

# Complaints Policy



**Our Neighbourhood Service**

Warrington Housing Association

## WHA COMPLAINTS POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

Warrington Housing Association (WHA) is a community based not-for-profit housing association located in the borough of Warrington. We are as passionate now as we have ever been about making Warrington a great place to live, in which the potential of individuals and communities can be realised.

### AIMS OF THE POLICY

We aim to deliver excellent services to our customers and treat all customers fairly and with respect, but recognise that sometimes our service may not be as good as we would wish and customers may be dissatisfied and want to complain.

We welcome complaints and this policy sets out how we will handle complaints, with the aim of putting things right and learning lessons to prevent things going wrong in future and using learning to improve our services.

### SCOPE OF POLICY

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'

We will accept complaints by email, through our website/ customer portal, by telephone, letter, in person, through social media or via a representative/ advocate with the customer's permission.

It applies to any service provided by Warrington Housing Association, including our Home Improvement service (WHiA) and Lifetime.

### OUT OF SCOPE

Some requests for service will not be treated as complaints. This includes reports of anti-social behaviour, hate crime or domestic abuse which will be dealt with in accordance with the respective procedures.

If a complaint is about something that cannot be resolved by the Complaints Policy we will explain why and make sure the right team is dealing with it.

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We may not investigate a complaint if it involves ongoing legal action, is about a service failure that happened more than 6 months ago or that have previously been investigated.

Anonymous complaints cannot be dealt with through this complaints policy. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be necessary to investigate the matter in order to protect the Association's interests.

Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of individuals makes it very difficult for us to deal with their complaint. In a small number of cases the actions of individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff or our process.

#### LEGISLATION/ REGULATION

WHA is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing and is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and is required to have a complaints policy.

This policy meets the requirements of the RSH Consumer Standards, specifically Tenant Involvement and Empowerment and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

#### COMPLAINTS PROCESS

We will log and acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and have a 3 stage complaints procedure:

- Stage 1 – Officer – 10 working days
- Stage 2 – Manager – 20 working days
- Stage 3 – Panel – 20 working days. The Panel will consist of a Member of our Scrutiny Panel (WHASP), Board Member and Director.

If the investigation means we need to extend deadlines we will ensure customers are kept updated and receive an explanation for any delays. Where possible, we will aim to discuss any decisions with you first before confirming in writing.

#### REDRESS/ COMPENSATION

We will ask a complainant what they would like us to do to put things right and resolve their complaint. This may be an apology, sending flowers, completion of a service, amendment to a policy, colleague training or financial compensation.

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Compensation payments may be paid at the discretion of a service manager. Any compensation can be offset against any monies owed.

#### HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

If having completed our 3 stage complaints process a complainant remains dissatisfied they have the right to take their complaint to a designated person, such as their MP or to the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman is an independent body set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with them. Their service is free, independent and impartial.

#### ADVICE

You may wish to seek independent help or advice from organisations such as Citizens Advice.

#### RECORD KEEPING

We will record all complaints in our housing system.

#### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All colleagues should embrace complaints, are empowered to try and resolve them and see them as learning opportunities. The heads of service are responsible for overseeing the management and resolution of complaints in their teams.

#### TRAINING

All colleagues will be briefed that we welcome complaints, about our policy and how we will handle complaints and use them to improve services.

#### PERFORMANCE REPORTING

We will report and publish summary information on the number and type of complaints we receive, response times, number resolved at each stage, key learning or changes made.

#### DATA PROTECTION

When handling data colleagues will come into contact with personal information. The handling and use of the data will be carried out under the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

#### MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Board has overall responsibility for the organisation.

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We will carry out an annual assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Compliant Handling Code.

Key Performance Indicator measures will be provided at Senior Management Team and Board level.

We reserve the right to use discretion when applying the policy and may deal with a complaint differently where individual circumstances merit it although we will always endeavour to investigate and resolve complaints where possible.

#### EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In implementing this policy, we aim to treat all customers fairly. An equality impact assessment has been carried out. Where customers require additional support, we will endeavour to provide a service that seeks to meet the needs of a particular individual or household.

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