

Resolving Complaints Policy Summary

Falcon Housing Association C.I.C (FHA) aims to deliver a positive customer experience and we encourage feedback from tenants about our service so that we can learn and improve.

Sometimes things go wrong, and people are dissatisfied, when this happens we aim to put things right at the first point of contact. If we cannot resolve the issue quickly, this expression of dissatisfaction (EOD) can be escalated to a formal complaint. We take complaints seriously and work hard to resolve them quickly and fairly.

It is our policy to:

- Follow a process for handling EOD's and formal complaints
- Effectively respond to tenant complaints, ensuring tenant feedback is acknowledged and acted upon at the first point of contact
- Where possible, successfully resolve customer complaints at the first point of contact, without need to escalate
- Empower staff and contractors to take ownership and resolve issues raised within our service commitments for resolving complaints
- Improve communications and partnership working with our contractors around tenant handling and resolutions
- Record/learn from customer feedback (EOD and formal complaints)

What is a complaint?

A complaint is where a tenant (or their representative) is dissatisfied with any aspect of the service provided by FHA or one of our contractors.

What is not a complaint?

FHA will not treat an initial request for a service (e.g. a repair to a property, a first report about anti-social behaviour, or a first request for information/explanation of our policies/procedures) as an EOD or a formal complaint.

Likewise, a report about something that we do not control or is not within our responsibility (e.g. street lighting) will not be dealt with under this policy. However, where we can, we will support tenants to raise it with the appropriate organisation.

How to give feedback (express dissatisfaction, comment, compliment or complain)

Tenants or their representative can feedback to us by contacting our Operations Team by:

- Email: info@falconha.org
- Tel: 0191 2600551
- In person: with a member of staff
- By letter to: North Wing, 2nd Floor, 2 Lighthouse View, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham, Co Durham, SR7 7PR

Our process for resolving complaints

It is our intention to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage. Wherever possible, we aim to resolve the problem immediately. By telling us what has gone wrong, we can help put things right.

FHA aim for a first-time fix approach and encourage tenants to initially contact the member of staff who is dealing with the delivery of the service. Staff are expected to take ownership for resolving an EOD quickly, normally within 5 working days. However, some issues may take longer to investigate and respond to.

FHA operates a three-stage resolving complaints process:

At each stage of the process you will receive a written response to your complaint. The response will give the decision, the reason for that decision and explain who you should contact if you wish to move to the next stage.

Stage one

After making a complaint, your feedback will be passed to the relevant member of staff and/or manager to investigate and resolve. They will then contact you to discuss the problem / issues raised with you and ask you how you would like your problem / issue to be dealt with and resolved. Wherever possible, we will try to resolve your problem immediately. At the very least, we will aim to send you a full response within 10 working days.

Stage two

If you are unhappy with the response from Stage 1, you can then escalate your complaint to Stage 2 by contacting the Operations Manager to request that your complaint is reviewed. The Operations Manager will then look at how your problem / issue has been managed and decide whether there is more we could do. The Operations Manager's will send you a full response within 10 working days of you asking for your complaint to be reviewed.

Stage three

If you are still dissatisfied following Stage 1 and Stage 2 you can ask us to arrange for a special appeals panel to review your case. The Panel will be heard by the Chief Executive and an independent member of staff, you will be offered the opportunity to meet with the panel personally, so that you can explain why you are still unhappy. The Panel will be arranged within 15 working days of you notifying us that you wish to proceed to stage 3. A full response will be sent to you within 5 working days of the meeting.

The appeals panel will provide our final response to the concerns that you have raised.

External resolution options

If a complaint remains unresolved after exhausting FHA's internal process, customers may consider the following external options to resolve the complaint:

- Referral to a Designated Person (such as a local elected representative) for a review and resolution
- Referral to the Housing Ombudsman Service (normally after waiting 8 weeks from exhausting the internal stages)

Unacceptable Behaviour

FHA believe that all tenants have a right to be heard, understood and respected, we also believe that staff have these same rights. FHA expect our tenants to be polite and well mannered when contacting us. If tenants are unnecessarily aggressive or abusive, we reserve the right to refuse to deal with the complaint and will consider further action, where required, to protect our staff from unacceptable behaviour.

Unreasonable complaints

A very small number of complaints may be unreasonable because of the way or frequency that complaints are raised with staff, or how complainants respond when they receive feedback about the complaint. These may include tenants who make frequent complaints which are not valid; who persistently make the same complaint; who request a complaint to be escalated when we have fully responded to all points; or are seeking an unreasonable or unrealistic outcome. In these circumstances we reserve the right to refuse to deal with the complaint.

If you have any questions in relation to this policy, please contact a member of our Operations team who will be happy to help on E:info@falconha.org or T:0191 2600551.