

Complaints

compliments and comments

Home Group aims to deliver the best services possible to customers and positively encourages feedback in the form of complaints, compliments and comments. This information is extremely valuable and helps ensure we continually shape, improve and learn from all of the feedback. This allows us to improve our working practices and enhance the quality of our services received by our customers.

This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our standard of service
- dissatisfaction with our policy
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- our failure to follow proper procedure.

Your complaint may involve more than one of our services or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service, for example reporting a problem that needs to be repaired or initial action on anti social behaviour
- our policies and procedures that have a separate right of appeal, for example, if you are dissatisfied with the level of priority you have been given when applying for a house, you may have the right to appeal against the decision
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered

where we have already given our final decision following a stage 2 investigation. If you are still not satisfied, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for an independent review of the complaint.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns we will give information and advice to help you.

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. Please also read the section on 'Getting help to make your complaint'.

How do I complain?

You can make a complaint in the following ways:

- Write to us.
- Contact us through our website www.homegroup.org.uk using the 'General Enquiry' form. This can be found in the 'Help Centre' section of the website.
- Telephone us on 0345 141 4663.
- Give your feedback to any Home Group member of staff.

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of our service the simplest and quickest way to deal with a problem is to discuss it with a member of staff at our Customer Service Centre on 0345 141 4663. Our staff are fully equipped to handle concerns or feedback about our service addressing most problems immediately over the phone.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about, or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage one – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at stage one in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why. If you are still dissatisfied you can ask for your complaint to be investigated further through stage two. You may choose to do this immediately or some time after you get our initial response. We can help you with making this request.

There may also be occasions where it is appropriate to issue a first and final response to a complaint at stage one. If this is the case we will discuss this with you. This will not prevent you from escalating your complaint to the next stage, although the response received at the next stage of our complaints handling process may be the same response received at stage one if no new information is brought to our attention.

Stage two – investigation

Stage two deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at stage one and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using stage two we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO **cannot** normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO:

In person:	By post:
SPSO	SPSO
4 Melville Street	Freepost EH641
Edinburgh	Edinburgh
EH3 7NS	EH3 0BR

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

Requests for Discretionary Compensation

Requests for discretionary compensation will be considered as part of the complaints handling process, in line with our Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy. If compensation is awarded and you have any outstanding arrears and/or debt, your compensation award will be offset against either or both and any balance paid to you.

Complaints about our factoring service

The SPSO does not normally look at complaints about our factoring service. The Homeowners Housing Panel (HOHP) offers a dispute resolution between homeowners and property factors if a homeowner believes that the property factor has failed to comply with their factoring duties or the Property Factors Code of Conduct. The homeowner must first notify their property factor of the reasons why they consider that the factor has failed to carry out their duties. The property factor must also have refused to resolve the homeowners concerns or unreasonably delayed in attempting to resolve them. For more information please see <https://hohp.scotland.gov.uk>.

Care complaints

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose whether to complain to us or the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about their complaints procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting the Care Inspectorate.

Information about their complaints procedure, contact details and offices around Scotland, and information about how to complain are all on their website:

www.scswis.com

Or you can contact them by:

Tel: 0845 600 9527

Fax: 01382 207 289

For an online complaints form
email enquiries@careinspectorate.com

Private Rented Housing Panel (PRHP)

Customers of Mid Market Rent (MMR) properties in Scotland do not have recourse to the SPSO because the landlord is Home Group Ltd and is classed as a private landlord in Scotland. However, if the complaint relates to the state of repair of the property and the customer remains dissatisfied at the conclusion of the complaints procedure, they have the right to complain to the PRHP. The PRHP's contact details can be found on their website www.prhpscotland.gov.uk.

Reporting a Significant Performance Failure to the Scottish Housing Regulator

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) can consider issues raised with them about 'significant performance failures'. A significant performance failure is defined by the SHR as something that a landlord does or fails to do that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, and which the landlord has not resolved. This is something that is a systematic problem that does, or could, affect all of a landlord's tenants. If you are affected by a problem like this, you should first report it to us. If you have told us about it but we have not resolved it, you can report it directly to the SHR.

A complaint between an individual tenant and a landlord is not a significant performance failure. Significant performance failures are not, therefore,

Translation service

We can also give you this leaflet in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio and Braille).

Punjabi	ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਅਪਣੀ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਕਰਵਾਉਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਰਜਿਸਟਰਡ ਆਫਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲ ਕਰੋ।
Polish	Jeśli chciałby Pan/chciałaby Pani, aby którakolwiek część tego dokumentu została przetłumaczona, prosimy o kontakt z naszym zarejestrowanym biurem.
Hindi	यदि आप इसमें से किसी अंश का हिन्दी अनुवाद चाहते हैं तो कृपया प्रकाशक से संपर्क करें।
Mandarin	如果您希望得到该文件任何部分的译文, 请与我们的总部联系
Urdu	اگر آپ کو اس کے کسی حصے کے ترجمے کی ضرورت ہو تو براہ کرم ناشر سے رابطہ قائم کریں۔

Please let us know if you would like a large print, audio or Braille version of this document.

dealt with through this complaints handling procedure. You can ask us for more information about significant performance failures. The SHR also has more information on their website:

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

Or you can phone them on: 0141 271 3810

Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance or Citizens Advice Bureau.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: 0131 260 5380

Fax: 0131 260 5381

www.siaa.org.uk

Citizens Advice Scotland

Website: www.cas.org.uk

Or check your phone book for your local bureau.

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing please tell us.

Please contact us in writing, by phone or email using the details below:

Home Group Head Office

2 Gosforth Park Way,
Gosforth Business Park,
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE12 8ET

Tel: 0345 141 4663

Email: contactus@homegroup.org.uk

www.homegroup.org.uk/contactus

Quick guide to our complaints procedure

Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by e-mail or in writing. If your complaint is about the care service we provide to you on behalf of a local authority, you can ask them to deal with the complaint, or you can take the complaint straight to the Care Inspectorate.

We have a **two-stage complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage one – frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within **five working days** if we can. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at stage two.

Stage two – investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage one. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation. We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days** and give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it. We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

If your complaint is about our factoring services you can ask the Homeowners Housing Panel to consider it. If it is about our care services you can ask the Care Inspectorate to consider it. If you live in a mid market rent property, you can apply to the Private Rented Housing Panel.