formal complaint.
5. The Executive Officer will appoint a lead manager to work with you to investigate and endeavour to resolve your complaint. The complaint will be acknowledged within two working days.
6. The lead manager will provide you with a written response within ten working days, outlining the outcome of their investigation and any action(s) agreed with you to resolve your complaint or, if actions cannot be agreed, our final decision on the matter
7. If we need more time to investigate your complaint, e.g., it is complex, we will contact you to explain and agree a new response time.
8. If the lead manager requires any additional information, they may contact you or seek to make arrangements to meet with you to discuss the matter further.
9. The lead manager's letter will make it clear that this represents our final decision and marks the end of our internal complains process. The letter will explain how you can



raise the matter with a Designated Person and/or Ombudsman if you remain unhappy with our response. We will close complaints once we have sent you our response.

10. We will try everything to investigate your complaint; however, should you decide not to engage with us to resolve your complaint in line with our complaints process, we may have to close your complaint.

11. We will work very hard with you to achieve a satisfactory resolution to your complaint. If, however, you disagree with our final decision you may contact any of the following:

- a Designated Person;
- the Housing Ombudsman Service;
- the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO); or
- the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

12. Where we are providing services on behalf of a local authority, customers can also complain to their local authority.

13. We will not discriminate against anyone who makes a complaint. If a complainant or their representative behaves inappropriately in making a complaint, we will seek to manage that behaviour as necessary, while treating the complaint like any other. Examples of inappropriate behaviour might include:

- refusing to accept the decision or repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence;
- making complaints intentionally to cause harassment, divert resources or to disrupt the proper workings of Hill Homes;
- being abusive or threatening to staff;
- insisting on complaints being managed in ways that are not compatible with our policy of procedures;
- refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of our policy or procedures;
- changing the basis of the complaint during the course of the investigation without sufficient reason;
- submitting repeat complaints with only minor differences and insisting they are new complaints; or,
- making excessive and disproportionate demands on staff time and resources e.g., lengthy phone calls, emails to numerous staff, detailed letters every few days or expecting immediate responses.

In these cases, whilst we will seek to resolve the substance of any complaint, we will manage the behaviour in line with our “Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints” policy and our “Tenants’ Code of Conduct”.

RESOLUTION PROCESS MAP

