

PA Housing Complaints Policy

Paragon Asra Housing Limited
September 2022

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Department **Customer Experience**
Approved by **EMT**
Next review date **September 2024**

Paragon Asra Housing Limited (PA Housing) is committed to equality and diversity. This policy has considered the Equality Act 2010 and its protected characteristics which are: race, gender, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, marriage, civil marriage and partnership, and pregnancy and maternity explicitly.

We will make sure that all of our communication is fully accessible and to achieve this if a policy or document needs to be available in other formats we will provide them.

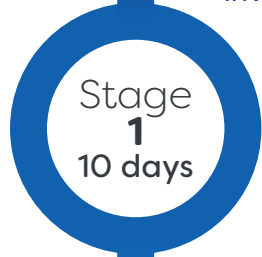
Complaints Timeline



Start

Make a complaint

You can give us a call, send us an email, or fill in a complaints form online. Please provide as much specific detail as possible. Attaching photos will assist the investigation.



Stage
1
10 days

We'll get back to you

We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days (usually 48 hours) to tell you we've got your complaint.

We'll investigate your complaint to find out what has gone wrong and how we can fix it.

We'll report back what we've found out, what we're going to do to put it right, and we'll say sorry.



Stage
2
20 days

We'll get back to you, Like Stage 1, we will acknowledge your escalation to stage 2 within 5 working days (usually 48 hours).

We'll re-investigate your complaint again and involve the next level of management, usually a Head of Service or Assistant Director for their perspective.

We'll report back with what we found out during the new investigation, let you know what we're going to do to put it right, and we'll say sorry.

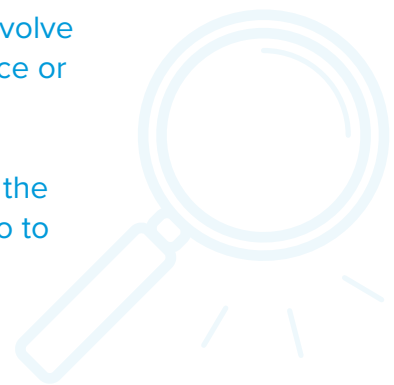


Finish

Complaint resolved*

By now, we hope we've reached a resolution and you're happy.

*If we can't agree at the end of Stage 2, the next step is to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.



1 Introduction

1.1 This document details PA Housing's Complaints Management Policy.

1.2 Our aim is to provide excellent service to all our customers. We accept that from time-to-time things can go wrong, and we are committed to ensuring the concerns of our customers are investigated and responded to.

1.3 Complaints give us an insight into problems and concerns, and we want to learn from the feedback they provide to improve the way we do things.

2 Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the policy are to:

- define a complaint and make it clear who can make a complaint and how.
- provide details of what customers can do if they are not happy with the resolution or decision, and what they can do to appeal.
- create business practices where all employees listen, update, resolve and learn from customer complaints.
- be clear, simple, accessible and to ensure complaints are resolved promptly, professionally and fairly.

3 Definitions

3.1 The Housing Ombudsman complaints handling code has been updated in 2022 to raise standards in complaint management across the sector. We have aligned our complaints approach, and use the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.


A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative will still be handled in line with our complaints policy.

3.2 A service request is when a customer contacts us to ask us to do something to their home or tenancy, for example, a repair. This is not a complaint but if we fail to carry out the repair this may become a complaint. Similarly, a customer may raise an enquiry where they ask us about something relating to their home or tenancy. For example, information about their rent account. This too would not be a complaint but may become one if we fail to provide the information requested. All service requests are to be logged on our CRM system.

4 Resolving A Complaint

4.1 If a customer wishes to make a complaint and needs help, we will support them in any way we can, and in all instances will try to resolve any expression of dissatisfaction at the first point of contact. Complaints can be made by any means. This includes the My PA app, letter, telephone, in person, email, our website, social media, or customer feedback.

Contact details for PA Housing are as follows:

 **0300 123 2221** - Our Contact Hub. This is the quickest way to get in touch for an immediate response.

 **Complaints@pahousing.co.uk** - Our Complaints team mailbox.

4.1.2 Should a customer raise dissatisfaction through a public social media channel, we will initially follow this up directly through a private channel to ensure the issue is dealt with confidentially.

4.2 PA Housing is committed to ensuring that people are not disadvantaged in accessing our services. As such we will make reasonable adjustments as required. Please see the Reasonable Adjustment Policy for further details.

4.3 Complaints (at Stage 1 and Stage 2) sent directly to the Chief Executive, member of the Executive Management, Leadership Team or individual managers will be dealt with in accordance with this policy and managed by the Customer Experience Team.

4.4 A complaint made in the form of a petition on behalf of multiple customers will be treated as one complaint; interactions and correspondence will be directed to the nominated signatory.

4.5 Complaints can be received through any source, including from people acting as advocates. This can be relatives, neighbours, agencies, and solicitors, providing they have the complainant's consent.

4.6 Where a customer cannot complain unaided and cannot give consent because they lack capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, complaints will be accepted from a representative acting in the customer's best interests. For example, where the matter complained about, if true, would be detrimental to the customer.

