

# Cassiltoun

## Housing Association

**COMPLAINTS PROCESS  
OCTOBER 2018  
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Cassiltoun Housing Association is committed to providing high-quality customer services. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. This document outlines the process by which complaints are handled by Cassiltoun Housing Association (CHA) and its staff, how to make a complaint and the service standards tenants' can expect from the Association.

This complaints handling process should be read in conjunction with the Staff Guidance on Complaint Handling which defines, in greater detail, roles and responsibilities as well as 11 Corporate Appendixes which support our process. The Complaints Policy and Procedure should also be taken into account when handling complaints.

## 2.0 DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

2.1 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about CHA's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of CHA.

A complaint can be about:-

- Delays in responding to enquiries and requests
- Failure to provide a service
- Standard of service
- Dissatisfaction with CHA Policy
- Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- Failure to follow proper procedure.

A complaint may involve more than one of CHA's services or be about someone working on behalf of CHA.

2.2 There are some things which cannot be dealt with through our complaints procedure. These include:-

- A routine first-time request for a service, for example reporting a problem that needs to be repaired or 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 that decision.
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our **final** decision following stage 2 investigation. If you are still not satisfied you can ask the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman, the Homeowner Housing Panel or Financial Ombudsman Service for an independent review of the complaint.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help resolve a person's concerns that information and advice will be provided.

## 3.0 HOW TO COMPLAIN

Anyone can make a complaint to CHA, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with the service provided by or on behalf of CHA.

A complaint can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, e-mail or using our complaints form.

A complaint should be made immediately in order that it can be rectified quickly and effectively. However, should be made no later than 6 months after the event that is being complained about or finding that there is a reason to complaint, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

When complaining the following information is required:-

- Full name and address of person complaining
- As much information as possible regarding the complaint
- What has gone wrong
- How the matter can be resolved.

#### **4.0 COMPLAINT PROCEDURE STAGES**

4.1 CHA Complaints Procedure is comprised of two internal stages, a Frontline Resolution (Stage 1) and an Investigation (Stage 2).

4.2 When the two internal stages of the Complaints Procedure have been exhausted staff will instruct the customer that they can contact the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO), Homeowner Housing Panel (HOHP) or Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) whichever is the most appropriate who may carry out an external independent review of the customer's complaint.

4.3 Where a member of staff receives a complaint which they are unable to resolve immediately, the complaint is passed to the appropriate Manager/Senior Officer (Corporate Services Manager, Housing Manager, Finance Officer, Communities Co-Ordinator) and may if appropriate be escalated immediately to the Investigation Stage.

#### **5.0 RECEIVING A COMPLAINT**

5.1 Complaints will be accepted by any member of staff and can be written or verbal. Complaints received in all instances must be forwarded to Corporate Services to be recorded. A Complaints Process Flowchart is attached as Appendix 1.

5.2 Staff will aim to resolve straightforward customer complaints quickly and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. If the complaint is able to be immediately resolved by the staff member then this should be done at the Frontline Resolution stage.

5.3 If the staff member is unable to resolve the complaint immediately then the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate Manager/Senior Officer (Corporate Services Manager, Housing Manager, Finance Officer, Communities Co-Ordinator) who will allocate the complaint to a relevant staff member for investigation.

5.4 Where an expression of dissatisfaction concerns a routine request for a service, this will not be considered under the complaints handling procedure and should be directed to the appropriate officer (please see paragraph 2.2).

- 5.5 Where an expression of dissatisfaction involves a request for compensation only, this will not be considered under the complaint handling procedure and should be directed to the appropriate officer (please see paragraph 2.2).
- 5.6 Any attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a previous complaint reconsidered where CHA's definitive decision has been communicated following stage two of the Complaints Procedure cannot be considered. Customers in this instance should be directed to the SPSO, HOHP or FOS. (paragraph 2.2)

## **6.0 FRONTLINE RESOLUTION**

- 6.1 The initial stage in the Complaints Procedure is Frontline Resolution which seeks to resolve a complaint immediately, or within a five working day timescale.
- 6.2 Any complaint received needs to be recorded. If a complaint is made verbally by a customer then the details of the complaint will be recorded by staff on either an Immediate Resolution Form (IRF) (see appendix 2 of Staff Guidance) or a Verbal Complaint Form (VCF) (see appendix 3 of Staff Guidance).

### **6.3 Immediate Resolution**

- 6.3.1 Where a complaint has been resolved immediately staff will record the details of the complaint on an IRF.
- 6.3.2 Staff will also record the outcome of the complaint and any action taken on the IRF.
- 6.3.3 Staff will confirm to the customer the actions taken or to be taken and where appropriate will confirm this in writing to the customer.
- 6.3.4 Staff will also advise the customer that if they remain dissatisfied then they can have their complaint reviewed by the relevant Manager/Senior Officer. The customer will also be advised that CHA record all complaints in order to allow learning from complaints which will improve the services CHA provide.
- 6.3.5 Staff will send a copy of the complaint and outcome to Corporate Services to be recorded on the Complaint Register.

