

SERVITE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy Guardian:	Corporate Services Manager
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Diversity compliant:	Yes
Data Protection compliant:	Yes
Health & Safety compliant:	Yes

1. **Why have a Complaints Policy?**

- 1.1 Servite Housing Association aims to provide a first class service for all our customers. If you have been happy with the service that we have provided, then please let us know. We also welcome suggestions for improvements and will take them seriously as a part of developing and improving our services.
- 1.2 There may be occasions however, when you are not happy about something, and if this is the case, it is important to tell us. The aim of this complaints policy is to give you clear details of what steps you can take to try and get things put right where there is a problem. We will want to consider how we might have done things differently in individual cases and also how we can generally improve the quality of our services.

2. **Who can use the Complaints Procedure?**

- 2.1 Anyone who receives or requests a service from Servite Housing Association can use the complaints procedure. This includes tenants, people applying for housing, and sharing owners.
- 2.2 The procedure is also open to people who may be acting on your behalf, such as a Councillor, Member of Parliament, advice agency or Solicitor.
- 2.3 The complaints procedure also gives us the chance to keep an eye on the quality of service we provide so that we can continually work to improve it.

3 **What can you complain about?**

- 3.1 You can complain about any aspect of our service which you are unhappy about, for example:
 - If a repair has not been carried out properly
 - If you have not received information you have asked for
 - If you feel that a member of staff, a Committee Member or a Contractor has not behaved reasonably towards you
 - If you feel your housing application has not been handled properly
 - If you feel you have been unfairly discriminated against
- 3.2 Complaints against neighbours will be dealt with under our Estate Management Procedure which is explained in your Tenants Handbook.
- 3.3 We will always try to deal with complaints sympathetically, but there are some things we will not be able to give you information about. For example, it would be wrong for us to discuss with you the details of someone else's housing application, as this would be a breach of confidentiality, but we can of course talk to you about how our Allocations Procedure works.

4. How you can complain

4.1 A complaint can be made to the Association in the following ways:

- Direct to a member of staff (Face to Face)
- By Telephone
- By Letter
- By Fax
- By E-mail

4.2 If you live in Sheltered Housing you have the right to complain to the Care Commission at any time, contact details for the Care Commission can be found on page 6 of this policy document.

5. Trying to sort things out informally

5.1 You have every right to make a formal complaint whenever you wish to, but in the first instance it can often be quicker and easier for everyone if the problem can be sorted out informally; the choice is yours.

5.2 To try and resolve a problem informally, the best thing for you to do is to talk to (or drop a line to) the Housing Services Department or whichever Officer is appropriate.

5.3 If you live in sheltered housing, we would expect you to try to resolve things informally by letting the Scheme Manager/Warden know what the problem is, before contacting office staff.

6. The Formal Complaints Procedure

6.1 If the problem has not been sorted out informally you should, in the first instance, make your complaint to the Corporate Services Department who will then allocate this to the appropriate person.

A complaint becomes a formal complaint:

- After initial discussions with a member of staff have not resolved the issue to your satisfaction or;
- You, the customer, clearly request that your concern should be classified as a formal complaint

6.2 A complaint can be taken in any form, but for the sake of clarity, any complaint and the steps taken to deal with it will be recorded when the process becomes formal. When you make a complaint it is really important for you to let us know exactly what the problem is and how you would like to see it resolved. We would encourage you to do this in writing whenever possible, but if this is not easy you can complain by telephone,

or in person. If the Housing Services Director is not available your complaint will be noted by the person who speaks to you and passed on to the appropriate Director.

- 6.3 If you have a complaint against a member of staff you should write to the Chief Executive. Complaints about the Chief Executive should be sent to the Chair of the Committee of Management.
- 6.4 Whether you have complained in writing, by telephone or in person, we will write to you within five working days to acknowledge that your complaint is being dealt with and how long it may take to resolve.

7 How does the Complaints Policy Work?

The senior member of staff in each department will be responsible for ensuring that staff within their department is familiar with the Associations Complaint's Procedure.