4.7 Anonymous complaints will be investigated, and we will report the outcome to our involved residents' forum.

5 Our Complaint Approach

5.1.0 We have a two-stage process for complaints to ensure our customers have the opportunity to challenge our decisions and for these to be reviewed.

Regular updates, even without a definitive outcome, will be provided where possible to help customers feel reassured and that someone is working on their behalf to put things right.

We will create business practices where all employees listen, update, resolve and learn from customer complaints.

5.1.1 Upon receiving a complaint, our Customer Experience Team will keep the customer updated and work with those involved to resolve any outstanding issues, resolving issues as quickly and effectively as possible. If the complaint is upheld, PA Housing will offer an explanation and an apology. If it is appropriate, we will take any actions needed to solve the problem fully, which may include a compensation payment.

5.2 Service Request

5.2.1 Often a customer's concerns can be resolved at 'first point of contact' and will not need to go through our two stage complaints process. These are known as 'Service Requests'. Initially staff should always try and help a customer and try to resolve any problems they have at first point of contact. The emphasis is on resolving problems and putting them right with the minimum of delay.

5.2.2 Not all requests will be suitable for resolution immediately, however we will empower our staff to do what they can to progress any concerns at the first point of contact. This may include a manager call-back for example.

We would expect issues that are straightforward and easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation, to be provided with an 'on-the-spot' apology, explanation, or other action to resolve the request immediately, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

5.3 Stage 1 Complaint Investigation

5.3.1 When we first receive a complaint, we aim to agree a solution with our customer within 10 working days. If the complaint is particularly complex, we may on occasion need longer than 10 days to resolve. In these instances, the customer will be kept informed and regularly updated on the reasons for this. The customer will also be provided the Housing Ombudsman's details should they not agree to an extension for the stage 1 response.

5.4 Stage 2 Escalated Complaints

5.4.1 If the customer is not happy with the decision they have received from us at Stage 1, they have the right for this to be reviewed at Stage 2. The timeframe for escalation is set at 28 days, however this can be extended in exceptional circumstances. At stage 2, a different complaints specialist will take on the case as well as the investigation being reviewed by the next level of management.

5.4.2 A definitive response will be provided within 20 working days following a thorough investigation of the points raised. If the complaint is particularly complex, we may on occasion need longer than 20 days to resolve. In these instances, the customer will be kept informed and regularly updated on the reasons for this. The customer will also be provided the Housing Ombudsman's details should they not agree to an extension for the stage 2 response.

5.5 Putting Things Right

5.5.1 We will take various measures to put things right following a complaint and we will apologise if we are at fault. We want to use the feedback to learn from our mistakes. Where a complaint results in a change to a policy or a service, we will record this and feedback to our residents on a regular basis.

5.5.2 We will complete a case when we have agreed a solution with our customer and we may make a commitment to provide a service within a clear timescale. However, a complaint will not be closed until all outstanding actions are completed, for example, an agreement to provide repairs through the planned maintenance programme.

5.5.3 Complaints highlight to us which services are working well and which need a closer look. We will use feedback from complaints to learn from our mistakes.

5.5.4 We will involve our resident groups and involved residents to review our complaint performance and consider feedback and lessons learnt from complaints. This will help us to learn from issues that arise and take steps to improve services, as well as making sure the way we handle complaints is fair and transparent to all.

5.6 Safeguarding

5.6.1 If we receive a complaint about safeguarding, we will follow the steps set out in our safeguarding policy to address it. We have detailed procedures and that follow the different local safeguarding Information sharing protocols. The AD of Housing is the safeguarding lead and will report the information.

5.7 What If the Customer Is Still Unhappy?

5.7.1 If all avenues of resolution and escalation within the Complaints policy are exhausted, and a complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome, a request can be made that the complaint is further escalated externally.

5.7.2 A complainant can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service, at any time, although in most instances, the Ombudsman will request the customer exhausts the organisations Complaint Policy first. This is an independent, impartial and free service. The Ombudsman will decide if the complaint is appropriate for them to consider. Their contact details are:

Phone: **0300 111 3000**

Complaint correspondence:

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Email: **info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk**

Website: **www.housingombudsman.org.uk**

5.7.3 Long leaseholders, shared owners and freeholders can get advice from The Leasehold Advisory Service if there is a dispute regards a lease. They can be contacted on *020 7832 2500*, Email: *info@lease-advice.org.uk*, Website: *www.lease-advice.org.uk*

5.7.4 Leaseholders can also apply to the First Tier Tribunal (Property Chambers) to resolve complaints that have been through all stages of the complaints Policy regarding complaints about Service Charges and the terms of lease agreements. The Tribunal is a special branch of the UK legal system that deals with property disputes. It is independent of the Government but can be reached through the gov.uk website:
<https://www.gov.uk/housing-tribunals>

6 Exclusions

6.1 There are some circumstances where a matter will not be considered a complaint. If they fall under these areas we will advise the customer and explain the reasons why, whilst also providing details of the Housing Ombudsman should they wish to challenge this decision. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may instruct us to take on the complaint.

