



Policy Statement: Customer Feedback

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1. PURPOSE

Tuntum Housing Association is committed to providing excellent services that meet the standards agreed with our customers. When we do not meet expectations we are always keen to understand, learn and identify how we can improve service provision.

This policy sets out Tuntum Housing Association's approach to dealing with and learning from complaints. We aim to deal fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately with all complaints. The organisation must also identify areas where service failure or an inability to meet our published standards of service requires remedial action.

Complaints need to be taken seriously and dealt with professionally as the customer experience of our response plays an important part in shaping and improving our services.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Tuntum Housing Association will make available its complaints policy to anyone on request. Further, the Association will advertise the policy to its customers.

The Association will acknowledge complaints within three working days of receipt, and will endeavour so far as is possible to respond fully in writing within two weeks of the receipt of complaint.

We welcome all comments and enquiries and will deal with them all seriously. In line with this policy, they will be acknowledged, directed to the appropriate area of service and where appropriate, a full response given.

All compliments will be treated in the same way with the appropriate people being made aware of the appreciation expressed.

All comments on service standards will be acknowledged, considered and, where appropriate, acted upon. Feedback will always be provided to the person making the comment.

All complaints will be dealt with within the timescales set out in this policy and to the satisfaction of both the customer and the Trust.

Any matters regarding customer dissatisfaction will be put right as quickly and as simply as possible. We will also improve services to ensure that these issues do not arise again.

We will quickly implement any improvements to our policies and procedures arising from a comment or a complaint.

The following principles will be followed when dealing with complaints:

- They will all be dealt with promptly, courteously, systematically and fairly.
- Where appropriate, they will be treated confidentially. If information is to be discussed with staff or external bodies, the customer will be asked for their permission before any information is disclosed.
- There will be clear communication of the final outcome or of a complaint's progress if a longer timescale of investigation is required.
- They will be used to improve and develop procedures and services.

All enquiries, comments and compliments will be recorded and monitored with the information being fed back into policy and service reviews to ensure continuous service improvement.

3. DEFINITIONS

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when a customer expresses dissatisfaction with:

- Actions taken by Tuntum (i.e. we have done something badly or incorrectly)
- A lack of action by Tuntum (i.e. we have failed to do something we should have done)
- The way staff/contractors have dealt with someone or provided a service (i.e. treated someone unfairly or discourteously)

A complaint is **not**:

- A request for service (reporting a repair)
- A request for information or explanation of a decision
- A request for explanation of policy or practice
- Matters for which there is an alternative route of appeal (i.e. someone objecting to an offer of housing being made)

We aim to resolve all complaints effectively within set targets and to customer satisfaction.

Who can make a complaint?

Any tenant, leaseholder, resident or applicant for housing can make a complaint. If you need help in making a complaint, someone else can complain on your behalf, but we will need to be sure that they are representing your views.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director of Resources and Risk is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Payments for compensation and other non-financial remedies are the responsibility of the relevant Head of Service. However, the levels of compensation and ex gratia payments (payments made without Tuntum recognising any liability or legal obligation) will be reviewed by the Customer Service Manager and Director of Resource and Risk to maintain a level of equity and fairness.

5. PROCEDURE

Compliments

If you have had an excellent experience of customer service, we would love to hear from you. Receiving praise helps teams and individuals to improve and share ideas of best practice.

All compliments will be recorded and in some cases highlighted on the website.

Complaints Procedure

We recognise that there may be occasions when our services fall short of your aspirations and our high standards and that you may need to complain about an aspect of the service. Initial complaints can be made in the following ways:

- By telephone: 0115 916 6066
- By email: admin@tuntum.co.uk
- By letter: Tuntum Housing Association, 90 Beech Avenue, Nottingham NG7 7LW
- In person to any member of staff
- Councillor/MP enquiry

A complaints form is available on our website: www.tuntum.co.uk

Stage Zero

When you let us know that you have had a problem with our service, we will always try to fix things straight away. If the person taking the complaint can resolve things for you within one working day, we will log your issue with a unique reference number and class it as a 'quick fix'.

For example, this would apply where we have missed an appointment but were able to make a new arrangement that suited you straight away. Where we do this, you will still receive a letter to confirm that you experienced a problem, reported it to us and agreed a resolution. If you are not satisfied with this outcome, you can move onto the formal complaints process within five working days.

If you wish to make a formal complaint, a two-stage complaints process is followed.

Stage 1 (Officer stage)

When we are unable to solve the problem immediately, we will move into our formal complaints process. In the first instance, complaints should be made to the person responsible for the alleged service failure (e.g. maintenance concerns to the Maintenance Officer, housing issues to the Housing Officer.)

