

 saha Transforming Lives	Committee: June 2018
	Executive Team: June 2018
DIRECTORATE / DEPARTMENT: Housing Services AUTHOR: Stephen Bate, Head of Customer Services	Pages: 9
	Issue Date: June 2018
	Location: Staff Intranet & Saha website
	Review Date: June 2021
Customer Feedback & Complaints Policy	

<p>1. Purpose</p> <p>1.1 The purpose of the policy is to ensure all types of customer feedback are dealt with appropriately and to ensure that saha treats customers fairly, follows fair processes and takes appropriate steps to remedy any service failure.</p> <p>1.2 saha should aim to learn from feedback received to improve services and feed that back to our customers.</p>
<p>2. The following documentation can be relied on to supplement this policy:</p> <p>a. The saha feedback procedure</p>
<p>3. <u>Introduction</u></p> <p>3.1 We are committed to providing an excellent standard of service to customers, potential customers and others who come into contact with the organisation. We welcome all types of feedback from our customers.</p> <p>3.2 We recognise that customers may wish to feed back a concern or service enquiry about our services without wishing it to be treated as a formal complaint.</p> <p>3.3 We also recognise that there will be occasions when people believe that our service has fallen short of the standards set and wish to make a formal complaint. We welcome and take seriously any feedback in the form of a complaint that is made to us about the quality of service that we have provided.</p> <p>3.4 We also welcome compliments from our customers as they indicate where we are doing things well and help us to continue to improve by learning from our successes.</p> <p>3.5 This policy defines what we mean by a service enquiry, a complaint and a compliment.</p>

4. Definitions

- 4.1 A service enquiry refers to verbal or written feedback expressing an opinion or reaction to the services that the Association delivers.
- 4.2 A complaint refers to dissatisfaction with an action, lack of action or quality of a service from saha.
- 4.3 Feedback concerning disputes between customers are not saha service complaints. Such feedback is more appropriately addressed through saha's anti-social behaviour and breaches of tenancy procedures, unless the feedback refers to a complaint about how we have managed the process itself.
- 4.4 A compliment is any positive feedback regarding saha services.

5. Policy Summary

- 5.1 We will offer customers the opportunity to provide feedback on all the services we provide.
- 5.2 We will offer a wide variety of media in which to give our customers the opportunity to provide feedback on our services, including but not limited to telephone surveys, social media, email, website and via our customer service centre.
- 5.3 Feedback received in the form of a service enquiry can be used as an informal avenue to have a service issue resolved quickly and where a customer may not wish to escalate their concern through the formal complaints procedure. Our front line employees are often best placed to resolve these types of issues quickly, without the need for more formal action.
- 5.4 Feedback in the form of a formal complaint will be dealt with through our internal complaints procedure, of which there are three principle stages: An investigation into the complaint by a senior manager, a review undertaken by a Director, and an appeal to a saha Panel
- 5.5 Where we have failed in our service delivery we will apologise and work hard to put things right.
- 5.6 We will use learning from customer feedback to improve the services we provide and feed that back to customers.
- 5.7 We will record a summary of complaints and compliments feedback to EMT and report upon our performance to our Governance & HR Committee and our customers.

6. Objectives

This policy aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 6.1 To ensure customers affected by the operation of our services are able to provide feedback, particularly if the service has failed or exceeded service standards.

- 6.2 To ensure that when feedback is received in the form of a complaint, our approach to dealing with complaints is easily accessible, simple to understand and use and that complaints are dealt with fairly, politely and to published timescales.
- 6.3 To use information gathered from feedback to learn from and improve upon the services we provide to customers.

7. Policy Statement

- 7.1 As a national provider of social housing to a diverse range of service users, we want to ensure that our service standards are met and so encourage feedback from our customers. Where a service fails and feedback is received in the form of a complaint, the circumstances should be investigated and any learning outcomes used to improve future service delivery. Where comments and compliments are received, these should also be used in a positive manner and shared as good practice if applicable.
- 7.2 We set standards to ensure that those using or affected by the operation of the Association's services are able to advise saha if that service has failed to meet its standards of performance or if service delivery has excelled against the agreed service standards. This includes customers in all service areas, plus any external customers of the organisation who have been affected by saha service delivery.

8. Service Enquiries

- 8.1 Feedback received in the form of a service enquiry may highlight a concern or some degree of dissatisfaction which highlights a service issue which needs to be addressed or rectified.
- 8.2 Service enquiries are likely to relate to straightforward matters which can be addressed quickly and without the need for escalation.
- 8.3 A customer may also express as part of the feedback process that they do not wish to have the matter dealt with through a formal complaint process.
- 8.4 Service enquiries will be responded to in accordance with our set procedures and timescales and appropriately logged and recorded.

