



**Complaints Policy and Procedure**

<b>Policy Author</b>	Head of Housing & Property
<b>Approved and Authorised By</b>	Housing & Property Committee
<b>Review Date</b>	June 2024
<b>Next Review</b>	June 2026



## 1. Introduction

Hammersmith United Charities (HUC) aims to have a positive complaint handling culture. We recognise that this supports a strong relationship between the Charity and our residents, helps ensure that things can be put right when they have gone wrong and helps us develop and improve our services.

HUC ensures regular analysis of complaints to identify and address trends, for review by the Housing & Property Committee. At all times, HUC will work with other agencies, including housing regulators, local authorities and social services, to support complainants

## 2. Purpose and scope

This Complaints Policy applies to all residents and their representatives, visitors, volunteers of Hammersmith United Charities (HUC). For the purposes of this document all individuals or groups listed above who make a complaint will be referred to as complainants.

The policy describes how the Charity deals with complaints about its properties and services. Complaints will be dealt with in a clear, consistent, and transparent manner.

## 3. Definition of a complaint and a service request

HUC defines a complaint in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code 2024 “an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.”

A resident does not have to use the word “complaint” for it to be treated as such, whenever they express dissatisfaction, they must be given the choice to make a complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or advocate will also be handled in line with this policy.

A complaint is not the same as a service request. A service request is a request from a resident requiring action such as request for a repair when made for the first time, a report of anti-social behaviour or a request for information. If HUC subsequently fails to respond to that service request in line with its published policy, that matter may become a complaint.

### Exclusions

Some issues may not be treated as a complaint under the terms of this policy. These include but are not limited to:

- If the complaint relates to a matter where legal proceedings have already started
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago, unless relating to safeguarding or health and safety.
- If the complaint has already been through the complaints process.



Complaints between residents, and/or staff and volunteers regarding anti-social behaviour are dealt with through the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

If the Charity decides not to accept a complaint, then an explanation will be provided in writing to the resident setting out the reasons why the complaint is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman.

#### **4. Aims of the Policy**

This policy aims to:

- Set out a clear and efficient procedure for residents and others to make complaints.
- Focus on finding solutions that meet and resolve the situation, or on coming to a position of mutual understanding to agree closure of the complaint.
- Maintain a consistent level of service and uphold the good reputation of the Charity.
- Recognise that some of the residents may be vulnerable and may face additional barriers in making their views and voices heard.

#### **5. The Process**

HUC ensures that our Complaints Policy is accessible to everyone by publishing this policy on the HUC website, including information in the Resident's Handbook and displaying a copy on the noticeboard at both schemes.

Complaints can be made in a range of ways:

- In writing via letter to Head of Housing & Property, Sycamore House, Sycamore Gardens, London W16 0AS
- By email to [officeadmin@hamunitedcharities.com](mailto:officeadmin@hamunitedcharities.com) this email will then be forwarded to the Head of Housing and Property or in their absence the CEO
- By telephone to 0208 741 4326, a brief description of the complaint will be noted and the matter referred to the Head of Housing and Property or in their absence the CEO
- In person or directly to any HUC member of staff who will take a brief description of the complaint and pass the matter on to the Head of Housing and Property or in their absence the CEO

Complaints will be dealt with in two stages:

##### **Stage 1**

- HHP will ensure the complaint is acknowledged within 5 working days. This will include our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes being sought. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, we will ask the resident for clarification. The complaint will also be logged on the complaints register.

**Head office & Sycamore House**  
Sycamore Gardens, London, W6 0AS  
General enquiries: 020 8741 4326



- Ensure issues that cannot wait until the complaint is investigated are dealt with alongside the complaint investigation.
- Welcome residents to be represented or accompanied at any meeting or communication regarding the complaint and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. We will also keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed and well as any disabilities disclosed by or on behalf of the resident.
- Manage expectations from the outset and be clear where the desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.
- Make contact from the outset to discuss the concerns and make further contact if more information is needed.
- Provide updates with the progress of the complaint investigation and agree the preferred way to communicate.
- Give the opportunity to outline the position and comment on any findings before a final decision is made.
- Provide a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. If an extension is required, we will aim to make this less than 10 working days unless there is good reason and will explain the reasons clearly and in writing to the resident along with the contact details of the Ombudsman.
- At the completion of Stage 1 we will provide the following in writing:
  - The complaint stage
  - The complaint definition
  - The decision on the complaint
  - The reason for any decisions made
  - The details of any remedy offered to put things right
  - The details of any outstanding actions
  - Details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the resident is not satisfied with the response
- Ensure that any actions because of the complaint resolution are monitored through to completion.
- Keep a record of the complaint, the date received, the correspondence with the resident or other parties and supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.
- Respond to all Ombudsman enquiries within their timescales.

## Stage 2

Complainants can request a review of the complaint if they are unhappy with the decision

We will:

- Not unreasonably refuse a request for a complaint to be reviewed. Should we do so, we will explain why in writing and who the complainant can contact if they do not agree with this decision. Reasons for not agreeing to a review can include:
  - The request is over 20 days from the date of the complaint investigation outcome without a reasonable explanation.
  - Where demands are made that are unreasonable or distressing.



- Write to acknowledge the complaint review within 5 working days. This will include our understanding of the reason for the review and the outcome being sought.

The review will be handled by the Chief Executive and Chair of the Housing & Property Committee.

We will:

- Provide a full response within 20 working days with the complete stage, the complaint definition, the decision on the complaint, the reasons for any decisions made, details of any remedy offered to put things right, details of outstanding actions, and how to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman if the resident remains dissatisfied.
- Make contact if we cannot give a full response within 20 working days to make an agreement to extend the time by a further 10 working days and confirm this in writing.
- Provide the contact details of the relevant Ombudsman if an agreement to extend cannot be reached.

Where a response to a complaint is likely to fall outside the timescales detailed above we will agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.

If, having followed the two stages of this complaint's procedure, you still remain dissatisfied you may ask to have your complaint reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted via their website <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>, via email on [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk) or by phone on 0300 111 3000.

## **6. Complaints Officer/Member Responsible for Complaints**

The Complaints Officer at Hammersmith United Charities is the Head of Housing and Property. It is the role of the Complaints Officer to ensure the prompt resolution of complaints, to liaise with the Ombudsman and ensure that complaints are reported to the Housing and Property Committee

The Chair of the Housing and Property Committee is the Member Responsible for Complaints. This person has lead responsibility for complaints and supports a positive complaint handling culture.

## **7. Legislation and Regulation**

- Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code 2024
- Regulator of Social Housing, Consumer Standards - Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- Public Sector Equality Duty



## **8. Equality and Diversity**

HUC has obligations derived from the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. The Charity's complaints policy upholds this obligation by ensuring that all complaints are managed in accordance with PSED which has been designed to provide assistance and support to vulnerable people.

## **9. Monitoring and reporting**

The Housing and Property Committee receives a quarterly report which details performance indicators around complaints, and monitors these to ensure good governance.