

RLHA Complaints Procedure

Why is a complaints procedure needed?

We take great pride in the management of our Estates but from time to time we do get things wrong. If you are unhappy with any aspect of our service, we'd prefer that you tell us so that we have the opportunity to put things right, learn from our mistakes and take steps to stop it happening again. Our aim is to continuously improve our service and achieve a high level of customer endorsement in our annual satisfaction surveys.

What should I do before submitting a complaint?

In the first instance we will always recommend you try to talk to your Estate Manager if you have one or the Estate Service Adviser at our Frimley Office. If this does not seem appropriate, please contact the Area Manager either by telephone, email or when they visit.

There may be a simple misunderstanding that can easily be put right, and we would always prefer to resolve a complaint quickly by following an informal approach. Of course, we understand that at times making the complaint 'official' is the most appropriate course of action.

How can I make a complaint?

We recommend putting something in writing to us, but you can make a complaint in any way you like, either by letter, email, telephone or in person to your Estate Manager, Area Manager or to a team member at our Head Office. Overall responsibility for keeping a record of all complaints is the Customer Service Manager. Our contact details are as follows:

- RLHA, Building 2, Archipelago, Lyon Way, Frimley, GU16 7ER
- email; customerservices@elmgroup.org.uk
- telephone Customer Services Team on 01252 356000

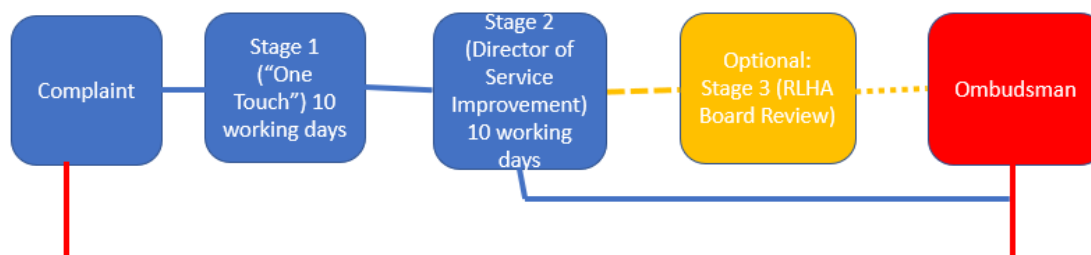
Once we have received your complaint, we'll write to you within 2 working days and advise when to expect our full response.

Alternatively, you can make a complaint directly to the Landlord if RLHA acts as a managing agent on your estate. Please ask us for further details if you are unsure.

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.

What is the actual procedure?



A complainant can go directly to The Housing Ombudsman at any time

Tel: 0300 111 3000 Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time. When we acknowledge your complaint, we will tell you the name of the person who will be your main point of contact. We understand how frustrating it can be to have a complaint procedure that has lots of stages, each with their own time frames, so to minimise this frustration we follow a **‘one touch complaint review’** (stage 1). On receipt of your complaint and behind the scenes we will review the situation in depth, examine the facts and involve **all** relevant members of staff (including members of the Senior Management Team) to avoid lengthy, drawn-out investigations. We prefer that any complaints are dealt with on a ‘one touch’ basis to draw matters to a swift conclusion. We will communicate our decision in writing within 10 working days and at this stage should you be in any way unhappy with how the complaint has been handled / or the decision made, your next step would be to pursue your complaint by requesting a review by our Director of Service Improvement (stage 2). The Director of Service Improvement review will take place within 10 working days and the decision will be sent to you in writing.

Requests to escalate a complaint should be made within 10 working days of receiving your final response

What if I am unhappy following the stage 2 Review?

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time. The decision made by the Director of Service Improvement concludes our formal complaints process. In some instances, you have the option to contact the RLHA Board to request an appeal (for example, when compensation has been requested and refused) The Board will review the file and make a decision as to whether an appeal would be appropriate or not. If the appeal is considered appropriate it would usually take place within 6 weeks of your request, usually via correspondence, and the result would be available following the appeal hearing and no later than 8 weeks from the date of your original complaint.

What if I am not satisfied with the Appeal Panel's response?

A complainant can contact the Housing Ombudsman **at any time**. The complainant may take the matter up with The Housing Ombudsman or Property Redress Scheme without charge.

The Housing Ombudsman Limited (where RLHA are Freeholder)

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000 Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/>

Property Redress Scheme (PRS) (where RLHA are the Managing Agent)

Ground Floor, Kingmaker House

Station Road

New Barnet

Hertfordshire EN5 1NZ

Tel: 0333 321 9418 Email: info@theprs.co.uk

<https://www.theprs.co.uk>

In the case of complaints taken up by the Property Redress Scheme (PRS), if the complainant is still not satisfied after the last stage of the in-house complaint procedure (or more than 8 weeks has elapsed since the complaint was first made, then he/she can take the matter up the Property Redress Scheme without charge.

RLHA is obliged to follow any decision the Ombudsman may make. The Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM) can also deal with complaints against its members. Contact them by email on enquiries@arhm.org or by telephone 020 7463 0660 (website details: www.ARHM.org). ARHM and the PRS may be unable to review your complaint until you have completed the in-house Complaints Procedure.

