



COMPLAINTS POLICY

1.0 Introduction

Wales & West Housing Group (WWHG) is committed to dealing effectively with any complaints you may have about our services. We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we will put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you are entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we will apologise and, where possible, try to put things right for you. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.

2.0 What is a complaint and when to use this policy?

A complaint is:

Any expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by WWHG or its representatives affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

For example:

- WWHG has done something it should not have done;
- WWHG has not done something it should have done;
- When the behaviour or attitude of an employee of WWHG (or any WWHG contractors or agents has been inappropriate);
- A service has not been delivered in a timely manner or to the quality and standard expected;
- A decision-making process has been flawed;
- A policy has not been applied properly.

Some matters are dealt with under different WWHG policies or by other Statutory bodies such as a Local Authority or the Police. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- insurance claims
- report of anti-social behaviour
- requesting a service for the first time (e.g. reporting a faulty boiler, requesting a transfer etc.)

This policy does not apply to data access issues or Subject Access requests. Please contact data.protection@wwha.co.uk or phone 02920 415 329.

3.0 Asking us to provide a service?

If you are approaching us to request a service, e.g. reporting a repair, or requesting an appointment, this policy does not apply. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your complaint known as we describe below.

4.0 Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things straight away. If you have a complaint, please raise it with the person you are dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your complaint, the member of staff will draw them to our attention. WWHG will aim to resolve the issue as soon as is practicable within 10 working days.

If WWHG is unable to resolve the complaint within 10 days or if the complaint is of a very serious nature, or about a member of staff, this will automatically be dealt with through formal resolution.

If you are not happy with the response at this stage, you can also then ask for a formal review.

5.0 How to complain formally

You can express your complaint in any of the following ways:

- Ask for a copy of our form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your complaint formally.
- Get in touch by telephone on 0800 052 2526 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- Use the form on our website at www.wwha.co.uk
- Email us at contactus@wwha.co.uk
- Write to us at:

Archway House 77 Parc Ty Glas Llanishen Cardiff CF14 5DU	Ty Draig St David's Park Ewloe Deeside CH5 3DT	Cwrt Y Llan Church Lane Newcastle Emlyn SA38 9AB
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We will have complaint forms available at all three offices. Copies of this policy and the complaint form are available in Welsh and other languages, in audio and large print on request.

6.0 Dealing with your complaint

- We will formally acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you need documents in large type.

- We will deal with your complaint in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your complaint if you tell us about them within six months. This is because it is better to look into your complaint while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at complaint which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to explain why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, we will not consider any complaint about matters that took place more than three years ago.

If you are expressing a complaint on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf whether that be in writing or verbal.

7.0 What if there is more than one body involved?

If your complaint covers more than one body, e.g. ourselves and a Council, we will usually work with them to decide who should take the lead in dealing with your complaint. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf, e.g. repair contractors, you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

8.0 Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your complaint. If your complaint is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from the relevant service area to look into it and respond to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere in WWHG or, in certain cases we may appoint an independent investigator.

If you are not happy with the person looking into your complaint, let us know why and we may consider an alternative.

We will set out our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we are right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you do not want this to happen, it is important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We will aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- Let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate.
- Tell you how long we expect it to take.
- Let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- Give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your complaint will firstly aim to establish the facts. The extent of the investigation will depend upon how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We will look at relevant evidence. This could include information you have provided, our case files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your particular complaint. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies, any legal entitlement and guidance.

9.0 Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we find. If necessary, we will produce a report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions. If we find that we made a mistake, we will tell you what happened and why. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again. If we make a mistake, we will always apologise for it.

10.0 Putting Things Right

If we did not provide you with a service you should have had, we will aim to provide it now, if that is possible. If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had done things properly.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, when we should have provided it for you, we will try to refund the cost.

11.0 The Ombudsman

If we fail in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the service provider.
- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your complaints to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- Phone: 0300 790 0203
- Email: ask@ombudsman.wales
- The website: www.ombudsman.wales
- Writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office deals with complaints about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

12.0 Learning Lessons

We take your complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. Our Senior Leadership Team and Board considers a summary of all complaints quarterly and is made aware of all serious complaints. We share summary (anonymised) information on complaints received and complaints outcomes with the Ombudsman as part of our commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.

Where there is a need for significant change, we will develop actions setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

13.0 What if you need help?

Our staff will aim to help you make your complaints known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help or we will make reasonable adjustments in how your complaint is managed.

You may have someone who can help you with your complaint, however we ask for verbal/written confirmation that they are able to act on your behalf.

You can also use this complaints policy if you are under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline. Meic is the helpline service for children and young people in Wales.

- Phone 0808 802 3456
- Website www.meiccymru.org

or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

- Phone 0808 801 1000
- Email post@childcomwales.org.uk
- Website www.childcom.org.uk

14.0 What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations when we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

15.0 Equalities Statement

WWHG provides equal access to the complaint's procedure. All employees are required to adopt a positive, open and fair approach and will make reasonable adjustments where needed. WWHG will ensure the Equality Policy is adhered to and applied consistently to all.

If you have any issues regarding this policy or if you require this policy in another language or format, please contact our Corporate Services Manager Amanda.Harries@wwha.co.uk or 01239 712 034.

**Appendix A
Complaint Form**

Please Note: The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in Section B as well.

A: Details of the person who has experienced the problem:

Surname:	Forename(s):	Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms if other please state
Address and postcode:		
Your email address:		
Daytime contact phone number:		

Please state how you would prefer us to contact you:

Your requirements: if our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English or Welsh is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

B: Making a complaint on behalf of someone else:

Please note: We have to be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person who has experienced the problem.

Your name in full:	
Address and postcode:	
What is your relationship to them?	
Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?	
Are they aware of this complaint?	
Do you have their permission?	

C: About your complaint (Please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary)

- **Name of the department/section/service you are complaining about:**
- **What do you think they did wrong, or failed to do?**
- **Describe how you personally have suffered or have been affected:**
- **What do you think should be done to put things right?**
- **When did you first become aware of the problem?**
- **Have you already put your complaint to the frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so:**
- **If it is more than six months since you first became aware of the problem, please say why you have not complained before now:**

If you have any documents to support your complaint, please attach them with this form.

Signature:

Date:

When you have completed this form, please send it back to Wales & West Housing Association (see section 5).