6.2 A new report about neighbour nuisance or antisocial behaviour is not a complaint about our service unless specifically around the management of an existing case. These will be dealt with under our Neighbour Dispute or

Antisocial Behaviour Policy. If we do not follow what we say in our policy, this may become a complaint.

6.3 If there is legal action, an insurance claim, or a case is being dealt with by the First Tier Tribunal, these will not be dealt with under our Complaints Policy.

6.4 A complaint about the level of rent or service charges is not a complaint about our service. If we do not follow what we say in our policy or if services are not being delivered, this may become a complaint.

6.5 We know that the number of properties we have available for customers to move into and transfer to unfortunately does not meet the demand. We will not accept a complaint about a transfer or allocation unless our policy has not been followed correctly or the complaint is about the service received.

6.6 We will only deal with matters brought to our attention within a reasonable timeframe. Unless there is a good reason for not making a complaint at the time, the limit will be no more than 6 months after the event occurred, or the matter came to the notice of the complainant. However, if the problem is a recurring issue, we will consider older reports as part of the background to help to resolve the issues for the customer.

6.7 On a small number of occasions as a last resort, we may withdraw the complaints procedure from a complainant whose behaviour is unreasonable, or we may have to restrict contact. An example of this would be if someone raises the same complaint several times in different ways. We will explain why we have taken this action to the complainant or their advocate (See Unacceptable Behaviour Policy).

6.8 If customers are dissatisfied with the way we have handled their personal information, they can use this policy, contact our Data Protection Officer, or contact the Information Commissioner's Office on 0303 123 1113. PA Housing has a Data Protection policy in place which sets out how we must handle personal information.

7 Training

7.1 We will carry out induction and refresher training for all staff to ensure they are aware of the complaints policy and of our commitment to excellent service delivery standards and targets. All managers will receive specific training to provide the skills and knowledge to comply with this policy.

8 Monitoring and Reporting

8.1 We record all complaints, regularly monitor our progress in handling them, and measure our performance against targets. We compare our performance within PA Housing, and benchmark against other similar housing associations. We report regularly to our Executive Management Team, Operations Team and our Board on lessons learnt, and service improvements and changes to policies made as a result of feedback from complaints.

8.2 Our complaints service is also subject to internal audit.

8.3 Performance on complaints and how complaints have been used to improve services is reported on a quarterly basis to our involved residents, so that they can hold us to account and recommend improvements.

Performance on complaints is also published monthly to our residents on our website.

9 Legislation

9.1 Further information can be found in ‘The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper’, which sets out the actions the government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

10 Related policies



Data Protection Policy



Compensation Policy



Unacceptable Behaviour Policy



Equality and Diversity Policy



Reasonable Adjustment Policy



Safeguarding Policy

Audit Log

Date of Change	Who updated?	Details of the change
26 March 2021	Derek Crook	<p><i>This document details PA Housing's new Complaints Management Policy, taking into account the Housing Ombudsman's (HOS) complaint handling code.</i></p> <p><i>Key changes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• Uses the HOS definition of a complaint.</i><i>• Removes the process details – these will be included in a separate procedure.</i><i>• Details the two-stage complaint process, and the stage 0 service request designed to prevent issues escalating into complaints.</i><i>• Response times for a Stage 2 complaint has changed from 10 days to 15 days.</i><i>• Provides more details on reasonable adjustments and access to complaints, including referrals from solicitors if acting on behalf of a customer.</i><i>• Enhances the lessons learnt and role of residents in terms of helping us to learn from issues and taking steps to improve services.</i><i>• Timescale for accepting complaints has changed from 12 months to 6 months.</i>
23 March 2021	Resident Complaint Panel	<p><i>Positive feedback about new complaint approach and confirmation that PA are focusing on the right things.</i></p>

26 July 2022

**Resident
Complaint Panel**

Introduced the current policy and briefed residents on the revised HOS Complaint Handling Code. We gained their feedback on the way forward and areas to consider for the revised policy. This included the changes to how long we take to acknowledge and log a complaint, the Exclusions for when we do not raise a complaint and the change to the time to respond to a stage 2 complaint.



24 August 2022

**Housing
Ombudsman**

Sought advice and guidance from the HOS on our Exclusions. Our Policy has been updated accordingly.

08 September
2022

**Mohammed
Umerji**

This document details PA Housing's updated Complaints Management Policy, taking into account the Housing Ombudsman's (HOS) updated complaint handling code (April 22).

Key changes:

- Uses the HOS definition of a complaint.*
- Removing Stage 0 and introducing Service Request designed to prevent issues escalating into complaints.*
- Response times for a Stage 2 complaint has changed from 15 days to 20 days as per the HOS revised Handling Code.*
- Clearer expectations on complaint exclusions around ASB issues.*
- Clarified how and when complaints can be referred to the HOS throughout the complaints process.*
- Included details on how PA Housing will deal with complaints made publicly through Social Media platforms.*

Removed details around the localism act 2011, as from October 1, 2022, the Ombudsman will remove the 'democratic filter' process.

Updated the Safeguarding lead details.