At Stage 1, we will:

- Acknowledge your complaint by telephone within three working days and confirm this in writing. We will discuss your complaint to ensure we understand the details.
- Give you a unique reference number and let you know who will be dealing with your complaint
- Investigate your complaint and, if necessary, telephone you with any updates or further questions
- Write to you within 10 working days to let you know the outcome.

If further investigation is needed which will take longer than 10 working days, we will telephone you to agree when you will get a full response.

Stage 2 (Head of Service Stage)

If you are not satisfied with the response received at Stage 1, you can let us know within 20 working days why you are unsatisfied, and what you would like us to do in response to the complaint. A Head of Service, who was not previously involved with the complaint, will investigate the complaint and confirm whether it will be escalated to Stage 2.

If your complaint is escalated to Stage 2, we will:

- Acknowledge your request in writing within three working days.
- Confirm that your complaint is being considered at the second stage of our procedure.
- Let you know the name and position of the person who will look into the problem for you.
- Offer you the opportunity for a personal telephone conversation or meeting about your complaint.
- Contact you in writing within 10 working days to let you know whether the original action or response given is supported, or outlining any new or additional proposals.

If this target will not be met, we will agree with you by telephone and notify you in writing, detailing the reasons why, and let you know when you can expect a full response.

If the reason for escalation is not a failure in service or service standards, or we cannot meet the outcome you are asking for, we may decline your request for escalation. If this is the case, we will write to you to confirm this.

Independent Complaints Panel (ICP)

The Localism Act 2011 brought in an additional step before a complaint may be sent to the Housing Ombudsman. This is scrutiny of the complaint by a 'designated person' which could be a local MP, the local authority or an independent complaints panel made up of fellow tenants. Since April 2013,

Tuntum has operated such a panel in partnership with one other local housing association, Derwent Living.

If your complaint remains unresolved after Stage 2, then you are invited to submit the complaint to the ICP. This request should be made in writing or by e-mail to Tuntum's Head of Housing. She will then process the complaint and advise you of the procedure to follow.

Only if a complaint remains unresolved after the ICP has met, or 8 weeks have passed since the end of Stage 3, can a complaint be forwarded to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent and impartial service that resolves disputes between landlords and tenants. This service is free to use but **the Ombudsman will not accept any complaint unless you have been through the Association's Complaints Procedure above.**

*The Independent Housing Ombudsman
Norman House
109 - 105 Strand
London WC2R 0AA*

*020 7836 3630
0845 1725 973
ombudsman@ihos.org.uk
www.ihos.org.uk*

Our Director of Resources and Risk will make the relevant files and records available to the Housing Ombudsman's Investigating Officer on request and we will co-operate fully with the investigation.

PERSISTENT AND UNWARRANTED COMPLAINTS

Unreasonably persistent complaints have the potential to consume resources and cause stress for our staff whilst achieving no benefits for customers and service users.

Tuntum Housing must ensure that in using the complaints process, individuals who demonstrate unreasonable behaviour or are unreasonably persistent are still dealt with fairly, honestly and correctly. The resources of Tuntum Housing have to be used as effectively as possible and other customers and employees must not suffer any detriment because of the behaviour of others.

All reasonable measures will be taken to resolve complaints through the complaints process.

When someone repeatedly telephones, visits the office without appointment, sends irrelevant or duplicate documents, or raises the issues that have already been considered, Tuntum Housing may decide to:

- Only take telephone calls from the customer at set times on set days, or put an arrangement in place for only one member of staff to deal with calls or correspondence from the complainant in the future.
- Require the customer to make an appointment to see a named member of staff before visiting the office, or that the customer only contacts the office in writing
- Return the documents to the customer and advise them that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed. Electronic copies may be taken and stored.
- Take other action that we consider appropriate. We will, however, always say what action we are taking and why.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

All complaints will be analysed in order to:

- Assess whether the service standards set out in this policy have been met
- Assess the quality of response to complaints
- Identify any lessons to be learnt
- Decide on any necessary communication to staff and residents
- Identify any required amendments to procedures

In order to measure our performance, we will work to agreed targets that are set out in this policy. The association will carry out a tenant satisfaction survey at least once every three years, publish the outcome of this to customers, and act upon any suggestions arising from it.

We use information from enquiries, comments, complaints and compliments to develop policy and service reviews to ensure continuous service improvement. The number of complaints received and our performance in resolving complaints will be reported to all relevant bodies and published annually in our tenant newsletter.

All enquiries, comments, complaints and compliments dealt with under this policy will be recorded and made available to the Board. Statistics on complaint resolution will be reported to the Board on a regular basis.

A complaints register will also be kept and will be updated at each stage of the procedure with information about the relevant issues, timescales and person dealing with the complaint.

It is good practice to try to resolve the complaint immediately or have an overall time frame of no more than 8 weeks for all stages of the complaint.

This policy will be reviewed 3 years or sooner should legislative requirement concerning housing complaints change or should monitoring of delivery of the policy reveal that a review is desirable.