

# PARAGON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

**POLICY: Compliments, Comments & Complaints Policy**

**POLICY AREA: Governance**

**DATE APPROVED: 01/04/2021 (Implementation Date)**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Paragon Housing Association (PHA) is committed to providing high-quality customer services. We value compliments, comments and complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.
- 1.2. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. If you feel we have done something that has delighted you, or, you simply want to leave us a comment on the services we deliver we welcome that feedback too.
- 1.2. This policy describes our comments, compliments and complaints procedure and how you can make one. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.
- 1.3. Like other Registered Social Landlords Paragon will be adopting the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHP) and these are appended to this policy.

## 2. What is a compliment?

- 2.1. A compliment is an indication by one or more customers that they were happy with the actions taken or services provided by PHA.
- 2.2. A compliment may relate to:
  - service delivery standards;
  - approval of PHA policy;
  - actions taken by a member of staff; or
  - service improvements.
- 2.3. You can make a compliment by contacting this office in person or by telephone, emailing [enquiries@paragonha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@paragonha.org.uk) or at our website [www.paragonha.org.uk](http://www.paragonha.org.uk)

## 3. What is a comment?

- 3.1. A comment is feedback from one or more customers regarding a policy, procedure, service standard etc. This can be, but is not restricted to, feedback during a consultation exercise, a feedback session or written survey.
- 3.2 A comment may relate to
  - a proposed policy (including amendments of current policies);
  - consultation regarding service standards; • consultation relating to annual rent reviews; or
  - regular customer feedback surveys.

3.3 You can make a comment by contacting this office in person or by telephone, emailing [enquiries@paragonha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@paragonha.org.uk) or at our website [www.paragonha.org.uk](http://www.paragonha.org.uk)

## 4. What is a complaint?

4.1. Paragon Housing Association's definition of a complaint is: '**Any expression of dissatisfaction by one or more customers or members of the public about Paragon Housing Association's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on behalf of Paragon Housing Association.**'

4.2 The MCHP applies to all Registered social landlords (RSLs) and all the services they provide, including those that they provide under contract from other agencies such as local authorities.

4.3 A 'customer-facing' CHP is included as a separate but integral section of the CHP. This provides standardised information on the complaints procedure to customers of the organisation, ensuring that they receive the same information on complaints regardless of where they live or the organisation they deal with. This will replace the existing complaints leaflet and issued to all tenants at the start of their tenancy.

## 5. What can you complain about?

5.1. You can complain about things like;

- failure to provide a service, or inadequate standard of service;
- how we met your needs;
- how we communicated with you; • how long we took to deal with your case;
- dissatisfaction with our policies or procedures;
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff; and/or
- failure to follow the appropriate administrative process.

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

## 6. What can't you complain about?

6.1. There are some things we won't deal with through our complaints procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service, for example reporting an initial repair will not be logged as a complaint;
- 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 a tribunal; and/or
- 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 (SPSO) for an independent review of the complaint.

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

## 7. The value of complaints

7.1. Complaints provide effective and valuable information for us to improve customer satisfaction. This complaints handling policy and supporting procedures will help us address customer dissatisfaction and also, where appropriate, provide learning opportunities to prevent the problems that gave rise to the complaint from happening again.

7.2. For our staff providing customer services, complaints provide us with a first-hand account of the experience and perspective of service users. This can highlight problems in our service delivery that could otherwise go undetected.

7.3. We recognise that if handled well, complaints can be valuable in providing our customers with a form of redress where things go wrong and can also inform our commitment to continuous improvement of services.

## 8. Who can complain?

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

## 9. How do you complain?

9.1. You can complain in person at our office, by phone, in writing, by email or submitting comments through our website site at [www.paragonha.org.uk](http://www.paragonha.org.uk)

9.2. It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the team 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.

9.3. When complaining, tell us:

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

## 10. How long do you have to make a complaint?

10.1. Normally, you must make your complaint within six 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.

## 11. Contact details

Office: Invergrange House Station Rd, Grangemouth, FK3 8DG

E Mail: [enquiries@paragonha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@paragonha.org.uk)

Phone: 01324 664966

Web Site Contact Form: [www.paragonha.org.uk](http://www.paragonha.org.uk)

## 12. What happens when you have complained?

12.1. We will always tell you who and how we are dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages:

**Stage one- frontline resolution** - We aim to resolve complaints quickly 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 1 within five working days, 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 of our complaints process. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial response. We can help you with making this request.

**Stage two – 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 three working days;
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for; and
- 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 and keep you updated on progress.

<p><b>Stage 1: Frontline response</b>          For issues that are straightforward and simple, requiring little or no investigation          ‘On-the-spot’ apology, explanation, or other action to put the matter right          Complaint resolved or a response provided in <b>five working days</b> or less (unless there are exceptional circumstances)          Complaints addressed by any member of staff, or alternatively referred to the appropriate point for frontline response          Response normally face-to-face or by telephone (though sometimes we will need to put the decision in writing)          We will tell the customer how to escalate their complaint to stage 2</p>	<p><b>Stage 2: Investigation</b>          Where the customer is not satisfied with the frontline response, or refuses to engage at the frontline, or where the complaint is complex, serious or ‘high-risk’          Complaint acknowledged within <b>three working days</b>          We will contact the customer to clarify the points of complaint and outcome sought (where these are already clear, we will confirm them in the acknowledgement)          Complaint resolved or a definitive response provided within <b>20 working days</b> following a thorough investigation of the points raised</p>	<p><b>Independent external review (SPSO or other)</b>          Where the customer is not satisfied with the stage 2 response from the service provider          The SPSO will assess whether there is evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the service provider          Some complaints may also have an alternative route for independent external review</p>
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### 13. What if you are still dissatisfied?