Will you consider mediation?

RLHA is happy to arrange mediation. If we feel this would be helpful, we will suggest it to you, or alternatively you may request mediation yourself. Please note that mediation is only possible if both parties agree willingly to take part and the aim is to help the two parties find a solution for themselves. In this sense mediation is quite different from arbitration, in which an outside body imposes a solution. It should be noted mediation is not an alternative to the Property Redress Scheme.

Limitations and Exclusions

There are circumstances when RLHA may refuse to start or continue to investigate a complaint. This can include but is not limited to:

- Unreasonable behaviour (see Unreasonable Behaviour Policy in appendix A)

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- Where a complainant repeatedly refuses to accept reasonable explanations for the time it may take RLHA to act on a particular matter
- Where a complainant repeatedly will not accept RLHA's explanations for decisions provided
- Where the same complaint, from the same complainant has been addressed previously.
- Where the contact is a service request (as opposed to a complaint about the service requested)
- Where legal proceedings have been issued on the matter. (It would not be RLHA's intention to disengage with the complainant where they have responsibilities for undisputed, on going repairs or property management responsibilities.

Where can I obtain independent advice?

You may wish to seek independent advice. A local Citizens Advice Bureau or Housing Advice service such as www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk (0800 377 7070) or www.lease-advice.org (0207 832 2500) may be able to help. Additionally, your local MP or Councillor can also give you independent advice.

And finally ...

Most complaints arise out of misunderstandings. The RLHA team genuinely wish to help, and we urge you therefore to discuss any problems with us at the earliest opportunity. Our aim is to provide you with fabulous service at all times.

Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

Introduction

This Policy applies to all stakeholders, employees, and customers of ELM Group, RLHA and ELM Management Ltd, which includes members of the Public, third parties and businesses. It should be read in conjunction with the ELM Group Complaints Policy that a complaint will not be investigated or continued if *“in our opinion the complainant is acting unreasonably, is continuously missing deadlines, is abusive, has clearly fabricated evidence or if ELM Group, RLHA, ELM Management Ltd considers the complaint to be frivolous or vexatious “*

1. We are committed to dealing with complaints fairly and thoroughly and providing good service. We recognise that inevitably there will be occasions when a complainant will disagree with our decisions, advice, or processes.
2. Where an investigation has been carried out, and a response issued (One Touch stage 1), the complainant will have the opportunity to escalate the complaint for review by the Director of Service Improvement (stage 2) and subsequently can request the RLHA Board review the complaint. The Director of Service Improvement and RLHA Board will consider very carefully any further representation after the initial response but may not continue to respond to complainants indefinitely where, in their opinion the correspondence raises no significant new issues which call the original response into question.
3. Very occasionally a complainant may behave so unreasonably that it is necessary to limit access to our company resources in some way. ELM Group recognise that there will often be strong feeling around disputes, however unreasonable behaviour is not accepted. Any decision to restrict access to company resources will be taken by the Customer Service Manager after consultation with the Executive Leadership Team. The complainant will be advised in writing of the exclusions / limitations when they will be reviewed and how to appeal the decision. The complainant can appeal by writing to the Director of Service Improvement at our Head Office address, within 10 days of notification of restrictions being implemented. The Director of Service Improvement’s decision will be final.
4. Unreasonable behaviour can include but is not limited to:
 - a. Rudeness (eg. swearing, persistent interruption, name calling or general discourtesy)
 - b. Anger (eg. shouting)
 - c. Aggressive behaviour (eg. threats of physical harm to person(s) or property or to self: behaviour which indicated that physical harm to person (s) or property or self is imminent or actual physical aggression)
 - d. Repeatedly requesting responses within unreasonable timescales
 - e. Insisting on speaking to a particular member of staff
 - f. Refusal to accept explanations as to what ELM Group, ELM Management Ltd or RLHA can or cannot do.
 - g. Not accepting ELM Group, ELM Management Ltd or RLHA processes
 - h. Not accepting ELM Group, ELM Management Ltd or RLHA timescales
 - i. Repeated telephone calls

- j. Sending repetitive and/or irrelevant emails or letters
 - k. Reiterating the same points in communications despite points being previously addressed
5. In the rare cases where unreasonable behaviour occurs, ELM Group, ELM Management Ltd or RLHA will tell the complainant why they believe that their behaviour is unreasonable and request that they change their behaviour. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, we may take action to limit the complainant's contact with the organisation and inform the complainant of the limitations and the reasons for it.
6. Any limitations imposed will be appropriate and proportionate and will be reviewed after a suggested period of time (usually 6-12 months). The limitations include but are not limited to:
- a. requesting contact in a particular format
 - b. limiting phone calls to specific days and times
 - c. asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct.

Any restriction in place will not prevent RLHA nor the complainant from fulfilling their obligations under the lease or tenancy agreement.

7. If the complainant continues to behave inappropriately, we may decide to terminate contact with that person all together.
8. Where behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and / or welfare of our employees or property other options will be considered including reporting the incidents to the Police or taking legal action. In these circumstances warning of this action may not be given.

Signed:



Position:

Chief Executive