

# **PARAGON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED**

## **YOUR GUIDE TO MAKING A COMPLAINT**

“We value complaints and use  
information from them to help us  
improve our services”

Paragon Housing Association is committed to providing high-quality customer service. **We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.**

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

## **What is a complaint?**

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

## **What can I complain about?**

You can complain about things like:

- Delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- Failure to provide a service
- Our standard of service
- Dissatisfaction with our policy
- Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- Our failure to follow proper procedure

Your complaint may involve more than one of our services or be about someone working on our behalf.

## **What can't I complain about?**

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 a problem that needs to be repaired on initial action on anti-social behaviour.
- Requests for compensation.
- Our policies and procedures that have a separate right of appeal, for example, if you are dissatisfied with the level of priority you have been given when applying for a house, you may have the right to appeal against the decision.
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal.
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision following a Stage 2 investigation.

If you are still not satisfied, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for an independent review of the complaint.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns we will give information and advice to help you.

## **Non Association Services**

There are some areas that we do not deal with e.g. services provided by the local authority etc. However, in these cases staff may be able to signpost you to the relevant agency.

## **Who can complain?**

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. Please also read the section on “Getting help to make your complaint”.

## **How do I complain?**

You can complain in person at our office, by phone, in writing, email, or by using our complaints form.

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

## **Anonymous Complaints**

We value all complaints. This means we treat all complaints including anonymous complaints seriously and will take action to consider them further, wherever this is appropriate.

Generally, we will consider anonymous complaints if there is enough information in the complaint to enable us to make further enquiries. If, however, an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable us to take further action, we may decide

not to pursue it. Any decision not to pursue an anonymous complaint must be authorised by a senior manager.

If an anonymous complaint makes serious allegations, we will refer it to a senior officer immediately.

If we pursue an anonymous complaint further, we will record the issues as an anonymous complaint on the complaints system. This will help to ensure the completeness of the complaints data we record and allow us to take corrective action where appropriate.

## **Neighbour Disputes/Anti-social Behaviour**

Complaints against neighbours/anti-social behaviour will not be dealt with under our complaints procedure. There is a separate policy for dealing with this and any member of staff will be pleased to assist you with any enquiries regarding this.

However, if you have a complaint about the way the Association has dealt with a neighbour dispute, then you can use the Complaints procedure.

## **Staff/Committee Complaints**

Complaints about staff members will be dealt with fairly. This will include giving the person being complained about an opportunity to respond to the complaint.

## **How long do I have to make a complaint?**

Normally, you must make your complaint within 6 months of:

- The event you want to complain about, or
- Finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit, if you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## **What happens when I have complained?**

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

Our Complaints procedure has 2 stages.

## **Stage 1 — Frontline resolution**

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage One in 5 working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why. If you are still dissatisfied you can ask for your complaint to be investigated further through Stage 2. You may choose to do this immediately or some time after you get our initial response. We can help you with making this request.

## **Stage 2 - Investigation**

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days.
- Discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- Give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you of no more than 5 working days and keep you updated on progress.

## What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- A complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- Events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago.
- A matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO:

In person:

SPSO  
Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road,  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4NS

By post:

Freepost SPSO

Freephone:	0800 377 7330
Online contact:	<a href="http://www.spsso.uk/contact-us">www.spsso.uk/contact us</a>
Website:	<a href="http://www.spsso.org.uk">www.spsso.org.uk</a>
Mobile site:	<a href="http://www.m.spsso.org.uk">www.m.spsso.org.uk</a>

## Complaints about Factoring

The SPSO does not normally look at complaints about our Factoring Service. The Housing and Property Chamber will try to resolve complaints and disputes between homeowners and property factors. So if your complaint is about a factoring service, and you are still dissatisfied after our investigation stage you should approach this body.

The contact information for the Housing & Property Chamber is as follows:

Housing and Property Chamber  
First-tier Tribunal for Scotland  
Glasgow Tribunals Centre  
20 York Street  
Glasgow  
G2 8GT

Telephone: 0141 302 5900  
Fax: 0141 302 5901  
Email: [HPCAdmin@scotcourtsribunals.gov.uk](mailto:HPCAdmin@scotcourtsribunals.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.housingandpropertychamber.scot](http://www.housingandpropertychamber.scot)  
Open hours: Phone lines operate from 9 am to 5pm Monday-Thursday and 9 am – 4:30 pm on Fridays only.

