



## Group Complaints Policy

<b>POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST</b>	
Policy Guardian:	Director of Finance & Governance
Author:	Governance Manager
Version number:	2.0
Approved by Chief Executive on:	May 2019
Governing Body Approved:	May 2019
Effective from:	May 2019
Date of Last Review:	July 2020
Date of Next Review:	July 2025
Diversity compliant:	Yes
Equality Impact Assessment required:	No
Data Protection compliant:	Yes
Health & Safety compliant:	Yes
Procedure implemented:	Yes
QL system changes made:	Yes
KPIs / reporting arrangements implemented:	Yes
Training Completed:	Yes
Posted on intranet:	Yes
Posted on website:	Yes
Publicity material issued:	N/A

This document can also be provided in large print, braille, audio or other non-written format, and in a variety of languages.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 This policy underpins the Caledonia Group's ("the Group") corporate commitment to valuing complaints and sets out how we will fulfil regulatory expectations in relation to their handling based on the following core set of complaints handling principles that underpin the Group Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP):

- User-focused
- Simple and timely
- Thorough, proportionate and consistent
- Objective, impartial and fair
- Seeking early resolution
- Delivering improvements

1.2 The relationship we share with our tenants and other customers is one we value and we are similarly committed to ensuring it remains open and positive. The array of feedback we receive plays a vital part in helping us achieve this. It confirms the high expectations placed upon us, and whether or not we are meeting these expectations.

1.3 We recognise the importance of complaints in helping to improve our customer service and achieving our Customer 1<sup>st</sup> principles of "Keep it Simple, Keep it Personal, Make it Right". This brings a requirement to have in place robust systems and effective procedures to ensure complaints are properly managed and acted upon.

## **2. Policy Context**

2.1 The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 provides the basis for standardised complaints handling across the public sector. It empowered the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to develop a series of sector specific Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) models. The overall aim was to improve how complaints are handled across the public sector, and provide a consistent process for customers to follow.

2.2 In legislative terms, Registered Social Landlords (RSL) are defined as one of the "listed authorities" over which SPSO can exercise its powers. Consequently, SPSO developed a model CHP for the RSL sector. First published in April 2012, and revised and reissued in 2020, this model applies to and requires to be adopted by all Scottish RSLs.

## **3. Complaints Handling Procedure**

3.1 Caledonia Group shall adopt the model CHP for the RSL sector in full. We will maintain appropriate business support systems to enable us to record, manage and respond to complaints. We will also maintain the necessary systems that reflect a commitment to learn from complaints we receive.

3.2 We note the CHP comprises two documents. The first explains to staff how to handle complaints; the second provides information on this for customers. We shall ensure all staff are fully aware of the procedure and receive appropriate training on its use and our associated management systems. New staff will cover the procedure as part of their induction process with all staff being provided with refresher training as required to ensure they are confident in identifying complaints, empowered to resolve simple complaints on the spot and are familiar with how to apply the procedure (including recording complaints). As part of this we will aim to embed an organisational culture of valuing and learning from complaints, in the context of identifying service improvements.

3.3 We shall similarly promote and publicise our procedure to ensure, as far as possible, that all tenants and other customers are aware of their right to complain and the arrangements for doing so.

### Specifics

3.4 The model CHP aims to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process for resolving complaints. In adopting the model we acknowledge its key features, including:

- A single, clear definition of a complaint, with guidance on and examples to aid identification.
- A defined two stage internal process for resolving complaints at either the 'frontline' (as close to first point of contact as possible) or through 'investigation' where the matter is more complex, serious or high risk.
- Defined timescales for resolution at either stage; including examples of the limited circumstances under which these can be extended.
- Detailed guidance on handling and processing complaints and communicating with complainants during the process.
- Definition of the scope for customers to approach the SPSO if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
- Definition of roles and responsibilities, including those relating to the Group Governing Bodies, Chief Executive and senior officers.
- Minimum requirements for recording complaints, their outcomes and any resulting action.

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

4.1 Our CHP sets out detailed arrangements for the governance of complaints handling. This includes distinct roles and responsibilities for the Group's Governing Bodies and staff members.

4.2 In summary, each Governing Body is responsible for approving adoption of the Group CHP and this Policy; monitoring our performance in handling complaints through receipt of KPI information; and approving changes to any of our other policies to reflect learning from complaints.

4.3 The Chief Executive shall oversee implementation and on-going operational deployment of our Complaints Handling Procedure, in conjunction with the other senior officers. This will include ensuring management systems are in place and working effectively to properly record all complaints; investigation processes are suitably robust; and performance reports are produced and submitted to the respective governing bodies.

4.4 The Chief Executive will have a direct role in reviewing and signing off investigation stage complaints, and in handling complaints that are identified as being high risk or high profile.

4.5 For complaints relating to service provision, the Director of Finance & Governance will coordinate and handle all complaints at investigation stage, with the exception of those involving an activity or service that falls within their functional responsibility. In these cases another senior officer from the Executive Management Team (EMT) will assume this role.

4.6 The senior management team will actively monitor and analyse complaints handling performance, including outcomes and learning points. They will also be responsible for identifying and proposing policy changes that may be required as a result of complaints and, for putting these into practice.

4.7 All other staff may be involved in receiving and resolving frontline stage complaints, including recording and responding to them in accordance with our CHP.