9. Complaints

- 9.1 All feedback in the form of a complaint will be dealt with fairly and complainants need have no fear of adverse treatment of themselves or their families because they have made a complaint.

There are three principle stages to our internal complaints process. Investigation, review and appeal.

- 9.2 The first stage of the complaints process is the investigation. The investigation of a service complaint will be completed by the Senior Manager who is responsible for the service area the complaint is about. The Senior Manager will confirm or request confirmation of how the complainant would like the matter resolved, investigate the issues raised and then respond with a decision, an offer of resolution if appropriate and detail learning outcomes if applicable. The Manager has 15 working days to

respond. Where the investigation will take longer to complete, this will be agreed and confirmed with the complainant.

- 9.3 If the complainant does not agree with the findings and resolution to the complaint, the second stage available is the review. A review must be requested by the complainant within fifteen working days and it will be carried out by the service Director. The review will offer the option of external mediation to resolve the matter and/or a visit by a Senior Manager if appropriate. The Director will review the original complaint, the resolution requested by the complainant, the investigation carried out at stage 1 of the process and the complaint response. The Director has 15 working days to carry out the review and make a determination. Where the review will take longer to complete, this will be agreed and confirmed with the complainant.
- 9.4 If the complaint remains dissatisfied following review there is a final option to appeal to a saha Panel. An appeal must be requested with 15 working days. The appeal Panel will consist of the Chief Executive, a Board Member and a resident representative. The Panel will review the original complaint, the resolution requested by the complainant, the investigation carried out at stages 1 and 2 of the process and the complaint responses. A suitable date for the Panel hearing will be organised in consultation with the complainant..
- 9.5
- 9.6 All service complaints will be appropriately logged, monitored and responded to in accordance with our set procedures and timescales.

10. Agency Managed Services

- 10.1 Where we engage managing agents to provide services on our behalf, we will work to ensure that they provide services that are at least as comparable as our own and that their approach is in line with our own approach, as set out in this policy.
- 10.2 Feedback received directly from customers at our Agency Managed services will be acknowledged and complaints investigated and referred for response by the Managing Agent in accordance with our procedures. They will enter the complaint procedure when we are satisfied that the Managing Agent has fully completed their internal process and if a Director review is requested by the complainant.

11. Disputed Complaints and Further Options

- 11.1 saha residents may approach a 'designated person' (introduced by the Localism Act 2011) where they are still dissatisfied after exhausting saha's internal complaints process. The following are referred to as 'designated persons':
- Member of Parliament (MP)
 - Councillor
- 11.2 The role of a 'designated person' is to facilitate resolution of tenant complaints, which may involve them providing advice to tenants; advocating on their behalf; discussing matters with the landlord; engaging with other designated persons or carrying out other actions.

11.3 The 'designated person' may also refer complaints to the Housing Ombudsman where the designated person considers that they are unable to resolve a complaint locally and if a complainant wishes and authorises them to do so.

11.4 The complainant always remains in control of their complaint and a complaint can only be referred to the Ombudsman with the authorisation of the complainant.

12. Complaining directly to the Housing Ombudsman

12.1 saha tenants may complain directly to the Housing Ombudsman if they are still dissatisfied after exhausting saha's internal complaints process. Complaints to the Ombudsman do not have to be referred by a designated person, but if they are not, the Housing Ombudsman requests that the complainant waits at least eight weeks from the end of the internal complaint process before contacting them.

12.2 The Housing Ombudsman will only consider complaints once the internal processes have been completed.

13. Other types of complaints

13.1 Support Services

If the feedback concerns a complaint about the support service that a client is receiving, then the complainant may also wish to refer this complaint to the relevant Local Authority (LA) Commissioning team. Each LA Commissioning team has its own procedures. These procedures determine at what stage a complaint should be referred.

13.2 Fundraising Activities

If a complaint is about our fundraising activities and we are unable to resolve it, the complainant can ask the **Fundraising Standards Board**, the self-regulator for fundraising in the UK, to consider it by submitting a complaint through the FRSB website www.givewithconfidence.org.uk; writing to the Fundraising Standards Board, 65 Brushfield Street, London E1 6AA, or Telephoning 0333 321 8803.

14 Vexatious Complainants

14.1 In defining unacceptable actions by complainants, people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined. In fact, we accept that being persistent can be a positive advantage when pursuing a complaint.

14.2 However, the actions of those who are angry and demanding may result in unreasonable demands on, or unacceptable behaviour towards staff. It is these actions that we consider unacceptable and aim to manage under our unacceptable customer procedure document.

14.3 In terms of vexatious complainants, our approach will be based upon the guidance and best practice supplied by the Housing Ombudsman relating to vexatious complaints and complainants when required. The link is <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>

15. Anonymous Feedback

We will accept and deal with feedback received anonymously as far as possible. We will also publicise our policy widely to ensure that anyone who wants to feedback or complain knows how to do so.