## **Confidentiality**

We will take steps to ensure that confidentiality is maintained as far as this is possible. However, it may be necessary to speak to staff members and other parties about your complaint. If you do not wish us to talk about your complaint to specific people or organisations please let us know but this can make it more difficult to resolve the matter.

There may be situations where we cannot provide you with information as it may affect another person's right to confidentiality e.g. details of housing applicants and so on.

## **Unacceptable/Unreasonable Behaviour and the Association's Response**

Our staff and committee members will treat you with respect. The Association retains the right, to restrict or change your access to our services if we consider your actions to be unacceptable or unreasonable.

## **Unacceptable Behaviour**

While we understand expressions of frustration and anger and take this into account we will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour from you.

The Association considers the following as unacceptable behaviour:

- Verbal abuse
- Physical abuse
- Threats

This list is not exhaustive.

This behaviour is unacceptable if displayed face to face or expressed on the telephone, by letter, email or any other form of communication.

## **Unreasonable Demands**

We are committed to working towards the resolution of complaints but we may deem some demands unreasonable. In all such cases we will take account of the circumstances of the situation, however, where unreasonable behaviour impacts substantially on the work of the Association to the detriment of service to others then we cannot accept this.

The following may be considered unreasonable demands:

- Demanding responses in unreasonable timescales
- Persistent phone calls etc.
- Unwillingness to follow the complaints procedure
- Demanding to deal with particular members of staff/committee only.
- Pursuit of complaints without producing evidence, refusing to co-operate with investigations etc.
- Repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint

This list is not exhaustive.

## **Associations Response**

We may take the following action in response to Unacceptable Behaviour/Unreasonable Demands:

- Advise you why we consider your actions unreasonable/unacceptable and normally give you an opportunity to change your behaviour. Staff members are empowered to end telephone calls or interviews where you are aggressive, abusive or offensive.
- Take legal action if concerned about physical or verbal abuse and/or report it to the Police.
- Require contact through a particular medium e.g. by letter or e-mail instead of in person or by phone.
- Restrict access to particular staff members
- Require contact by a third party only.

We will record and monitor all such assessments and actions.

If you are aggrieved by any such decisions or assessment then a written submission should be made to the Director or Depute Director and it will be reviewed.



## **Recording and Monitoring**

All complaints and their outcome will be recorded in the Complaints Register. These will be reported regularly to the Finance and General Purposes Sub Committee. This feedback will be used to assess the effectiveness of the Policy and Procedures.

## **Reporting a Significant Performance Failure to the Scottish Housing Regulator**

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) can consider issues raised with them about “significant performance failures”. A significant performance failure is defined by the SHR as something that a landlord does or fails to do that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, and which that landlord has not resolved. This is something that is a systematic problem that does, or could, affect all of a landlord’s tenants.

If you are affected by a problem like this, you should first report it to us. If you have told us about it but we have not resolved it you can report it directly to the SHR.

A complaint between an individual tenant and a landlord is not a significant performance failure. Significant performance failures are now, therefore, dealt with through this complaints handling procedure. You can ask us for more information about significant performance failures.

The SHR also has more information on their website:

<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/> or you can phone them on - 0141 271 3810, or e-mail them at [shr@shr.gov.scot](mailto:shr@shr.gov.scot).

## **Getting help to make your complaint**

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain to us.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance or Citizens Advice Bureau.

## **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**

Telephone: 0131 260 5380

Fax: 0131 260 5381

Website: [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)

## **Citizens Advice Scotland**

Website: [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)

Or check your phone book for your local bureau.

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing please tell us.

We can also give you this leaflet in other languages and formats if required.

## **Quick guide to our complaints procedure**

### **Complaints procedure**

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email or in writing. We have a two-stage complaints procedure. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly, but if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

### **Stage 1: Frontline resolution**

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within 5 working days if we can. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at stage two.

### **Stage 2: Investigation**

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage one. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than 20 working days unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

### **The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint you can ask the SPSO to consider it. We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

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