

## FORUM HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Forum Housing Association is fully committed to all principles of Equality and Diversity and takes an approach which recognises the importance of all seven strands of Diversity (Race, Gender, Gender Identity, Age, Disability, Sexual Orientation and Religion and Belief). As a demonstration of our commitment, this policy and procedure has had an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken on it to ensure it has a positive impact on the Association's work regarding equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery.

### COMPLAINTS (SERVICE USERS)

#### POLICY

Forum Housing Association is continuously developing its services to ensure that service users receive the best service possible. In order to help achieve this, the Association recognises that it is essential to provide positive opportunities for service users to make us aware when they are dissatisfied.

Complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction from service users, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Association, its staff or agents. We will ensure that your complaints are listened to and dealt with fairly and openly.

In order to achieve this we will promote a positive complaints culture, ensuring that staff are trained and supported and particularly that front line staff are empowered to resolve matters quickly and to the service user's satisfaction.

We will accept complaints via a range of mechanisms and where able make use of modern technology.

We will also accept complaints submitted by advocates and others acting on their behalf and positively welcome the input of advocates and others. Service users wishing to use the help of an advocate or another will be required to provide written consent.

Service users who wish to make complaint about support staff can do so either direct to the Service Manager with responsibility for that staff member or alternatively contact a member of the Human Resources Department at Association Head Office. Complaints about Service Managers will be investigated by the Association's Executive or an appointed senior officer.

We will review this policy annually to ensure its effectiveness. In order to do this we will gather and monitor a range of relevant information. This information will be reported internally to the Association Board on a quarterly basis.

Service users will be requested to make comment on the handling of their complaint via satisfaction feedback forms. Information on complaints performance will be circulated to service users via newsletter. The resident representative team will facilitate additional opportunities to comment on and guide the performance of this policy and set of procedures.

We will offer service users two stages of appeal if they remain dissatisfied with our initial response. We will further assist service users if they remain dissatisfied beyond the Association's stages to take their case to the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service.

Whenever we investigate a complaint we will use the procedures described below.

## PROCEDURES

Talk to us! Always try, where able, to resolve the issue with staff. Many problems can be resolved this way immediately. Staff are here to help. If after discussion, the problem has not been resolved or you remain dissatisfied then please feel free to action the remainder of this procedure. There are three stages to the complaints procedure:

- Stage 1: Investigation by a Support Worker responsible for delivering your service. A written response will be given within three working days.
- Stage 2: Appeal to the Service Manager responsible for delivering your service. A written response will be given within a further five working days.
- Stage 3: Appeal to the Head of Service with departmental responsibility for your complaint area. A written response will be given within a further five working days.

If you are still not happy after you have been through each of these stages then you can appeal to the Independent Housing Ombudsman. Further details of how to contact the Ombudsman can be found later in this document.

### How to make a complaint

If your complaint can not be dealt with straightaway and you remain dissatisfied, you can request that a formal record of your complaint is made. There are a number of ways in which you can do this for example:

- Face to face to a member of Association Staff
- By Phone
- In Writing

In order to help us deal with your complaint and continuously improve our services we require you to provide us with a range of information including:

- Name and contact details
- Details of your complaint
- What you would like us to do to put things right

Any information you give us will be dealt with in confidence, and only used in connection with your complaint.

### **Stage 1:**

You will be given a written acknowledgement of your complaint. The complaint will be investigated and a written response and feedback on your complaint will be provided to you within **three working days**. Where possible we will try and reply sooner. If there is to be any delays we will advise you of this, and set out the reasons for this.

We will also enclose a satisfaction form asking you to record whether the complaint has been resolved to your liking and whether you have any comments on how we can improve our procedure. It is really important that this form is returned to us.

If you remain unhappy after your Stage 1 response you are entitled to appeal. You can do this using the lower section of the satisfaction form. Additional details of how to carry this out will be sent with this document.

### **Stage 2:**

This appeal will be heard by the Service Manager responsible for your support. You will receive a written acknowledgement that your appeal has been received. The Manager will investigate your appeal and provide written feedback **within five working days** from the date received. Where possible we will try and reply sooner. If there is to be any delays we will advise you of this, and set out the reasons for this.

Accompanying this written response will be a satisfaction form asking you to record whether the complaint has been resolved to your liking and whether you have any comments on how we can improve our procedure. It is really important that this form is returned to us.

If you remain unhappy after your Stage 2 response you are entitled to appeal further and progress to Stage 3. You can do this using the lower section of the satisfaction form. Additional details of how to carry this out will be sent with this document.

### **Stage 3:**

This will be the final stage within the Association. This appeal will be heard by the Head of Service with departmental responsibility for your complaint. For example if your complaint was about a repair this stage would be heard by the Head of Service (Estates and Risk Management).

You will receive a written acknowledgement that your appeal has been received. The Head of Service will investigate your appeal and provide written feedback **within five working days** from the date received. Where possible we will try and reply sooner. If there is to be any delays we will advise you of this and set out the reasons for this.

Accompanying this written response will be a satisfaction form asking you to record whether the complaint has been resolved to your liking and whether you have any comments on how we can improve our procedure. It is really important that this form is returned to us.

In the unlikely event that we have been unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you are entitled to request a review from the Housing Ombudsman.

## Independent Housing Ombudsman

The Independent Housing Ombudsman works to make sure that we treat our service users fairly. They review complaints once they have been through the stages in our procedure. You can contact them by writing to:

Independent Housing Ombudsman Service  
81 Aldwych  
London  
WC2B 4HN

Tel: 020 7421 3800

Lo-Call: 0845 7125 973

Minicom: 020 7404 7092

Fax: 020 7831 1942

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

## Getting independent help

If you need help or advice in making a complaint or want someone to act on your behalf you can contact independent sources of help, such as:

Local Supporting People Teams  
Citizens Advice Bureau  
Housing Aid Centre  
Local Law Centre  
A Solicitor  
Your Local Councillor  
Your Member of Parliament

You can find these sources in local directories and we are happy to help you find someone or provide contact details.

**Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary proceedings.**