16. Collective Feedback

We also recognise that situations may occasionally arise where we receive feedback from a group of customers who wish to raise a concern or complaint as a collective rather than as an individual. Where such situations occur, we will take a collaborative approach, including meeting with the group when appropriate, to seek a resolution to the issues raised. In these situations a collective response will be provided to all complainants involved. When the majority of those involved with a collective complaint are satisfied with the response, we will consider the complaint closed. Individuals outside the majority that remain dissatisfied will be encouraged to re-raise the matter as an individual complaint if they wish.

17. External Feedback

Complainants who are not tenants of the organisation can raise a complaint against a service provided by us and also have a review of the matter if required by a Director. They do not have access to the appeal process.

18. Compliments

18.1 All compliments will be recorded on our housing management system and the customer will receive a response, including a thank you and any further details relevant to the person making the compliment. Staff named within any compliment will be notified of the positive feedback.

19. Timescale Guidelines

- 19.1 Feedback in the form of a service enquiry or complaint will be logged and acknowledged upon receipt. The acknowledgment will include the timescale for response.
- 19.2 Where a complaint is complex and will require further investigation and will exceed the timescale advised, the complainant will be kept informed by the designated investigating officer.
- 19.3 All complaint responses will include timescales regarding taking the complaint to the next stage of the process and the date the complaint will be closed. It will also include timescales for our feedback assessment surveys.
- 19.4 All service enquiries and complaints will be logged on to our housing management system and will include case notes and correspondence in chronological order.

20. Accessibility

- 20.1 We will work to ensure that our feedback process is easily accessible to all customers, is simple to understand and use, that service enquiries are dealt with promptly and that the system allows customers to communicate feedback by whatever means they choose.
- 20.2 We will encourage customers to feedback complaints through an advocate (a person who can assist them) if the customers feels that this will assist them in conveying, communicating and clarifying their complaint. Complaints will also be monitored taking into account the diverse needs of all customers and any trends that are established.

21. Learning from Customer Feedback

- 21.1 Feedback gained from service enquiries, complaints and compliments will be used to influence policy and procedure review.
- 21.2 Learning outcomes from all sources will be shared across the Association and where improvements have been identified and made; these will be monitored by the Head of Customer Service and reported to customers via our standard publicity procedures.

22. Monitoring and Reporting

- 22.1 A summary of feedback relating to formal complaints and compliments will be provided to the Executive Management Team on a monthly basis. This will include the numbers of complaints that have been agreed and the stage at which they were resolved.
- 22.2 Performance regarding complaints and customer feedback will be reported on a quarterly basis to Governance & HR Committee.

22.3 saha will publish information about complaints each year including the number and any learning outcomes.

22.4 saha shall inform residents how they use complaints to improve their services.

23. Implementation

saha will ensure that the implementation of this policy is proactively inclusive across all activities with particular attention towards the nine protected characteristics – age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation, whilst also being mindful towards the inclusivity of other vulnerable and marginalised groups that may be affected.

24. Roles and Responsibilities

24 Staff responsibilities

Senior Managers will be responsible for investigating and responding to complaints and Directors will be responsible for complaint reviews.

24.2 Customers' Responsibilities

Customers can assist us in improving services if required by informing us if they are having any difficulties with a particular service or if a service is failing and by sharing experience of good service practice with us.

25. Policy Review

We will review the operation of this policy in consultation with our residents, staff and relevant stakeholders (where appropriate), in light of current best practice, amending the policy where required.

Document History Log

Author	Date			Version	Approval	
	Created	Revised	Expiry		By	Date
S Bate	15/07/2009		July 2012	1.0	Monitoring Committee	15/07/2009
S Bate		21/04/2011	April 2011	1.1	Monitoring Committee	21/04/2011
P Latham		26/02/2014	June 2018	1.2	EMT	30/06/2015
S Bate		31/07/2015	January 2019	1.3	EMT	26/01/2016
S Haslam	For Merger	31.01.2017	January 2019	1.4		
HoCS		June 2018	June 2021	1.5	Gov & HR Committee	14/06/2018

Equalities Monitoring Form			
Name of Policy: Customer Feedback		Carried out by: BSO	Date: June 2018
Protected characteristics	Impact <i>(Positive, Negative, Neutral)</i>	Protected characteristics	Impact <i>(Positive, Negative, Neutral)</i>
Age	Neutral	Disability	Neutral
Sex (gender)	Neutral	Race	Neutral
Religion or Belief	Neutral	Sexual Orientation	Neutral
Marriage / Civil Partnerships	Neutral	Pregnancy / Maternity	Neutral

Privacy Impact Assessment Form		
Privacy Data Impacting Policy:	Timescales for Retaining Data:	Notes:
details of any complaints	For the length of the tenancy up to 6 years post tenancy.	