## **5. Compliance and Performance**

5.1 Outcome two within the Scottish Social Housing Charter relates to Communication. The accompanying note specifies that it “...covers all aspects of landlords’ communication with tenants and other customers” and that “...It also covers making it easy for tenants and other customers to make complaints and provide feedback on services, using that information to improve services and performance, and letting people know what they have done in response to complaints and feedback.”

5.2

5.3 We will maintain and implement a comprehensive performance management system, which is designed to meet Charter requirements and includes arrangements for monitoring and reporting on key performance measures, including those relating to complaints. We will ensure this is aligned with broader regulatory expectations in relation to complaints monitoring and reporting. We will ensure our complaints monitoring activities include arrangements for trend and root cause analysis; and that we will include qualitative as well as quantitative information in our public reporting.

5.4 We will aim to keep abreast of emerging good practice in the sector and remain open to adopting this. This may include for example, providing a role for tenants in reviewing complaints and the way they were dealt with.

## **6. Equalities Issues**

We acknowledge the relevance of the CHP to all our tenants and customers, and their respective rights to complain about something we have or have not done; or our standards of service. We will treat all complainants fairly, respectfully and as individuals and, as far as practically possible, accommodate any specific needs they may have.

6.1 In accordance with our commitment to equality and diversity, we shall ensure our CHP is accessible to everyone who requires to use it and provide appropriate support and assistance to any customer who wishes to make a complaint. As part of this we will:

- Ensure information about our complaints handling procedure is easily and widely available online and in our offices and other premises.
- Use our various publications to make tenants and customers aware of their right to complain and publicise arrangements about how to make a complaint.
- Explain our procedure and its application as required.
- Provide our procedure in formats or languages other than written English as appropriate or on request.
- Offer a range of methods of complaining Provide any other practical assistance, such as help with scribing or articulation.

## **7. Risk Management Implications**

- 7.1 The principal risk addressed by this policy is that of non-compliance with the SPSO's Complaints Handling Procedure. This policy, and the implementation of its associated procedures and practices, should minimise this risk.
- 7.2 Accordingly, and as required, we will continue to review our management systems and monitoring framework, and provide training for all staff.
- 7.3 We also recognise that certain types of complaints may be categorised as serious, high risk, or high profile. Our CHP details our approach to handling these.
- 7.4 In accordance with the CHP, we aim to ensure complaints are properly managed and investigated, and have robust systems and methods in place for this purpose. Our handling will focus on tenant needs and we will make every effort to understand their desired outcome. We will keep complainants informed as we process and investigate their complaint, and otherwise work in accordance with the CHP and its principles in all regards.

## **8. Redress Policy**

- 8.1 We acknowledge the role of complaints in providing customers with a form of redress, where we fail to meet their expectations. We note the SPSO guidance on redress, which advises service providers to, where possible, seek to re-instate an individual to the position they were in prior to the event which is the subject of the complaint.
- 8.2 This can include compensating for direct financial loss. In such cases we shall make an informed judgement of the level of financial hardship resulting from the event, and experienced by the complainant in making and pursuing their complaint. Where the complainant appears to have unrealistic expectations or submits a claim that we consider unreasonable, we may ask them to provide some form of substantiating evidence.
- 8.3 We note however that redress can similarly involve providing an explanation and apology through personal contact; and that often complainants may seek this, rather than a financial payment. In such cases, we will aim to find the most appropriate way of providing this, and meet particular communication requests complainants may have.
- 8.4 We acknowledge an individual's right to present their complaint to the SPSO, in the event that they remain dissatisfied with our handling of their complaint.
- 8.5 We will also provide our tenants and customers with the appropriate signposting and information to enable them to contact the Scottish Housing Regulator if they believe there has been a significant performance failure or failure to handle their complaint effectively. We will ensure any material produced by the SHR is prominently displayed and readily available in all locations open to the public. A significant performance failure can be defined as a failure by the landlord to meet its legal requirements or tenant commitments.

## **9. Review**

- 9.1 The SPSO will review and revise the model CHP periodically. By implication this is likely to present a requirement to adopt future procedural revisions and amend the Group's complaints handling procedure.
- 9.2 This policy shall accordingly be reviewed every five years to or earlier if a review of the model CHP is undertaken. Where flexibility in the model permits, we will seek to engage tenants and tenants groups in this review work.

## **10. Other Regulatory Bodies**

10.1 The Group has chosen to adopt the SPSO CHP for the RSL sector as the framework for its complaints policy. However, we are aware that customers may contact and register complaints with other external regulatory agencies. These include:

**The Scottish Housing Regulator**  
58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow, G4 0HF  
On line: [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk)  
Phone: 0141 242 5642

**The Care Inspectorate**  
Compass House, 11 Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY  
On line: [www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/contact-us](http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/contact-us)  
Phone: 0345 600 9527

**Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)**  
Quadrant House, 9 Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY  
On line: [www.oscr.org.uk/contact-oscr/charity-concern-form](http://www.oscr.org.uk/contact-oscr/charity-concern-form)  
Phone: 01382 220446

**Housing & Property Chamber (First-Tier Tribunal for Scotland)**  
Glasgow Tribunals Centre, 20 York Street, Glasgow G2 8GT  
On line: [www.housingandpropertychamber.scot](http://www.housingandpropertychamber.scot)  
Phone: 0141 302 5900

10.2 Often the agencies listed in 9.1 will refer complainants to the organisational complaints procedure or to the SPSO. However, we will communicate and co-operate with all external agencies where they have received a complaint and confirm that they intend to undertake an investigation.