### **6.4 Five Working Day Resolution**

- 6.4.1 Where a complaint cannot be resolved immediately then staff will advise the customer that the details of their complaint will be recorded, a full response will be sent to them within five working days and that if necessary their complaint can be escalated for a Manager/Senior Officer to investigate.
- 6.4.2 If a complaint is received verbally, staff will record the details of the complaint on a VCF and where appropriate will forward the completed VCF to the relevant Manager/Senior Officer. This should be passed to Corporate Services to be recorded on the complaints register and reference number allocated.
- 6.4.3 Where appropriate, the staff member, Manager/Senior Officer will write to the customer within three working days to acknowledge their complaint.

- 6.4.4 Where appropriate the Manager/Senior Officer will assess the complaint for risk (see Appendix 5 of Staff Guidance), identify an appropriate Investigating Officer and issue all relevant paperwork.
- 6.4.5 The Investigating Officer will carry out an investigation into the complaint and respond in writing to the customer within five working days. Any response communicated to the customer will include information on the next stage in the complaints procedure, should the customer remain dissatisfied.
- 6.4.6 If the complaint cannot be resolved within five working days then an extension of a further five working days may be agreed with the customer and authorised by a Manager/Senior Officer. This should only be granted in exceptional circumstances and only if it will facilitate a resolution of the complaint at the Frontline Resolution stage (see appendix 6 of Staff Guidance). Investigating Officer, Manager/Senior Officer will confirm any extension in writing to the customer.
- 6.4.7 The Investigating Officer will forward copies of all final paperwork, including the outcome of the complaint to the relevant Manager/Senior Officer and also to Corporate Services along with the complaint outcome form (see appendix 4 of Staff Guidance) to be recorded on the Complaints Register.

## **7.0 INVESTIGATION STAGE**

- 7.1 Where it has not been possible to resolve a complaint at Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution, or where a customer remains dissatisfied then staff will advise Director of Operations, Finance Director or Corporate Services Manager that the complaint is to be escalated to the Investigation Stage.
- 7.2 The relevant Director/Senior Manager will acknowledge the escalation of the complaint to stage two of the Complaints Procedure in writing to the customer within three working days of receipt and advise that an investigation into the complaint will be carried out and a response to their complaint will be communicated within a twenty working days timescale.
- 7.3 Director/Senior Manager will identify an appropriate investigating officer and provide details of the complaint and all paperwork from stage one to the relevant officer.
- 7.4 The officer carries out a thorough investigation into the customer's complaint, including a review of actions taken at stage one and interviews with relevant staff members and the customer where appropriate. A response to the complaint will be communicated to the customer within twenty working days.
- 7.5 If the complaint cannot be resolved within twenty working days due to extenuating circumstances or operational difficulties, or where the complaint involves very complex issues (see Appendix 6 of Staff Guidance), an extension to timescales may be authorised. This should be discussed with the customer and authorised by the Director/Senior Manager. The Director/Senior Manager should set the time limits on any extended investigation.

- 7.6 The customer must be kept updated on the reason for the delay and give them a revised timescale for completion. Director/Senior Manager will confirm any extension to the timescale in writing to the customer.
- 7.7 The investigating officer will have the complaint signed off by Director/Senior Manager before the response is issued to the customer. The response must include advice to the customer of their right to contact the SPSO, HOHP or FOS to undertake an independent external review of their complaint.
- 7.8 The investigating officer will forward copies of all final paperwork, including the letter notifying the customer of the outcome of the complaint, to Director/Senior Manager and also to Corporate Services along with the complaint outcome form (see appendix 4 of Staff Guidance) to be recorded on the Complaints Register.

## **8.0 EXTERNAL REVIEW STAGE**

- 8.1 Where it has not been possible to resolve a complaint at the Investigation stage, or where a customer remains dissatisfied, the customer will be advised that they can take their complaint to the SPSO or FOS who would undertake an independent external review of their complaint. Details of the appropriate Ombudsman will be included and if applicable a copy of the FOS leaflet "Your Complaint and the Ombudsman" will be sent to the customer. This represents the final stage in the complaints procedure.

SPSO or FOS will not consider complaints from factored owners. From October 2012 a Homeowner Housing Panel can hear complaints from factored homeowners who have exhausted CHA's internal complaints procedure. Correspondence sent to factored homeowners following the conclusion of their complaint at the Investigation Stage from October 2012 should signpost the owner occupier to the Homeowner Housing Panel as the next stage in the complaint procedure.