13.1. 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 ensure you have exhausted this process 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.

## 14. Complaints about property factoring

14.1. PHA deliver's property factoring services. The SPSO does not normally look at complaints about property factoring services. First-Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber) (HPC) will try to resolve complaints and disputes between factored homeowners and property factors or private residential tenants and private residential landlords. So if your complaint is about a property factoring service, and you are still dissatisfied after our investigation stage, you should contact:

First-Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber) Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service 4th Floor 1 Atlantic Quay 45 Robertson Street Glasgow G2 8JB

Telephone: 0141 302 5900

or visit their website at [www.housingandpropertychamber.scot](http://www.housingandpropertychamber.scot)

## 15. Concluding a complaint

15.1. Once you have exhausted the complaints process and a decision has been reached by the SPSO or First-Tier Tribunal to not uphold the original complaint, we consider the matter closed.

We will only re-engage with you if either body makes a recommendation to do so and/or they uphold or partially uphold your original complaint.

You can contact the SPSO:

In Person: SPSO Bridgeside House 99 McDonald Road Edinburgh EH7 4NS

Opening Hours Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 9am – 5pm, Tuesday 10am – 5pm

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Fax: 0800 377 7331

By Post: **Freepost SPSO**. This is all that needs to be written on the envelope (no street name, no postcode) and no stamp is required

Online contact: <https://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-form>

Online complaint form: <https://www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form>

Website: <https://www.spsso.org.uk/>

## 16. Anonymous Complaints

16.1 We value all complaints, including anonymous complaints, 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. Any decision not to pursue an anonymous complaint must be authorised by a member of the Management Team.

16.2 If we pursue an anonymous complaint further, we will record it as an anonymous complaint together with any learning from the complaint and action taken.

16.3 If an anonymous complainant makes serious allegations, these should be dealt with in a timely manner under relevant procedures. This may not be the complaints procedure and could instead be relevant child protection, adult protection or disciplinary procedures.

## 17. Persistent or Vexatious Complaints

17.1. We recognise that some complainants will not or cannot accept that we are unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided already. They may seek to persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their complaint or contact the office persistently about the same issue.

17.2. Examples of actions grouped under this heading include persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint; persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what this office can or cannot do; and continuing to pursue a complaint without presenting any new information. The way in which these complainants approach our office may be reasonable, but their persistent or vexatious behaviour in continuing to do so is not.

17.3. We consider the actions of persistent or vexatious complainants to be unacceptable when they take up what we regard as being a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

## 18. Managing unacceptable actions

18.1. There are relatively few complainants whose actions are considered unacceptable. How we aim to manage these actions depends upon their nature and extent. If it adversely affects our ability to do our work and provide a service to others, we may need to restrict the complainant's contact with our office in order to manage the unacceptable action. We aim to do this in a way, wherever possible, that allows a complaint to progress to completion through our complaints process.

18.2. We may restrict contact in person, by telephone, letter or electronically or by any combination of these. We try to maintain at least one form of contact. In extreme situations, we will tell the complainant in writing that their name is on a 'no personal contact' list. This means that they must restrict contact with our office to either written communication or through a third party.



## 19. Reporting a significant performance failure to the Scottish Housing Regulator

19.1. 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 the landlord has not resolved. This is something that is a systematic problem that does, or could, affect many or 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.

19.2. A complaint between an individual tenant and a landlord is not a significant performance failure. Significant performance failures are not, 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 at [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk) or you can phone them on 0141 242 5642. Leaflets are also available within our reception area.

## 20. Getting help to make your complaint

20.1. 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 for you.

20.2. You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance on 0131 556 6443 or Citizens Advice Bureau at [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk).

20.3. 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 find it difficult to put your complaint in writing, please tell us. 19.4. We can also give you this leaflet in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio and Braille).

## 21. Equality and Diversity

21.1. This policy has been developed with consideration to the Equalities Act 2010 and seeks not to consciously or unconsciously discriminate or to have an adverse impact upon any of the protected characteristic groups outlined in the Act.

## 22. Training

22.1 The SPSO has a comprehensive online training programme, and all staff are expected to complete this.

22.2 PHA aims to hold quarterly 'complaints quality circles' where past complaints are considered in terms of both how they were managed and learning points.

## 23. Monitoring

23.1 Complaints give us valuable information we can use to improve customer satisfaction. Our complaints handling procedure enables us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and will help to prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from happening again.

23.2 The detail of complaints are analysed for trend information to ensure we identify any service failures and take appropriate action as soon as possible.

23.3 We report on complaints performance as follows:

- Management Committee / Sub Committee Reports
- Quarterly KPI performance reports
- Publish in our newsletters and on our website what actions we are taking as a direct result of our complaints learning

**END**

## List of Appendices – SPSO

### Model Complaints Handling Policy

Part 1: Overview & Structure

Part 2: When to use the procedure

Part 3: The Complaints handling procedure

Part 4: Governance

Part 5: Customer Facing Guide

Implementation Guide