They will also:

- Monitor the complaints process within their department to ensure that it is functioning well
- Take responsibility for arranging reasonable and appropriate assistance for any complainant

Stage 1 – Investigation

If immediate resolution of the problem is not possible, the senior member of staff in the relevant department should take on the investigation. The Corporate Services Officer will write to you **within 5 working days** to explain:

- The Complaints Process
- Who will be involved in investigating the complaint and;
- Any progress to date.

Where a complaint involves one of the Association's policies or the conduct of a member of staff, the Chief Executive will be informed. The investigating member of staff will conduct the investigation as quickly as possible and respond with a suggested resolution **within 20 working days** of the complaint being raised.

Stage 2 – Review

If you do not agree with the proposed resolution, the matter will be passed to the Chief Executive. They will review the proposed resolution and either uphold it or propose a different solution. You will be informed of the result of this review **within 20 working days** of you informing the Association that you were unhappy with the proposed resolution.

Stage 3 – Appeal

If you are not happy with the response you will be able to use the Appeals Procedure.

8. Taking your Complaint Further - Right of Appeal

- 8.1 If you do not feel that staff have resolved your complaint satisfactorily, you can appeal to the Association's Committee of Management. Although it is this Committee which is responsible for considering your appeal, it has been decided that the complainant will go to a smaller ad hoc Committee set up for this purpose. The Committee May involve an independent external person. The Chief Executive will inform you **within 10 working days** of you stating that you are still dissatisfied with the decision of the Appeals process and who will be involved with the Appeals Committee.
- 8.2 The Chief Executive can be present at the discretion of the Committee but must not be present when the complainant or any other member of staff is giving evidence to this Complaints Sub-Committee.
- 8.3 When you meet the Members of the Complaints Sub-Committee you can be accompanied by a friend or adviser.
- 8.4 The Chair of the Complaints Sub-Committee hearing the Appeal will write to you **within three working days** of the meeting to let you know the decision. If you are not happy with it your final right of appeal will be to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

9. Referring your Complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman investigates individual complaints against housing associations and co-operatives where you claim to have suffered through maladministration. Before writing to the Ombudsman you will be expected to have exhausted the Association's Complaints Procedure.

Contact Details:

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

FREEPOST EH 641,
EDINBURGH,
EH3 0BR

Freephone: 0800 377 7330
Text: 0790 049 4372

Freefax: 0800 377 7331
E-Mail: ask@spo.org.uk

10. Referring your Complaint to the Care Commission

Also, if any of the services you receive from Servite are registered with the Care Commission, you can also complain to the Scottish Commission for Regulation of Care, Compass House, Riverside, Dundee, DD1 4XA, Telephone 01382 207100.

11. Referring your complaint to the Local Authority

Also, Individual service users have a right to access the relevant local authorities' complaints procedure at any time if they are not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation undertaken via our complaints procedure. This right is available to all our service users who are in receipt of services purchased or provided by the local authority.

12. Who will know about my Complaint?

We will as far as possible respect the confidentiality of your complaint. You will appreciate, however, that if your complaint involves another tenant or a member of staff it could be impossible for us to look into this without talking to that tenant or staff member.

13. Anonymous Complaints

In the event of any complaint being made anonymously, this would not stop an investigation being carried out but it could hinder our procedures.

