



# How to Complain

## Complaints

Handling complaints properly shows how important your complaint is to us at Mercian Housing Association. It shows that we listen to our service users, learn from our mistakes and that we are continually trying to improve our service. We strive to offer excellent services to our customers at all times. However we recognise that customers may from time to time be dissatisfied with our services and feel the need to complain. When we receive a complaint we will:

- Thank you for completing a complaints form.
- Respond promptly and acknowledge your complaint.
- Treat all complaints professionally with integrity and respect.
- Acknowledge that we use the information and investigation of complaints to improve our services to our customers
- Resolve the complaint as quickly and effectively as possible within designated timescales and guidelines.
- Communicate any necessary amendments to these timescales with the complainant.
- Identify any learning points from the complaint and where applicable introduce improvements to our service standards, policies and practices.

## What is an official complaint?

- There has been a failure in our provision of a service including failure to meet agreed and published timescales and standards.
- Where a published policy or procedure has not been adhered to or the customer feels it has systematically treated them unfairly.
- Where an employee or contractor of Mercian Housing Association has acted in an inappropriate manner, has been discourteous or rude.
- Where compensation is being claimed.

## What isn't an official complaint?

- Reporting a neighbour nuisance for the first time.
- Reporting an initial repair or maintenance issue for the first time.
- Reporting an initial gardening or cleaning issue for the first time.

## How to complain

1. In writing – complaints should be submitted to the address below:

**Complaints,  
Mercian Housing Association,  
Gee Business Centre  
Aston, Birmingham, B7 5JR**

2. Via the telephone – by telephoning 0121 322 7373.
3. Face to face - by informing a member of Mercian Housing Association staff in person of the issue. They will record the issue and then the complainant should sign and date the statement to verify its accuracy.
4. E-mail – by sending an e-mail to the complaints email address: [complaints@mercian.org.uk](mailto:complaints@mercian.org.uk).

All complaints received will be forwarded to the Complaints Administrator who will formally acknowledge and record the complaint.

## **Procedure outline and timescales**

**Stage 1:** This is the initial complaints procedure where the complaint is dealt with internally by the relevant manager responsible for the service delivery. The complainant will receive a formal response in writing. Our target for resolving complaints at Stage 1 is 20 working days.

**Stage 2:** The second stage in our complaints process is where a complainant is unhappy with the response or remedies offered to them at Stage 1. In these cases, the complaint will be investigated at Stage 2 by a Director (or Senior Manager). The complainant will receive a formal response in writing. Our target for resolving complaints at Stage 2 is 10 working days.

**Stage 3:** If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the response at Stages 1 & 2, they can request an internal appeal hearing with a Board Member and a Director. Our target for arranging an appeal hearing is 20 working days. The Complaints Co-ordinator will inform the complainant of their decision in writing. The target for sending this letter is 5 days from the date of the hearing.

If we have not been contacted again by the complainant within 10 working days of sending a letter to close the particular stage of the complaint, the Complaints Administrator will contact the customer (usually by telephone) and complete a Complaints Customer Satisfaction questionnaire. We will record this information on our customer complaints log (without including personal details) and use this as part of our performance monitoring to further improve our service.

## Remedies

There are various forms of action we can take to put things right if we have made a mistake. We can:

- Make an apology
- Carry out work, such as repairs
- Make a decision which should have happened before
- Reconsider a decision
- Improve procedures and train staff in the changes to a procedure

If we find a complainant has been disadvantaged in some way, either by the cause of the complaint or in pursuing it, some form of compensation will be considered. Generally compensation should be a payment in recognition of expenses caused to or income lost by the complainant. The Manager, Director or Appeal Panel investigating the complaint will determine whether compensation should be offered.

### **DISCLOSURE**

**Please note that all of the timescales listed above may be affected by postal strikes/delays and other matters outside of Mercian's control. In these circumstances timescales maybe amended and you will be informed.**



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