- 8.2 The contact details for the SPSO are as follows:-  
FREEPOST SPSO  
**Freephone 0800 377 7330 or call 0131 225 5300**

The contact details for the HOHP are 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

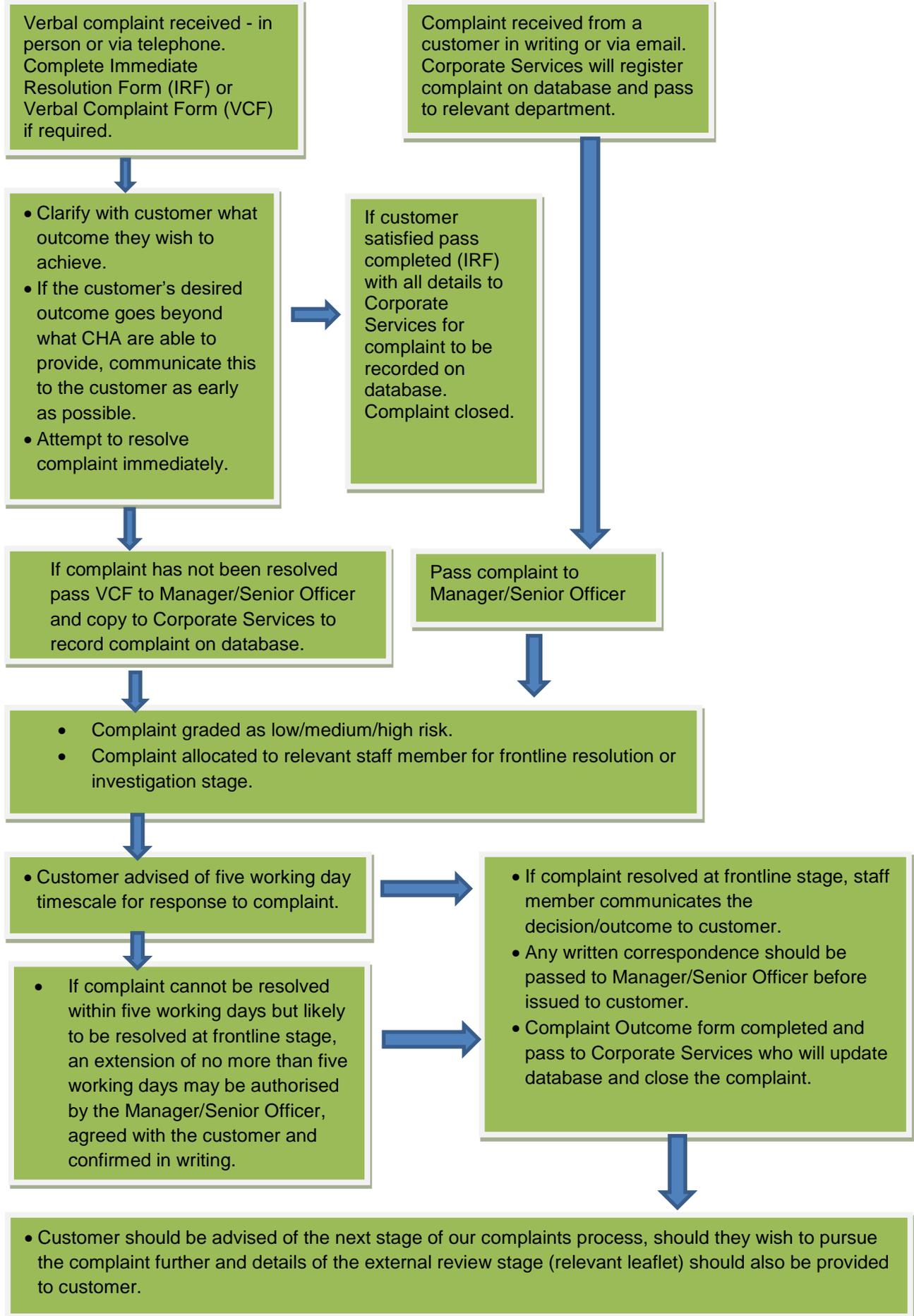
The contact details for the FOS are as follows:

Financial Ombudsman Service  
Exchange Tower  
London  
E14 9SR

**0800 023 4567**  
**0300 123 9123**

**APPENDIX 1 COMPLAINTS PROCESS FLOWCHART**

**STAGE ONE**



**STAGE TWO**

- Where frontline resolution has been unsuccessful the customer may wish to proceed to investigation stage.
- Complaints graded as high risk will progress directly to investigation stage.

- Notify Director/Senior Manager on day of receipt of complaint or notification to escalate.
- Notify Corporate Services who will record complaint on database and confirm latest response date.
- Director/Senior Manager issue a holding letter within three working days advising of investigation and twenty working day timescale to respond.
- Director/Senior Manager appoint an appropriate staff member to conduct an investigation.



- Director/Senior Manager pass complaint file to staff member conducting the investigation.



- Clarify with the customer what their specific complaint is and the outcome they wish to achieve.
- If the customer's desired outcome goes beyond what CHA are able to provide, communicate this to the customer as early as possible.



- Communicate progress of investigation to customer.
- On conclusion of investigation, the investigating officer confirms the outcome and the Director/Senior Manager communicates this in writing to the customer.
- Complaint Outcome form completed and pass to Corporate Services who will update database and close the complaint.



- If the Director/Senior Manager feels that the complaint cannot be fully investigated within the timescale due to operational or other circumstances a further extension may be set and authorised by the CEO, agreed with the customer and confirmed in writing.



- Investigation into the complaint has been concluded.
- Response must be signed off by the Director/Senior Manager.
- Customer notified of next stage in process if not satisfied with the stage two outcome.
- Corporate Services will update and record on the central complaints database and maintain complaints file.

