

RADIUS HOUSING <i>Corporate</i> 	Document No: HRPO0004	
	Prepared by:	A HAN
	Authorised By:	FHICS 31.05.19
	Date:	
TITLE: COMPLAINTS POLICY	Version No:	10
	Date Ratified by Board:	Board 26.06.19
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1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The Association is committed to providing the best housing, care and support to those in need of such services. We work continually to improve the service we offer.
- 1.2 We want to hear about the occasions where our service standards do not meet expectations. Please advise us about these occasions as soon as possible so that we have the opportunity to put things right and learn from any mistakes that we have made. We are committed to dealing with all complaints quickly, fairly, effectively and as far as is reasonably possible, to the satisfaction of the person who has lodged the complaint.
- 1.3 Many issues can be dealt with informally by approaching Radius Housing Association Managers or employees directly.
- 1.4 You can use the formal complaints protocols if you consider your complaint is too serious to be dealt with informally. If you wish to appoint another person to act on your behalf regarding the complaint, then unless a previous arrangement for this person exists with the Association, please inform the Association in writing providing full contact details for your nominated person.

2.0 Usage

This policy applies to:

- 2.1 A tenant or resident living in a property owned or managed by the Association or anyone acting on their behalf and with their consent can complain.
- 2.2 A member of the public, supplier of goods/services, joint management partner or anyone who receives a service or who wants to receive requests a service from Radius Housing can also complain.
- 2.3 Any member of the public or stakeholder, who has a legitimate concern about our service provision, or considers themselves disadvantaged through the Association's actions or inactions over activities that the Association can legitimately be expected to control.

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3.0 Definition of a Complaint

3.1 A complaint will arise when our service levels fail to meet your expectations. In line with the Ombudsman's definition of a complaint in the published Framework for Effective Complaint Handling, the Association uses the definition:

"Any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction by any person, however made, about the service, actions or inactions of a body or its officers which requires a response".

3.2 Examples of causes of complaints include:

A failure to fulfil statutory or contractual responsibilities (e.g. we have not done something that we said we would do in your tenancy agreement or our contracts with you);

- Delays in our administrative processes (e.g. we haven't called you back when we said we would);
- Attitude of employees or contractors working on the Associations behalf (e.g. you thought someone was unhelpful or rude);
- Poor workmanship;
- Dissatisfaction with the way Radius Housing has reached a decision or what has happened after a decision has been made.

3.3 A request for a service is not a complaint. So the following for example are not classified as complaints:

- A routine request for a service such as the initial request for a repair;
- Reporting an incident of neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour – this will be dealt with under our management procedures and tenancy agreement. Our antisocial behaviour policy is available at: www.radiushousing.org
- Employees with complaints or problems relating to employment issues should address this through the Association's Grievance policy.
- Reporting an accident on the Association's managed property – this will be dealt with under our incident reporting procedure.
- It is difficult to resolve anonymous complaints so please provide contact details.

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4.0 Methods of registering a complaint

4.1 You can lodge your complaint in a number of ways, including:

- on the telephone Head Office Tel. 0330 123 0888
- in person at the local office
- or at the scheme
- in writing to this address: Complaints Officer, Radius Housing Association, FREEPOST RSBH-RZZA-UUAE, 38-52 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6AA.
- by e-mail to complaints@radiushousing.org, via the complaints section on the Association website at www.radiushousing.org
- through a third party - for example a relative, neighbour, councillor, solicitor or MP but it would be helpful if you could tell us what we can do to improve things.

5.0 Complaints Process

5.1 Our complaints process has three stages - every complaint must start at the first stage.

5.2 Stage 1

Your complaint will be dealt with by the manager responsible once your complaint has been received. We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 2 working days and you will be advised who is dealing with your complaint and when you can expect a full response from us. We aim to provide you with a full written response or response in a format acceptable to you or your appointed representative within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.

RQIA registered schemes will handle complaints as required in the DHSSPS's "Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure Directions (Northern Ireland) 2009".

Sometimes it may take us longer to provide a response. If this is likely to happen, we will contact you to let you know when you can expect a full response from us and the reason for the delay.

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5.3 Stage 2

If you are not happy with the outcome of the first stage investigation of your complaint or if the problem/complaint has continued, you can request that the complaint be considered at the next stage of our process.

