

Kingston Churches Housing Association

The Caring Professionals

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

KCHA aims to provide good quality housing, services and amenities, and we hope that you need never complain. However, despite our best efforts and intentions things can and do sometimes go wrong. Our complaints procedure is available if you are dissatisfied with the Association's performance, or with any member of staff, and have not been able to resolve the problem.

Complaints may include:

- Unhelpful behaviour or unfair treatment by staff or contractors
- Delays or failure to provide a service
- Failure to achieve our published standards
- Dissatisfaction with policies and procedures

We welcome genuine complaints because they help us improve the way we work. All complaints will be taken seriously and, subject to the need to make enquiries, will be treated in confidence. We work to time limits and will let you know about progress and action we propose taking. If you need any help in reporting a complaint you can ask for advice from your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau.

To improve service delivery we review our policies and procedures regularly. Monitoring complaints helps us do this. A summary of complaints received is reported annually to the Board.

We have tried to ensure that this procedure is fair and accessible to all our tenants. Should you have cause to use the procedure below we would welcome your feedback on the way your complaint was handled.

Defining a Complaint

Following the introduction of the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code in September 2020, a complaint is universally defined as:

“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.”

Staff are trained to recognise the difference between a service request (pre-complaint), survey feedback and a formal complaint. Staff are encouraged to take appropriate steps to resolve the issue for residents as early as possible.

A service request (pre-complaint) is when we are initially advised of a problem and are given the opportunity to put things right. Many problems can be resolved by staff without the need to refer the matter as a formal complaint. These are known as “service requests (pre-complaint)” and are recorded and monitored proactively, as with formal complaints.

However, when our staff have failed to put things right and the individual remains dissatisfied, a complaint is made to KCHA following the KCHA complaints policy.

Stages of a Complaint

Initially, we would prefer you to try to resolve any problems you may have with your Housing Officer, who is usually your first point of contact with the Association. Your pre-complaint can be verbal, by email or in writing. We will attempt to resolve the matter within 10 working days.

If you are not satisfied with our initial response to your complaint and wish to pursue it, you can take the matter further in 2 stages.

Stage 1 – Making a formal complaint

At this stage the complaint will be recorded in our Complaints Register

If you feel the initial contact has not resolved your complaint you should contact the Housing Services Manager. This can be by telephone, by email, in writing or by making an appointment to visit our office to discuss the matter. You have the right to be represented at this meeting if you so wish. The Housing Services Manager will try to resolve your complaint satisfactorily and will confirm the outcome of any investigations in writing within 14 days of receiving your complaint. If it is felt that mediation may help to resolve matters, it will be offered at this stage.

Stage 2

If you are unhappy with the Housing Services Manager's reply you should address your complaint in writing or by email to the Chief Executive who will consider the matter and respond in writing within 14 days of receiving your letter. If you are unable to put your complaint in writing, a member of staff will be available to write out the details on your behalf. If this happens you will be asked to check it and sign that it is an accurate record of your complaint. The Chief Executive will only look at your complaint if you have already completed the stages with your Housing Officer and Housing Services Manager.

Further Assistance

If you feel your complaint remains unresolved after you have pursued it through the 2 stages above, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service, which investigates complaints about social landlords. You can write to them at Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ or telephone them on 0300 111 3000 and ask for an information booklet and complaint form.

You can also visit their website at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or email them at info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk. You may also collect the information booklet and complaint form from any local Citizen's Advice Bureau. The information from the Housing Ombudsman Service is also available in other languages and on audio cassette.

The Housing Ombudsman Service will only accept your complaint if it has been through all stages of the complaints procedure set out above.

If you believe we have broken the law you have the right to go to the Courts. You should first talk to a solicitor or advice centre.

If you want to know the full name of any of the staff of the Association, or of the members of the Board of Management, please telephone this office.

This Policy will be made available on our website at www.kcha.org.uk

Circumstances where complaints will not be considered:

- The Matter has already been considered under the complaints policy.
- The complaint relates to an incident occurring more than 6 months previously (exceptions will be made for recurring issues where historical context aid resolution).
- A tenant complains about the behaviour of another resident. This would be dealt with under our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- Complaints about levels of rent and service charges.

- The complainant does not reasonably engage with KCHA after making the complaint and or is abusive to staff.
- Complaints made by KCHA staff. These are dealt with under our grievance or Whistleblowing Policies.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints may not be acted upon; they will, however, be brought to the appropriate manager's attention and investigated if necessary.

Monitoring complaints

All complaints are kept under review for 3 months. Assuming there are no further occurrences, the complaint will be closed at this point. The complaints log is reviewed on a regular basis by the Senior Management Team.

Confidentiality

All complaints are treated with confidentiality in mind and in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.