

COMPLAINTS POLICY

(adopted march 2009)

The Co-op will encourage all members to follow the established procedure in this policy document notwithstanding what certain of the co-op tenancy agreements stipulate.

WHAT COMPLAINTS CAN BE MADE TO WEST HAMPSTEAD HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE (WHHC)?

WHHC aims to provide a good service to its members. The co-op will take all complaints seriously, and any such complaints will be thoroughly and fairly investigated and considered; however the co-op can only deal with complaints that are about Landlord / Tenant issues (i.e. the service the co-op provides to co-op members). For example: failure of the co-op to provide a service to a reasonable standard, failure by the co-op to follow its own policies and procedures or complaints about people employed or contracted by the co-op.

WHHC reserves the right to refuse to deal with a complaint or to deal with it differently if they are pursued unreasonably.

The co-op's Complaints Procedure does not apply to complaints about the actions or behaviour of your neighbours, other co-op members or visitors. These matters are covered by the co-op's Tenancy Agreements and Anti Social Behaviour Policy.

All complaints are treated confidentially.

A complaint can only be dealt with if it is made within three months of the occurrence of the event / issue in question.

At all stages of the procedure complainants will be kept informed about what is happening with their complaint. If it is not possible to respond in the agreed timescales they will be informed and given a revised deadline in writing.

It is not possible to skip any stage in the procedure.

AIMS OF THE COMPLAINTS POLICY / PROCEDURE

- To ensure a speedy and fair resolution to the problem
- To promote conciliation not confrontation
- To gain valuable feedback on the co-op's services
- An opportunity to identify and resolve problems

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Complaints can be made in person to the office, by telephone, email or letter. If you are dissatisfied in any way with the service you have received from the co-op you should in the first instance contact the office where you will be directed to the person responsible for the service. The person responsible should in most instances be able to resolve the matter to your satisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied with the service provided or the response to your initial complaint, the next step is to make a formal complaint to the Co-op Manager.

You will be asked to fill in a complaint form (assistance will be given in filling the form on request) and return it to the office along with any supporting documentation. Address the form to the Co-op Manager, unless the complaint is about a member of staff.

If your complaint is about a member of staff you should address it to the Chair of the Co-op and mark it "Private and Confidential". Please see Appendix A and the Disciplinary Procedure for further details.

If a member of staff has a complaint against a member / members of the co-op or another member of staff they should address their complaint to the Line Manager and mark it "Private and Confidential". Please see the Grievance Procedure for further information.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A COMPLAINT IS RECEIVED

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COMPLAINT

TIMESCALE: 7 DAYS FROM RECEIPT OF COMPLAINT

The Complaint is given a reference number and is recorded by filing the complaint form and any supporting documentation. The complaint form will be held on the tenancy file of the complainant and a record kept for monitoring purposes.

The complaint is acknowledged in writing to the complainant within 7 days of receipt.

STAGE 1

Complaint in writing to the Chair requesting a complaint panel hearing -
TIMESCALE: 3 WEEKS FROM RECEIPT OF COMPLAINT PANEL REQUEST

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the stage 1 resolution, a further complaint may be made which will initiate *Stage 2* of the procedure. The complainant will be requested to complete a Complaint Panel Request Form detailing why they are unsatisfied with the resolution and what / how they would like to rectify the problem. Assistance will be given in completing the form if requested. The Complaint Panel Request Form should be sent to the Chair and marked 'Private and Confidential'.

The Chair will set up a complaints panel of 3 Management Committee members. The panel will meet to hear the complaint within 3 weeks of receipt of the Complaint Panel Request Form. The panel will choose one person to act as panel chair, who will respond to the complainant outlining the panel's decision. A copy of this letter will be held on the tenancy file of the complainant and a record kept for monitoring purposes.

STAGE 2

Complaint in writing to the Chair requesting an appeal panel hearing -
TIMESCALE: 3 WEEKS FROM RECEIPT OF APPEAL PANEL REQUEST

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the result of the complaint panel, the complainant will be requested to complete an Appeal Form detailing why they are unsatisfied with the resolution and what / how they would like to rectify the problem. Assistance will be given in completing the form if requested. The Appeal Form should be sent to the Chair and marked 'Private and Confidential'.

The Chair will set up an appeal panel, which will consist of all Management Committee members. The panel will meet to hear the appeal within 3 weeks of receipt of the Appeal Form. The panel will choose one person to act as panel chair, who will respond to the complainant outlining the panel's decision. A copy of this letter will be held on the tenancy file of the complainant and a record kept for monitoring purposes.

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

If the complainant is still dissatisfied and feels that the complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction, they have the right to take their case to the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHO).

NB: The IHO will only deal with complaints once the co-op's own complaints procedure has been exhausted. Please note that the IHO will not investigate or resolve the actual complaint in terms of blame but will look at how the co-op dealt with the Complaint and whether it acted within its own policies and procedures,

essentially whether the co-op has dealt with the matter in a reasonable and professional manner. If the IHO finds that the co-op has not dealt with the matter properly they can make recommendations and orders and can recommend / order that the tenant receives compensation from the co-op.

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN
Lo-Call: 0845 7125 973
T: 020 7421 3800
Minicom: 0207 404 7092
w: ihos.org.uk
e: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

MONITORING

The co-op will use the feedback it receives through the Complaints Procedure to assist it to identify problems, review policies and practices and apply its resources more effectively.

All complaints are logged in a quarterly report is prepared for the MC. The report analyses the type of complaints received, length of time taken to respond, stage that the complaint is at and the outcome.