

West End Housing Co-operative- Complaints Procedure

The Co-operative has a simple two stage procedure for dealing with formal complaints.

We will advise you regarding your right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout your complaint, not only when the Co-operative's complaints process is exhausted.

If you remain dissatisfied after the Co-operative's complaints procedure has been exhausted, you can then refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Stage 1 Investigation

Formal complaints must be made in the manner described in the Co-operative's complaints policy.

The receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged in writing within five working days.

The investigation into the complaint will normally be carried out by the relevant NWHS Client Services Officer (CSO) who will act as the NWHS Complaints Officer and the Management Committee will also appoint a Co-operative Complaints Officer, who will make decisions at this stage. If the complaint relates to a decision made by the CSO, NWHS may identify another officer to conduct the investigation. Where appropriate, the CSO will involve other NWHS staff members to assist with the investigation and any meetings with the complainant.

The Co-operative's Complaints Officer will be a member of the Co-operative's Committee of Management. The Committee of Management will identify those members authorised to act as Complaints Officers.

When approached to act as Complaints Officer in individual cases, members must declare any potential conflict of interest and must not contribute to the investigation of matters in which they have a personal interest.

The investigating officers will contact the complainant within 5 working days and make arrangements to meet with them to discuss the complaint and to:

- Clarify the complaint;
- Clarify the outcome sought;
- Check whether the complainant needs any support;
- Explain the investigation procedure; and

- Discuss what the complainant wants.

The investigating officers will normally arrange a confidential interview with the complainant to obtain this information and carry out any further necessary enquiries before writing to the complainant to confirm their findings and to detail any action to be taken.

Complainants should be aware that in some instances the investigating officers may need to refer the matter to the management committee.

The Co-operative will aim to complete this process within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint. Where this does not prove possible, the complainant will be informed in writing of the reason for any delays.

If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable the Co-operative to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.

Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, the Co-operative will provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the complainant can challenge the Co-operative's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of the Co-operative's response.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, s/he may proceed to Stage 2 by writing to the investigating officer from NWHS.

Stage 2 Appeal

Requests to proceed to Stage 2 will be acknowledged in writing within five working days of receipt.

This stage consists of a review of the Stage 1 investigation by a panel of at least two members of the Co-operative's Committee of Management. The Committee of Management will identify a pool of members who can participate in the panel and delegate authority for dealing with complaints to the panel.

The members of the panel will not normally have been involved in the Stage 1 investigation. Committee members should not participate in the panel where there are potential conflicts of interest or the member has a personal interest in the subject of the complaint. The panel may seek assistance from independent advisors.

An appeal hearing will normally be arranged to allow the complainant to present their appeal. The complainant may bring along a family member or friend to assist.

The appeal panel hearing will be facilitated by the NWHS Complaints Officer.

The appeals panel may uphold, overturn or amend the judgement of the investigating officers or refer the matter to the Committee of Management.

If the matter is referred to the Committee of Management, only Committee Members who have not been involved in Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the complaint can consider the appeals panel findings.

The complainant will be notified of the outcome of the appeal in writing. The Co-operative aims to complete this process within 20 working days of the receipt of the request to proceed to Stage 2. Where this does not prove possible, the complainant will be informed in writing of the reason for any delays.

If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable the Co-operative to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.

Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, the Co-operative will provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the complainant can challenge the Co-operative's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of the Co-operative's response.

This is the last stage in the Co-operative's complaints procedure. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, s/he may refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Adopted 16th May 2023