14. How do we record, monitor and learn from complaints?

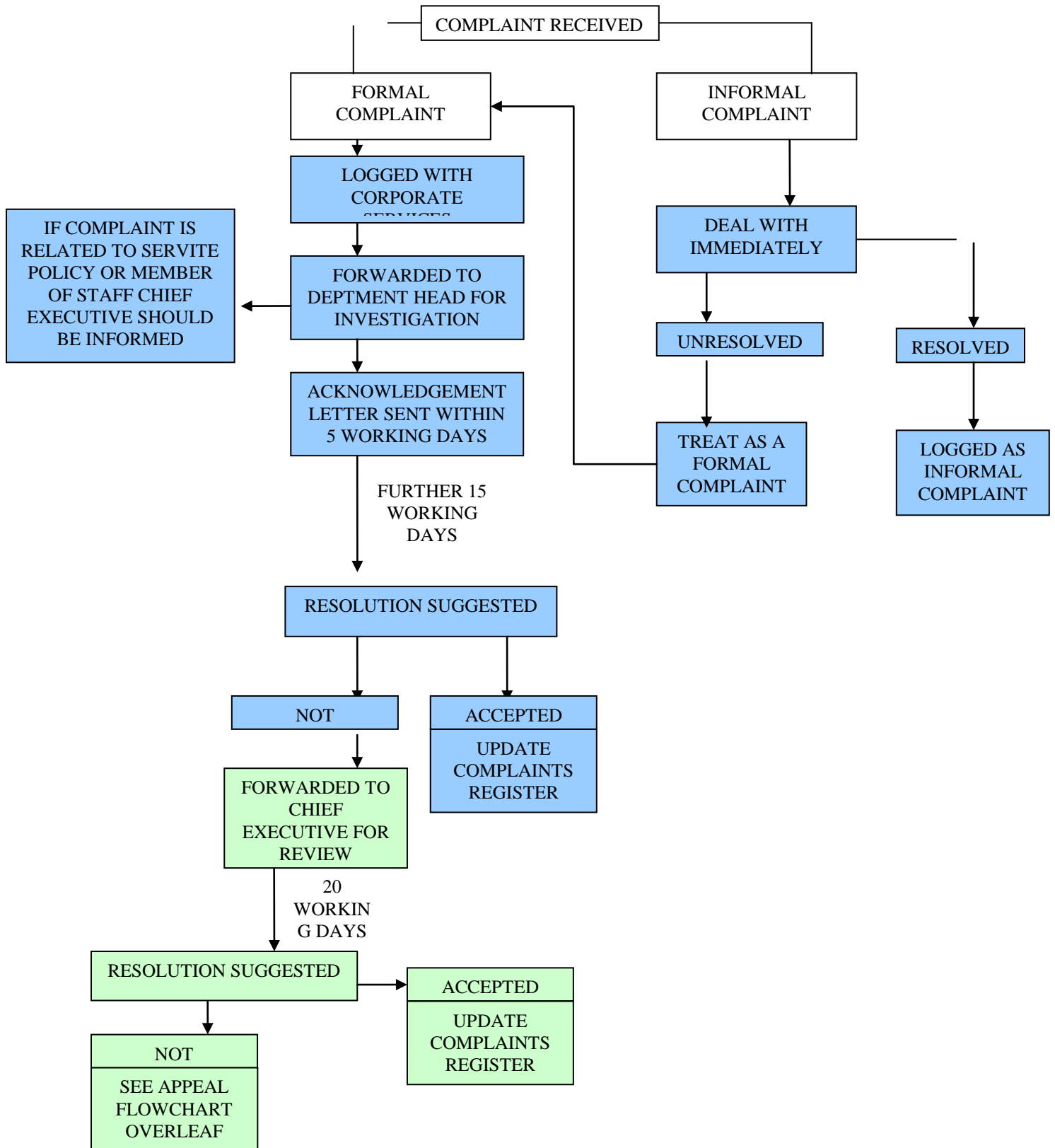
- 14.1 A record of complaints will be kept by the Corporate Services Department who will prepare a brief description for the Departmental Director to sign. Corporate Services will then ensure the central complaints register is updated (normally on a monthly basis but more frequently if necessary).
- 14.2 After a complaint has been dealt with to the customer's satisfaction the Corporate Services Department will send out a 'Learning from complaints' form to the relevant department for completion. Once this has been returned this information will be shared with the Operational Managers Group to implement any changes identified. These actions will be monitored by the Corporate Services Manager.
- 14.3 The Corporate Services Department will also consult with the Tenants Forum on a quarterly basis with regards to the complaints received, to ensure that tenants' views are taken into account in relation to service delivery.
- 14.4 Complaints can help us as well as you! All formal complaints made to the Association are recorded and reported to the Chief Executive, who will annually advise the Committee of Management of changes or improvements the Association may need to take as a result of complaints received.

15. Right of Access to Personal Information

Servite is subject to legislation which obliges us to allow current, former tenants and applicants access to check their personal file. This information is kept in the office and will be made available by appointment free of charge.

INVESTIGATION AND REVIEW

APPENDIX 1



APPEAL

APPENDIX 2 CONT1

