COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

HARBOUR HOMES

CONTENTS

We put our customers and communities at the heart of everything we do. Providing great customer service is something we pride ourselves on, but sometimes things do go wrong.

If you are dissatisfied with a service we have provided, please tell us. Complaints provide us with valuable feedback to help us to put things right and improve our services. This booklet explains how you can make a complaint and what to expect from us in response.

> “COMPLAINTS PROVIDE US WITH VALUABLE FEEDBACK”

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WHO CAN COMPLAIN?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. If you are making a complaint on someone else’s behalf (eg a relative, friend or someone you are providing advice to), you will normally need their written consent.

TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

WHAT COUNTS AS A COMPLAINT?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about actions we take (or lack of action), or the standard of service we provide. This can include dissatisfaction with services provided on our behalf.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS CAN I COMPLAIN ABOUT?

You can complain about things like:

Failure or refusal to provide a service.
Inadequate service standards.
An unreasonable delay in providing a service.
Delays in responding to enquiries.
Experience of unfairness, bias or prejudice.
Lack of information, or the provision of misleading, unsuitable or incorrect advice or information.
A repair that has not been carried out properly or in the agreed timeframe.
Dissatisfaction with one of our policies.
Failure to properly apply law, procedures or guidance when delivering services.
Failure to follow appropriate administrative processes.
Staff or contractor conduct or attitude (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves).
Disagreement with a decision (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).

WHAT ISN'T CONSIDERED A COMPLAINT?

There are some things our complaints handling procedure does not apply to. There may be other procedures or rights of appeal which can help to resolve your concerns. Examples include:

A routine first-time request for a service.
A request for compensation only.
Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process).
Disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (eg Freedom of Information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector.
A request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts.
A grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment.
A concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern).
A concern about a child or adult's safety.
An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision.
Abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our Unacceptable Actions Policy.
A concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf).

HOW TO COMPLAIN

You can complain in person at our office, by phone, in writing, by email, or by using the complaints form on our website. To help us resolve your concern, please send us your complaint quickly.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR COMPLAINT

When complaining, please include:

- ☐ Your full name and contact details
- ☐ As much detail as you can about the complaint
- ☐ What has gone wrong
- ☐ What outcome you are seeking

OUR CONTACT DETAILS

Harbour Homes
108 Constitution Street
Edinburgh
EH6 6AZ

hello@harbour.scot
www.harbour.scot

The sooner you can send us your complaint, the more likely it is to be resolved satisfactorily.

HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

The sooner you can send us your complaint, the easier it will be for us to gather the correct information and resolve your concern(s). Normally, your complaint should be sent to us within **six months** of the event you wish to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain.

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

“OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE HAS TWO STAGES”

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We will tell you who is dealing with you complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

STAGE 1: FRONTLINE RESPONSE

We aim to respond to complaints quickly (where possible, when you first tell us about the issue). This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

IF YOU'RE NOT SATISFIED WITH OUR STAGE 1 RESPONSE

If you are not satisfied with our response, you may choose to take your complaint to Stage 2. You should typically ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2 either:

- Within six months of the event you want to complaint about or finding out that you have reason to complain.
- Within two months of receiving your Stage 1 response (if this is later).

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a Stage 2 complaint after this time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at Stage 1, you can ask us to handle it at Stage 2 instead.

STAGE 2: INVESTIGATION

If your complaint requires investigation, or if you remain dissatisfied after Stage 1, your complaint will be handled at Stage 2.

When using Stage 2:

- We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days.
- We will confirm our understanding of the complaint and what outcome you are looking for.
- We will try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation).
- Where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days.

If our investigation is due to take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will keep you informed of revised timescales and keep you updated on our progress with the investigation.

Complaint acknowledged in three working days

Full response normally within 20 working days

WHAT IF I'M STILL DISSATISFIED?

After we have given you our final decision, if you are still dissatisfied or are unhappy with how we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to investigate.

ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO COMPLAIN

There are some complaints about housing that have an alternative route for independent review. We will tell you how to seek independent review when we give you our final response on your complaint. See page 9 for more information.

CONTACTING THE SPSO

The SPSO is an independent organisation that investigates complaints. It is not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support, please see page 10).

You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if all of the following apply:

- You have gone all the way through the Harbour Homes complaint handling procedure.
- It is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about.
- The matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

The SPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint. You can do this online at **www.spso.org.uk/complain/form** or call **0800 377 7330**.

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint. See the section on getting help to make your complaint (page 10). The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

If you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment.

Their freepost address is:

FREEPOST SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330
Website: www.spso.org.uk

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

CARE COMPLAINTS

If your complaint relates to a housing support service we provide (eg sheltered housing), you can choose whether to complain to us or to the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about their complaints procedure, or make a complaints, by contacting them.

The Care Inspectorate has several offices around Scotland. Please visit **www.careinspectorate.com** for more information.

REPORT 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 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 systemic 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 and 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 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 **www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk**.

LOOKING FOR HELP?

GETTING HELP TO MAKE YOUR COMPLAINT

We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. If you are dissatisfied with our service, we can accept complaints from your chosen representative. This might be a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain on your behalf.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance. Visit their website **www.siaa.org.uk** or phone **0131 510 9410**.

You can find out about advisers in your area through Citizens Advice Scotland. Visit their website **www.cas.org.uk** to check for your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

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 you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or require this information in another language or format, such as large font or Braille, please let us know.

OUR CONTACT DETAILS

Harbour Homes
108 Constitution Street
Edinburgh
EH6 6AZ

0131 554 0403
hello@harbour.scot

COMPLAINTS QUICK GUIDE

HOW TO COMPLAIN

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email, online via our website, or in writing. The complaint should be made as soon as possible, usually within six months of uncovering a reason to complain. If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose to complain to us or to the Care Inspectorate.

5 DAYS

STAGE 1: FRONTLINE RESPONSE

We will try to resolve your complaint within five working days or sooner if we can. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.

3 DAYS

20 DAYS

STAGE 2: INVESTIGATION

Your complaint will be acknowledged within three working days. We will confirm our understanding of the complaint and what your desired outcome is. Typically our investigation and decision will be concluded after 20 working days. If our investigation is due to take longer than this, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN (SPSO)

If you remain dissatisfied after our final decision, or are unhappy with how we handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to investigate further.

HARBOUR
HOMES

Harbour Homes Scotland Ltd
Registered Scottish Charity SC027945
Financial Conduct Authority Registration FRN772734
Property Factor Registration PF000283
Letting Agent Registration LARN1811003