

Information Leaflet

Customer Feedback

Suggestions, comments,
compliments and complaints



What is a complaint?

A complaint is usually about poor service. This could be because we have done something wrong or failed to do something we should have done.

Examples of complaints can include:

- where you believe that your repair has not been completed to an acceptable standard or within the prescribed time limit
- where you believe that you have not been treated fairly or in line with our policies or procedures.

Examples of issues that cannot be dealt with through our complaints procedure include:

- initial requests for repairs
- problems concerning antisocial behaviour or neighbour nuisance. For information about this, please refer to our websites.

Introduction

Grand Union Housing Group (GUHG) and its subsidiaries, Aragon Housing Association, Rockingham Forest Housing and South Northants Homes, aim to ensure that the customer always comes first. Sometimes, however, we make mistakes, but if this happens we would like to know about it so that we can not only put things right, but also learn and improve services as a result of your feedback.

We are also keen to receive your suggestions and comments for improvements to our services that could benefit everyone.

We understand that as a customer, you are well placed to see where changes could be made. Alternatively, if you just want to say 'thank you' to someone then this leaflet explains what you need to do. Everyone likes to know when they have done something well and the same applies to our staff, so if you feel that you have received good service or that someone has gone out of their way to help you, then please let us know.

Who can complain?

If you have a tenant/landlord relationship with us you can make a complaint.

This includes anyone who has a tenancy, lease, service agreement, licence to occupy or any other arrangement to occupy premises owned or managed by one of our subsidiary organisations in either a sole or joint capacity. If you live in a property where someone else has the relationship and you want to make a complaint, we will only respond to the person who has the relationship with us, unless we have their written permission to correspond with you.

Similarly, if you hold the relationship with us but would like someone else to make the complaint on your behalf, for example a friend or relative, we will only respond to your representative if we have your signed permission to do so. Otherwise, all correspondence will be sent to you.

If you are a member of a household where no-one has a tenant/landlord relationship with any of our subsidiary organisations, for example you are a home owner or private tenant, you may still make a complaint to us if you feel that we are responsible.

If you wish to make a complaint anonymously, we will investigate it as best we can.

If you wish to complain, you should do this within four months of the cause of the complaint.

You should always tell us if you are not satisfied with any aspect of our service and we will try to resolve it as quickly as possible. In this way, we hope that many situations will be dealt with outside of the official complaint procedure. However, if you need to make a formal complaint, you can do so in a number of different ways.

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint:

- via websites: www.aragon-housing.co.uk
www.rfhousing.co.uk
www.southnorthantshomes.co.uk
- by email
- in writing
- by telephone

What help and advice is available?

Please contact the Customer Services Team who will help and advise you how to make a complaint if you need to do so.

Our staff can also advise where you may be able to seek independent advice, for example from Citizens Advice or housing advice centre. Please ask if you would like more information about this.

What do you need to tell us?

Please tell us what the problem is and when it started. It is also helpful if you can tell us the names of anyone who has already spoken to you or written to you about the problem. Although we cannot promise to do everything you ask, it helps to know what you would like us to do to put things right.

What happens next?

We will aim to deal with your complaint promptly and to resolve it at the earliest stage. When we receive it, we will aim to acknowledge it within three working days (not including the date of receipt) unless we are able to issue a full response. Your complaint may then progress as follows:

Stage 1

Your complaint will be passed to the relevant team leader or manager who will investigate the issues raised in your complaint and aim to send you a full reply within 10 working days (not including the date of receipt). However if this is not possible, or we need more information, we will contact you to tell you when you can expect a full reply.

If you feel that our response has not fully addressed all the issues in your complaint, you should tell us within one month of our reply to you, giving details of what you feel we have failed to explain or to do. Your complaint will then be passed back to the relevant team leader or manager for them to issue a further reply.

Stage 2

If it is not possible to resolve your complaint at Stage 1, it may be necessary to refer it to a member of our senior or executive management team.

As with Stage 1, we will aim to issue an acknowledgment to you within three working days and a full reply within 10 working days (not including the date of receipt) or contact you if this is not possible or if more information is needed.

Designated person

If you have exhausted our internal customer feedback procedure but remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you now have to decide what you want to do next. The Localism Act 2011 provides that tenants will be able to ask for their complaints to be considered by a 'designated person' when their landlord's internal procedure is complete. The reason for this change is that ideally, local issues should be resolved at a local level without the need to involve the Ombudsman.

Who can be a 'designated person'?

A designated person may be an MP, local Councillor or Tenant Panel. Although landlords do not have to set up a Tenant Panel, the association has decided to offer this as one of your options. Tenant Panels will be supported in their role by the association but will act independently.

What can a 'designated person' do?

A designated person can either try to resolve your complaint or refer it to the Ombudsman. If they decide to do neither, you can then, immediately, refer the complaint to the Ombudsman yourself.

Do I have to refer my complaint to a 'designated person'?

If you do not want to refer your complaint to a designated person, you must wait at least eight weeks from the end of our internal procedure before you can contact the Ombudsman.

In summary then, you have the following options:

- ask your local Councillor, MP or Tenant Panel to help resolve your complaint
- wait eight weeks from the date of our Stage 2 letter and refer your complaint directly to the Ombudsman.

I do not have a tenant/landlord relationship with you – does the 'designated person' stage apply to me?

If you do not have a tenant/landlord relationship with us you will not be able to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, therefore the 'designated person' stage does not apply to you. However you may wish to contact your local MP or Councillor to see if they can assist you any further with your complaint. Alternatively, you may wish to seek advice on what to do next from your local Citizens Advice.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

This service aims to provide a fair and effective way of resolving complaints against a landlord such as Aragon Housing Association, Rockingham Forest Housing and South Northants Homes. There is no charge for the use of the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Ombudsman will expect you to have used our complaints procedure in order to give us the opportunity to resolve your complaint.

If you want to refer your complaint to the Ombudsman, you must contact them within six months of reaching the end of our procedure, however, please remember that if you have decided not to refer your complaint to a designated person, you must wait eight weeks before doing so. You can ask a friend, relative or adviser to help you with the complaint.

Contact details for the Ombudsman are:

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

Tel: **0300 111 3000**

Fax: **020 7831 1942**

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

Website: **www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk**

Compensation

You might be entitled to compensation. For this you must give us full details, including evidence of any financial losses.

Do you need this in a different format?

Do you need the information in this leaflet in a different format?

Please contact us on **0300 123 5544** to discuss your specific requirements.

Equality and Diversity

Grand Union Housing Group has a responsibility to ensure that equal opportunity and effective management of diversity are at the core of its business. We set targets to deliver services that are responsive to the needs of communities and individuals, and promote social inclusion.



Derwent House,
Cranfield Technology Park,
University Way, Cranfield,
Bedfordshire, MK43 0AZ

 GrandUnionHousing

 @GrandunionHG

Tel: 0300 123 5544

Email: enquiry@grandunionhousing.co.uk

Web: www.grandunionhousing.co.uk

Office opening hours: 8.45am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday

Registered address: Derwent House, Cranfield Technology Park,
University Way, Cranfield, Bedfordshire, MK43 0AZ.

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