

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



FIRST HOUSING
Aid & Support Services

Complaints Procedure

First Housing Aid and Support Services aim to provide services of a standard acceptable to everyone who uses our services. If we fail to do this, we want to know about it. This will enable us not only to deal with the specific problem, but also avoid it happening again.

This policy sets out the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from users of the service, an organisation or member of the public. It does not address complaints made by staff or volunteers (dealt with through grievance and disciplinary procedures) nor job applicants (recruitment procedure).

- This procedure is meant to provide a means to resolve a dispute between the organisation and any complainant. It requires staff and our Board of Directors at every stage to resolve the complaint. A Complaint is dissatisfaction with any aspect of our service.

Code of Practice

Our Objective is to provide a consistent practice. We want to give people who use our service a fair, consistent and structured process to get a remedy for problems in the delivery of our services.

We will use the outcome of complaints and any remedial action as a positive method of monitoring performance and improving our services.

Our objective is to;

- Improve the quality of the services we provide
- Improve our relations with service users/stakeholders
- Encourage best practice by our staff

Our Aims

Our service users have a right to:

- Have their views heard
- Receive an excellent quality service
- Expect prompt action when our performance is below standard, balanced by the resources we have available.

Our staff will be:

- Efficient and sensitive to the needs of service users
- Accessible and clearly identified
- Aware of the day-to-day concerns of our service users

Our procedure will:

- Deal with complaints impartially and objectively
- Be easy to access and widely advertised
- Advise service users/stakeholders of the standard of service they should expect a time limit for replying to their complaint and any right of appeal
- Provide a code of practice for handling complaints
- Ensure we monitor complaints
- Ensure we meet our standards
- Ensure confidentiality where necessary

The Procedures

When someone wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure should be adopted. Where the complaint is against a Senior Manager, the same procedure will be followed, but with the Chief Officer substituting in the role of the Senior Manager.

Preliminary stage

- ◆ The complaint should be received either via completion of a complaints form or by a request to make a verbal complaint.

Stage 1

- ◆ The complainant will be invited to speak to a member of staff to discuss the complaint with them. This can be done in person or by phone, whichever, is appropriate.
- ◆ The member of staff should keep a record of the conversation on the complaints monitoring sheet and inform their line manager. If possible, the member of staff will endeavour to resolve the matter.

- ◆ If the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where it is not possible to use **Stage 1** above (for example if it is not convenient for them to phone or visit the office) then refer to **Stage 2** below.
- ◆ Stage 1 should be completed within **5** working days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 2

- ◆ The complainant should be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Manager, marked Private and Confidential, providing as much detail of the complaint as possible.
- ◆ If the complainant is not able to put their complaint in writing the complainant will be offered an interview with the Manager or his/her nominee. The role of the Manager or nominee at this meeting will be confined to putting the complaints in writing, obtain the complainants approval for the contents of this, and ask the complainant to sign to indicate they agree with the contents. The complainant may choose someone to advocate on his or her behalf.
- ◆ The Manager will then investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it.
- ◆ The Manager may delegate any aspect of the investigation to a nominee.
- ◆ If the complaint involves a member(s) of staff the Manager should offer the opportunity for the member of staff to put forward their account, either by written statement or by presentation to the Manager.
- ◆ The Manager will ensure that all complainants receive a response in writing within **10** working days of the letter/complaint notes being received. This letter will summarise what investigations have been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter. A copy of this letter should be attached to the complaints form.
- ◆ If a response by letter is unsuitable, the complainant will be offered an interview with the Manager to provide the response verbally. This meeting should be held within 10 working days as before. A written record of this interview will be kept and signed by the complainant.
- ◆ If the complainant is not satisfied at this stage, they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under **Stage 3** of the complaint's procedure.

Stage 3

- ◆ Where the matter is not resolved by **Stage 2**, the Manager should immediately refer the complaint to a member of the Senior Management team

- ◆ The complainant will be informed immediately that this is being done
- ◆ A member of the Senior Management team will review the decision made at **Stage 2** and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved.
- ◆ The member of the Senior Management team will in turn notify the complainant of the decision and reasons within **15** working days of having received notice of the complaint. The member of the Senior Management team's decision will be final. Records of the meeting will be kept.

You have the right of appeal and to have an advocate throughout this process.

Agencies who may help:

NI Ombudsman
Progressive House, 33-37 Wellington Place, Belfast BT1 6HN
Telephone 0800 343424

Complaints will be recorded and kept on file, including those, which were resolved without being put into writing. The Complaints Monitoring form should be used to do this. All complaints shall be treated in accordance with First Housing Confidentiality policy

A record of complaints will be presented annually to the Board of Trustees summarising the nature of complaints received and how they were resolved.

COMPLAINTS FORM

First Housing Aid & Support Service is committed to providing a quality service for everyone in whom we come into contact with. We aim to work in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of our service users and stakeholders. One of the ways that we can continue to improve our service is by listening to you and responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right. If you wish to complain about any aspect of our Service Delivery, First Housing Aid and Support Services encourage you to fill in this form and return to us so that we can investigate the matter for you.

Please tell us details of your complaint

Please tell us what you feel should/should not have happened

Please tell us what you would like us to do now

Your Name _____

Reviewed and Updated QAG 2020.10.13

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Your Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Is it all right to contact you here? Yes /No
Thank you for completing this form you will receive a response within
_____ Working days

APPROVAL

This Complaints Policy has been reviewed October 2022 and has been approved by the Board of Directors and

Authorised by:

Kevin Wright
Chief Officer

