Mill Street Housing Society Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out to inform tenants, applicants or anyone seeking a service from the Society, how we will deal with complaints about us or our services, and how we ensure that all complaints are investigated quickly and thoroughly.

1.2 This policy is available on our website millstreethousingsociety.co.uk, directly from the Secretary or any other member of staff, in either paper or electronic form. We can provide the policy in large print as required.

1.3 We comply with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024.

2. Definition of a complaint

2.1 An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents. We will always consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.

2.2 A tenant does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such

2.3 Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make a complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy

2.4 A service request is not automatically considered a complaint, however, a complaint will be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request. Service requests are recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.

2.5 We will not assume that an expression of dissatisfaction made through a survey is a complaint. Where we undertake satisfaction surveys, we provide details of how tenants can make a complaint.

2.6 We will not consider the following matters as complaints:

- The issue that gives rise to the complaint is over 12 months old (unless there is good reason to do so)
- Legal proceedings have started
- The issue has previously been considered under the complaints policy

2.7 If we decide not to accept a complaint, we will explain why the matter is not suitable for the complaints procedure, and set out your right to take

that decision to the Housing Ombudsman. We will abide by any decision passed down by the Housing Ombudsman.

2.8 Note that this process is reserved for services provided by the Society. It is not to be used for reporting nuisance by one tenant against another.

3. General Principles

3.1 At each stage of the complaints process, we will:

- deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind
- give the resident a fair chance to set out their position
- take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
- consider all relevant information and evidence carefully

3.2 All complaints will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. If a complainant prefers to have the complaint dealt with by (or with the support of) a friend, advice agency, local Councillor or solicitor, this is acceptable provided that the person chosen is clearly authorised by the complainant.

3.3 Complaints against the personal behaviour or attitude of staff, agents or contractors should be at first passed to the Secretary (acting as the Complaints Officer), who will carry out Stage 1 of the complaints process.

3.4 Complaints against the Secretary to the Society will be referred to the Chairman, who will carry out Stage 1 of the complaints process.

3.5 The Society commits to addressing all points raised in the complaint and providing clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law, and good practice where appropriate.

3.6 We will also make reasonable adjustments for tenants where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. We will keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.

The Complaints Process

4. Stage 1

4.1 A complainant may email, write, telephone or visit the Society's office or the Managing Agents' office to make a complaint.

4.2 The Secretary (or a committee member as appropriate) will set out their understanding of the complaint, and the outcomes the tenant is seeking. They will also clarify which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for, and explain this in writing if necessary.

4.3 The complaint will be acknowledged within one week and a full response made in two weeks. We will confirm the following in writing to the tenant at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:

a. the complaint stage
b. the complaint definition
c. the decision on the complaint
d. the reasons for any decisions made
e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right
f. details of any outstanding actions
g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response

4.4 If the complainant is satisfied or accepts that all steps have been taken to resolve the complaint, the process stops here.

5. Stage 2

5.1 If remaining dissatisfied the complainant may ask for the complaint to be referred to a panel. The panel will be made up of at least two committee members. The complainant will not be required to explain their reasons for dissatisfaction.

5.2 As at stage 1, The Secretary (or a committee member as appropriate) will set out their understanding of the complaint, and the outcomes the tenant is seeking Requests for stage 2 will be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within 5 working days of the escalation request being received.

5.3 The complainant will be invited to put his/her case in person or by written deposition. The complainant will be given at least two weeks' notice of the date of the panel.

5.4 We will issue a final response to stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. Our response will include

a. the complaint stage
b. the complaint definition
c. the decision on the complaint
d. the reasons for any decisions made
e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right
f. details of any outstanding actions
g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied

5.5 At all stages, we commit to addressing all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law, and good practice where appropriate.

5.6 At any stage an extension to the timescales may be agreed with the complainant. Contact details of the Ombudsman will be provided should this occur.

5.7 Following stage 2 of the complaint process the complainant may ask the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service to investigate the complaint on his/her behalf. The Ombudsman's contact details are:

- Online: https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/
- By phone: 0300 111 3000
- By post: Housing Ombudsman Service
  PO Box 1484
  Unit D
  Preston PR2 0ET

5.8 We will keep a full record of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This will include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.