Your complaint should be made to the Chief Executive or the Director of a relevant department within 20 working days from the date of the response letter to your initial complaint. If possible, please provide the reference number of your original complaint and contact details in case we need to clarify something with you.

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days and we will advise when you can expect a full written response or response in a format acceptable to you or your appointed representative. The Chief Executive/Director will ensure that an investigation of your complaint is conducted by a different officer not previously involved in the case and you should receive a full response within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. A response may take longer if your complaint is more complex but we will contact you to let you know when you can expect a full response and the reason for the delay.

After the final response has been sent by the Association in either stages 1 or 2 and the Association has not received a response from the complainant within 20 working days of the date of posting the full written response (response in a format acceptable to you or your appointed representative), the complaint will be considered resolved for administrative purposes. This does not prevent further re-examination of the issues by either party at a later date, or the complaint being taken forward to another stage.

5.4 Stage 3

If your complaint has been considered at both stages and you are still not satisfied with the outcome, the Ombudsman (the Commissioner for Complaints) may consider a complaint for you.

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The Ombudsman will only consider complaints that have already been through the full internal complaint procedure. Your complaint must be made within 6 months of the date of our final response at stage 2.

The Ombudsman is completely independent of the Association and we will co-operate fully in the course of any investigation carried out by the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman Service can be contacted at:

Freepost NIPSO

OR Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman,
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
BELFAST
BT1 6HN

Freephone: 0800 343424

Tel: 028 9023 3821

Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Web-site: www.nipso.org.uk/nipso

6.0 Confidentiality

- 6.1 We will respect our duty of confidentiality in dealing with the information you have given us in connection with your complaint. Your name will not be made known to other parties, whether in proceedings relating to the complaint or not, unless it is necessary to assist in reaching a mutually acceptable resolution.
- 6.2 However, if your complaint involves another resident or an employee, a fair appraisal of the events will not be possible without talking to that person. Without this, the chances of reaching a satisfactory resolution to your concerns will be much reduced.

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7.0 Anonymous Complaints

- 7.1 Anonymous complaints received will be referred to a senior manager of the service department concerned, who will review the complaint and decide if the matter needs to be investigated further.
- 7.2 Anonymous complaints can rarely be properly investigated, because of insufficient verifiable information, and so the benefit of the doubt is likely to be granted to the alleged perpetrator of the incident on the “innocent until proved guilty” principle, because of insufficient reliable evidence.

8.0 Complaints made of Third Parties

- 8.1 Relevant Directorate committees or Board utilise reports for identification of trends, and confirmation of corrective and preventive actions taken, where necessary.
- 8.2 Where a complaint has been made on behalf of a service user by a third party, the Association reserves the right to seek confirmation that the third party has obtained the service users consent to make the complaint on their behalf.

9.0 Recording and process outcome monitoring

- 9.1 All complaints forwarded to the Association are recorded and analysed to aid continuous improvement. Where a complaint has been made on behalf of a service user by a third party, the Association reserves the right to seek confirmation that the third party has obtained the service users consent to make the complaint on their behalf.

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10.0 Complaints under our Equality Scheme – Section 75 Duties

10.1 From 1 April 2004, the Association was designated a public authority and as such has a specific responsibility under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 that requires the Association in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without
- between persons with dependants and persons without

10.2 If you feel that you would like to highlight any Association policy or procedure which, you feel, breaches the nine groups designated under the Section 75 duties, please contact the Director of Corporate Services in the first instance, in writing, clearly indicating the perceived breach. Where a complainant is unable to forward a written complaint, he/she should contact the Association and arrangements will be made on behalf of the complainant to facilitate the delivery of the complaint.

10.3 An internal investigation will be carried out and a response will be returned within 20 working days. The complainant will be kept updated throughout the process. If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, he/she may speak to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The Equality Commission has the power to refer the case to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Association will cooperate fully with any investigation into the complaint.

If you require any further details please contact the Director of Corporate Services. To access The Association's Equality Statement access, please visit www.radiushousing.org.

11.0 Complaints relating to fraud or misuse of money

11.1 All complaints relating to suspected fraud or the misuse of money will be handled in line with the Associations Anti-Fraud Policy Policies and associated protocols.

