



Thames Valley Housing Complaints Policy

This policy explains how residents can make a complaint if they are not satisfied with our services. Current residents of Thames Valley Housing (TVH) living in rented, shared ownership, leasehold or freehold homes (on TVH developments), and applicants for housing with TVH, can make a complaint using this procedure. **Complaints can be made by telephone, letter, fax, e-mail, in person or by using our Complaints Form.**

Complaints Policy

In addition to residents' rights under the terms of a tenancy agreement or lease, and the Tenant Services Authority Charter for residents, we aim to provide a high quality service. Our Service Promise sets out that standard of service.

It is important that residents tell us if we fail to deliver the service we commit to provide, so that we can take the necessary steps to improve our service. It is our policy to respond to complaints quickly and try to resolve any disputes within a set time frame. We record and analyse the number of complaints we receive about our various services to help us review and improve our services. This policy refers to "working days" which for this purpose means Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action, lack of action or the standard of service provided by TVHA. This includes action and services provided by persons or organisations acting on TVHA's behalf such as staff and contractors.

Who can make a Complaint?

A complaint can be made by anyone who is entitled to receive a service from TVHA or is affected by that service. An advocate (excluding legal professionals) may act on behalf of a complainant with written authorisation to do so.

General Advice – An issue will be treated as a complaint if a resident tells us that we have failed in our service delivery. **Residents are asked to contact us as soon as possible after the incident, and definitely within 20 working days.** Wherever possible, residents are asked to bring the problem to the attention of the person concerned. This should be quicker and more amicable. Sometimes complaints arise from a misunderstanding, which can be explained and resolved quickly once a member of staff is made aware of the problem.

Initial Reports of Failures in Service

If residents are dissatisfied with a particular service, they are encouraged to contact us. Our aim is to resolve initial failures in service informally and as quickly as possible. Our service standard is to provide a response **within 10 working days.**

Service failures are recorded so that we can analyse statistics on where things are going wrong and then seek to improve them. **They are not part of the formal complaints process.**

How the Procedure Works (See also: [Complaints Flowchart](#))

Stage 1: Formal Complaint

A formal complaint may be made either if the “service failure” was not resolved to the resident’s satisfaction, or if the resident wishes to make a formal complaint. The complaint will then be recorded and **acknowledged within 3 working days.** We will confirm who will be responsible for investigating the complaint, how they can be contacted and when the resident can expect to receive a response.

During the period of investigation, we will keep the resident informed of progress that is being made to resolve the complaint. We will ask the resident for any further information we need. At any part of this stage, we may arrange to meet with the resident to discuss the details, and to ask what the resident would like us to do to put things right. We will discuss the proposed resolution with the resident. Our service standard is to work with residents to resolve 90% of complaints at this stage.

We will provide a written response as soon as possible, and in any event, **within 10 working days of receiving the formal complaint.**

Stage 2 – Complaint Review

If the resident is not satisfied with the response received under Stage 1 the complaint will be reviewed by a senior manager not involved in providing the response under Stage 1. This will normally be a Director or Assistant Director. The facts and responses provided will be carefully reviewed. A written response will be provided **within 10 working days of receiving the resident's request for a review.**

Stage 3 – The Appeals Panel

Where the complaint is not upheld and the resident remains dissatisfied following the response under Stage 2, the resident will be advised of how to make an appeal. No appeal will be allowed if the complaint is a matter of law or regulation over which we have no jurisdiction or if the matter should be dealt with through another procedure. We will advise the resident of this and any alternative routes available.

The complaint will be considered by an independent appeals panel which will normally include members of the Executive and Board. Panel members will be selected with some experience in the subject of the complaint where possible. The resident will be offered the opportunity to put his or her complaint to the panel personally, and may be accompanied by a representative (although not a legal representative). **An appeal should be requested no later than 20 working days** following the response in Stage 2. **The hearing will normally be held within 20 working days** of receiving the request. The written decision of the panel will be provided **within 10 working days of the appeals hearing.**

Ombudsman

If the resident is still not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they have the right to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service. Details of this are provided at the appeal. The Ombudsman will not consider complaints unless they have first followed the above procedure.

Housing Ombudsman Service,
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Minicom: 020 7404 7092

Fax: 020 7831 1942

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Learning from Complaints

We keep a record of and analyse all the complaints we receive and regularly monitor and report on where we are going wrong. This allows us to learn from them and identify areas of our service where changes and improvements are needed.

Arbitration

If it has not been possible to resolve a complaint by this procedure, it may be possible to approach the National Housing Federation to appoint an arbitrator. Both parties would agree to accept the findings of the arbitrator.

Compensation Policy

Any claim for financial compensation should be supported by a receipt or adequate documentation wherever possible. We will advise residents whether or not a claim has been accepted in full or in part. Full details are set out in the separate Compensation Policy. If residents are not satisfied with a response to a request for compensation, they can follow the complaints procedure outlined above.

Vexatious Users Policy

On a very small number of occasions, there may be a need to step outside of this policy to deal with persistent and unacceptable behaviour. Where this is the case, complainants will have been subject to our Vexatious Users Policy and will have been informed of any changes to the way we handle their complaints and contact with us.

Being persistent in attempting to resolve an issue or pursue a complaint is not vexatious. However, if a complainant is doing so unreasonably then the policy may be initiated as a last resort.