

# **FIRST CHOICE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD.**

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Policy statement**

The Association will investigate complaints as quickly as possible, keeping the complainant fully informed of the process. Complaints will be dealt with in an efficient, confidential and respectful manner. Where any complaint indicates a service deficiency the Association will endeavour to improve that service.

An improvement to the Association's service may be in the form of establishing a more effective chain of communication between the Association, its tenants, the tenants' support providers and the Association's contractors.

If the complaint is general and relevant to all of the Association's properties it will be incorporated into the Association's policies and procedures.

If the complaint is specific to a one property, appropriate information will be noted on the appropriate system e.g property maintenance file, property housing management file, the housing management list and the maintenance department's SDM records.

### **1.0 Stage 1 Making a complaint**

- 1.1 An oral complaint can be made to any of the Association's staff. The Association's Secretary will be advised and an Investigating Officer appointed. The Investigating Officer is normally the Association's Housing Manager.

Written complaints should be sent to the Secretary of First Choice Housing Association Ltd at 19 Stanwell Road, Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan, CF64 2EZ.

The Association's telephone number is 029 2070 3758.

- 1.2 The Investigating Officer will write to the complainant within five working days, providing a summary of the complaint, contact arrangements, confirmation that the complainant has the right to contact the Investigating Officer, a copy of the Association's Complaints Policy and Procedure and information on sources of advice.
- 1.3 The Investigating Officer will aim to investigate the complaint within ten working days and send the complainant a full response to the complaint within one month. The complainant will be provided with details of the outcome of the investigation, an explanation of the reasons for the problem identified and the action taken to resolve the complaint. Where appropriate, a written apology will be provided and, if applicable, an offer of compensation. The letter will also advise the complainant of their right to request a review of the decision made by the Association.
- 1.4 If it is not possible to provide a full response to the complaint within one month a letter detailing reasons for the delay will be sent to the complainant within one month. If the delay continues, further letters will be sent at monthly intervals to keep the complainant informed of progress.

- 1.5 When a complaint has been resolved it will be reviewed by the Association's Chief Executive to ensure all appropriate actions and, where appropriate, necessary changes to working practices, have been implemented.

## **2.0 Stage 2 Review procedure**

- 2.1 If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Association's investigation into a complaint, they may request a review of the Association's response.
- 2.2 On receipt of a written request for a review, the Association will appoint a review panel which will meet within 28 days of the complainant's request for a review. The panel will consist of three people and at least one person on this panel will be an independent person. The other members of the review panel will normally be the Association's Chief Executive and a member of the Association's Board of Management, normally the Chairperson.
- 2.3 Complainants will be notified, in writing, at least 10 working days beforehand of the time and place of the review meeting, and the complainant will be invited to attend the meeting. The complainant is entitled to make written representations to the panel beforehand, and to make oral representations at the meeting. The complainant may be accompanied by another person, who can speak on their behalf.
- 2.4 Within 28 days of the review panel the complainant, and any others involved in the review, will be notified of the outcome of the review.

## **3.0 Stage 3 Written complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.**

- 3.1 At any point, including if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Association's complaints procedure; the Complainant has the right to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Address: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.  
1 Ffordd yr Gae  
Pencoed  
CF35 5LJ

Email: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Web: [www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 601 0987 (local call rate)

Fax: 01656 641199

When the Ombudsman contacts the Association for information regarding the complaint, the Association must respond within 4 weeks.

## **4.0 Criminal allegations**

- 4.1 In the event of substantial criminal allegations, a complainant may contact the police before making a complaint to the Association.
- 4.2. If the investigation carried out by the Association indicates the possibility of criminal activity, the Secretary of the Association will inform the police and

advise the Investigating Officer as to whether the Association should continue its investigation.

## 5.0 Advocates

If the complaint has been made by a tenant, and the Investigating Officer considers that they may need an advocate to act on their behalf, a request will be made to the Local Authority Social Service Department to identify an advocate.

## 6.0 Sources of advice

If the complaint is very serious or complicated it may be worth getting independent advice for example from a Citizens Advice Bureau, Solicitor, local Councillor, Assembly member or Member of Parliament. It may also be appropriate to consider mediation or arbitration as a way of resolving the complaint.

- **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**  
The CAB offers a wide range of advice including advice on your legal position. See your local phone directory or look up the CAB website: [www.nacab.org.uk](http://www.nacab.org.uk)

- **Shelter Cymru**  
Shelter Cymru are able to offer advice on a wide range of housing issues.

Address: Shelter Cymru  
25 Walter Road  
Swansea  
SA1 5NN

Tel: 01792 469400  
Website: [www.sheltercymru.org.uk](http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk)  
Email: [advicesouth@sheltercymru.org.uk](mailto:advicesouth@sheltercymru.org.uk)

- **Tenant Participation Advisory Service**

Address: TPAS (Cymru)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Transport House  
1 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff  
CF11 9SD

Tel: 029 2023 7303  
Website: [www.tpascymru.org.uk](http://www.tpascymru.org.uk)  
Email: [enquiries@tpascymru.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@tpascymru.org.uk)

TPAS (Cymru)  
Ty Blodwel  
Broad Street  
Llandudno Junction  
Conwy  
LL31 9HL

01492 593046  
[www.tpascymru.org.uk](http://www.tpascymru.org.uk)  
[iona@tpascymru.org.uk](mailto:iona@tpascymru.org.uk)

- **Mediation Wales**

Mediation is a way of sorting out disputes co-operatively. An independent mediator enables the people involved to reach an agreement that is acceptable to all.

Address: Mediation Wales  
42 Charles Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 2GE

Tel: 029 20 229955

Website: [www.mediationwales.org.uk](http://www.mediationwales.org.uk)

Email: [enquiries@mediationwales.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@mediationwales.org.uk)

## **7.0 Monitoring of complaints**

- 7.1 A summary of complaints received and outcomes is presented to the Association's Board of Management on an annual basis. This summary is reviewed in detail and any improvements to the Association's working practices that are identified, including the complaints policy and procedure itself, will be implemented.
- 7.2 If a serious complaint has been made to the Association it will be presented to the Association's Board of Management whilst it is under investigation.