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Any complaint received by a staff member via the complaints process relating to the areas of suspected fraud or misuse of money must be notified to their line management for investigation. If a staff member feels that the complaint cannot be notified to their line management, then the staff member should notify either the Director of Finance & ICT, a member of the Senior Management Team, the Chief Executive, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee or the Board Chair.

12.0 Unacceptable Behaviour within the Complaints Process

12.1 The Association expects any individual who is interacting or communicating with Radius Housing including elected representatives, complainants, their representative and staff of statutory bodies to behave in a respectful manner at all times. The Association defines unacceptable behaviour as acting in a manner that places unreasonable demands on our offices or the staff that work in them through acts of anger, abuse, aggressive, persistent or demanding behaviour. These are further defined below;

12.1.1 Anger, Abusive or Aggressive Behaviour

The Association will not tolerate any physical verbal behaviour that is violent or threatening towards staff where they feel intimidated, afraid or abused whether it be in person or using a telephone. Such aggression may include behaviour or language (whether oral or written) including inappropriate use of social media, email or letters.

12.1.2 Persistent Behaviour

The Association has a three level process for dealing with complaints. Radius Housing understands that some complainants do not or will not accept the limitations of service provided by the association. Any complainants who are not in agreement with decisions or actions made in regard to their complaint and contact Radius housing persistently may be regarded as persistent behaviour. This will include those persistently refusing to accept decisions, refusal to accept explanations or continually pursuing complaints further without presenting additional information. This will be assessed on an individual case basis.

12.1.3 Unreasonable demands

The Association will always seek to investigate each complaint to a high standard. Complainants who make unreasonable requests relating to the nature of information requested, the amount of information requested or its nature can be deemed as unacceptable depending on the context of the behaviour, the circumstances and the

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seriousness of the issues raised. Radius Housing may view such demands as unreasonable if they start to impact adversely on the work of the Associations offices, have large time impacts on staff or cause disadvantage to other complainants.

12.2 Restrictions

Should the Association find any individual who is interacting or communicating with Radius Housing including elected representatives, complainants, their representative and staff of statutory bodies not behaving in a respectful manner, the Association may place restrictions on contact leaving only one form of communication open for use. Personal contact may be withdrawn and in extreme cases, law enforcement agencies such as the Police Service of Northern Ireland may be contacted should those interacting with the association threaten the safety of staff. In the case of telephone use, where the caller is abusive or intimidating, members of staff will inform the caller that their behaviour or language is unacceptable in the hope that it will prompt the individual to moderate their behaviour or agree to be called back at a time when they may be calmer. However, if the caller continues to be offensive or abusive, the call will be terminated. Radius Housing staff have the right to make this decision and not the event with the person handling the complaint.

13.0 Useful contact details

Radius Housing Head Office, 32 -36 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6AA (Head Office)	0330 1230888
Radius Housing, 3 Redburn Square, Holywood, BT18 9HZ	0330 1230888
Radius Housing North West Regional Office, 7 Racecourse Road, Derry, BT48 7RB	028 9039 7165/ 028 9039 7166
Radius Housing South Regional Office, Ballybot House, 22 Corn Market, Newry, BT35 8BG	028 9039 7216
Radius Housing North East Regional Office, Deerfin Fold, Wakehurst Road, Ballymena, BT42 3LJ	028 9039 7147
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, 9 th Floor, Riverside Tower, 5 Lanyon Place, Belfast, BT1 3BT	028 9051 7500
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, Hilltop, Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital, Omagh, BT79 0NS	028 8224 5828
NI Housing Executive, The Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8PB	03448 920 900
AGE NI, 3 Lower Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NR	0808 808 7575

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Western Health and Social Care Trust, Altnagelvin Area Hospital, Glenshane Road, Londonderry, BT47 6SB	028 7134 5171
Southern Health and Social Care Trust, Craigavon Area Hospital, 68 Lurgan Road, Portadown, BT63 5QQ	028 3833 4444
Northern Health and Social Care Trust, Bretten Hall, Bush Road, Antrim, BT41 2RL	028 9442 4000
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, A Floor, Belfast City Hospital, Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 7AB	028 9504 0100
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Ulster Hospital, Upper Newtownards Road, Dundonald, Belfast, BT16 1RH	028 9055 3100

13.0 References

RH009 Anti-Fraud Policy

RH009 (AP) Fraud Response Plan

HRPRO0003 Equal Opportunites Policy

This policy has been screened and complies with Section 75 duties.