

Complaints Procedure

The Association is committed to providing a courteous and helpful service and aims to provide a good advice as well as clear and speedy replies to enquiries.

We are aware that things can go wrong and if they do we want to know about it. This leaflet tells you how to complain to the Association and how we will deal with the matter.

Who can use the Complaints Procedure?

The procedure is principally available to tenants of the Association and to applicants for our houses. In addition, it is available to neighbours of our tenants and to owner-occupiers or landlords where the Association has a management role.

Who is covered by the Complaints Procedure?

Appeals against a decision to reject a waiting list application are covered by a separate Appeals Procedure. The Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about Westfield Housing Association.

You may want to complain to us about the actions of someone else, such as a noisy neighbour. Please see the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

How can I complain?

You can complain to us in whichever way is easiest for you; by telephone, by visiting the office, or in writing.

The Complaints Procedure is designed as a series of stages – if you are not satisfied, you should take your complaint to the next stage. The final stage involves consideration of the matter by the Association's Board.

Informal Contacts

Staff of the Association have a day-to-day informal contact with tenants and others and it is anticipated

many grievances will be dealt with through such contacts. The stages in the Complaints Procedure are:

Stage 1

Formal Complaint to a Senior Officer

A first complaint should be made to a senior officer of the Association (Housing Services Officer, Property Services Officer or Operations Manager). You should explain your problem and include all the information you feel is relevant. The senior officer should be able to settle your complaint to your satisfaction, or at least give you a detailed response, within 10 working days. However, if you are still dissatisfied you should take your complaint to the next stage.

Stage 2

Formal Complaint to the Director

If you are not satisfied with our reply, or if we have not responded in the timescale promised, you should contact the Director. Again, the complaint need not be put in writing although the Director is likely to keep a summary record of the discussion (which you may be asked to sign). Where considered necessary, you will be visited at home and you should expect a response within 10 working days. Complaints which reach this stage will be recorded and monitored. The monitoring of complaints provides the Association with an indication of any areas of service which need attention.

Stage 3

Formal Complaint to the Board

If you are still not satisfied you can appeal in writing or in person to the Complaints Committee (or Neighbourhood Investment Committee). This Committee comprises of at least three Board members, one of which will be the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Association. Should the Committee consider it justified, they may award compensation to the complainant in order to make good the failure in service.

What if I am still not satisfied?

There is an Ombudsman for housing associations similar to that which governs the activities of local authorities and you can take your complaint there. Details can be obtained from Westfield Housing Association or you can contact the Ombudsman directly as follows:

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Fax: 020 7831 1942

E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

The Ombudsman will wish to be sure that you have gone through the complete Complaints Procedure of the Association before taking up your complaint.

You should note that, following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, unless you refer your complaint to a “designated person” in the first instance (see below) you will have to wait 8 weeks before you can refer the matter directly to the Ombudsman.

Who else can help?

A “Designated Person”

The Localism Act 2011 provides that tenants of housing associations can ask for their complaints to be considered by a “designated person” when their landlord’s internal complaints procedure is finished. This provision started on 1st April 2013.

A designated person (who can be an MP or local councillor) will help resolve the complaint themselves or they can refer the complaint straight to the Ombudsman. If they refuse to do either then the tenant can contact the Ombudsman directly.

If the problem is still not resolved following intervention of the designated person either they or the tenant can refer the complaint to the Ombudsman.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Your local CAB can help you. You can also get free advice from Law Centres and Housing Aid Centres. If you wish to engage a solicitor, you will normally have to pay for their services.

Tenant Board Members

At least a third of the Board are tenants. Details of such members can be obtained from Westfield Housing Association.

County Court

You have a right to lodge complaints of discrimination against the Association in the County Court on the grounds of race or gender and your rights under the Protection from Harassment Act. There is a six month time limit from the date of the event giving rise to the complaint and the date the complaint is registered.

