

HERRING HOUSE TRUST

Herring House Trust Complaints Policy 2025-2026

Reporting Period: 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Herring House Trust
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Herring House is a registered charity (number 1057387), Housing Corporation Reg No. LH4261, Company limited by guarantee (number 03202862)

Overall Purpose of the Policy

To have a complaints process that is simple, accessible and enables complaints to be resolved quickly, consistently and fairly and that identifies areas of learning for the Trust, whilst meeting relevant codes of practice, regulations or statutory requirements.

How will the Policy be Implemented

We will:

- aim to resolve issues at the first point of contact wherever possible;
- have a two stage complaints process;
- monitor and record complaints through; and
- use complaints to learn, improve and develop our services.

Performance Measures and Targets

- 100% of complaints will be acknowledged within five working days.
- 100% of complaints will be answered in the set target dates, or within the extended target timescales.
- No determination of maladministration for any complaints.
- No determination of service failure for any complaints.
- No determination of complaint handling failure for any complaints.

A review of the policy will be triggered if:

- Only 90% of complaints are acknowledged in the set target dates.
- Only 90% of complaints are answered in the set target dates.
- If any determination of maladministration, service failure or complaint handling failure occurs. Performance measures, targets and triggers will be monitored by the Client Services Manager.

Statement of intent

Every complaint offers us an opportunity to learn and improve our services to clients. While we aim to provide excellent services, we know sometimes things may go wrong and when this happens our aim is to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

A complaint is defined as:

an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by us, our employees, or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

Complaints will be managed in line with data protection legislation and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

We will consider reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010, to accommodate our clients' needs, where requested to do so.

We will publicise this policy along with our 'Guide to Complaints' on our website and in our offices.

Outline of Service and Support Complaints

Where something has gone wrong, we will aim to resolve matters to the client's satisfaction, at the earliest opportunity, through local resolution in the first instance.

A range of channels are available to make a complaint and clients can use the method they prefer, unless their behaviour is unacceptable or their complaint is vexatious in nature. In this case how this complaint is dealt with will be decided by the Client Services Manager.

If a client makes a complaint using social media they will be privately messaged to ensure we protect their privacy and confidentiality in line with data protection.

When clients are surveyed and / or provide feedback indicating they are dissatisfied, they will be advised on how to make a complaint should they wish to do so.

We accept complaints made by:

- tenants (a person who is or who was in a landlord / tenant relationship with us at the time the problem occurred);
- clients with a licence to occupy;
- customers who have a service agreement with us;
- petition or groups; or
- third party advocates acting on behalf of any of the above.

At our discretion we may choose to accept complaints from individuals who do not fall into the above categories.

The following complaints fall outside the scope of this policy, these are:

- Complaints made twelve months after a problem occurred or the client became aware of it.
- Complaints where legal proceedings have been started or issued or concern matters that must be decided by a court.
- Complaints of nuisance or antisocial behaviour (ASB), are dealt with by our Antisocial Behaviour Policy and Antisocial Behaviour Procedure. However, we will consider complaints about how nuisance or ASB reports were managed.
- Compensation claims for damage to personal property or personal injury, as these will be dealt with directly or through our insurers.
- •Complaints that are vexatious in nature or the client refuses to engage with us or behaves in an unacceptable manner.
- Complaints about action for breach of the terms and conditions of a tenancy or licence agreement. However, we will consider complaints about how any enforcement action in relation to the breach has been managed.
- Matters that have previously been considered under our Complaints Policy and Procedure where a final response has been given within the last 12 months, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Complaints about the conduct of employees will be investigated internally and in line with data protection legislation, the outcome must remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the client.

Where a complaint cannot be considered or is to be dealt with in an alternative way, we will advise the client of our decision and the reasons for this. Where appropriate they will be given details of the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) or other regulatory body.

We will not tolerate verbal or physical abuse of our employees and this may result in tenancy enforcement action and / or closure of the complaint.

Service Request

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, we will aim to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity. Where a client notifies us that they are unhappy with our service, we will:

- ask what is wrong and what we can do to resolve it;
- be clear about what we can and cannot do, to manage expectations;
- aim to resolve the issue at the first point of contact or, where a resolution requires input from other services/contractors, agree an acceptable course of action with the client, within three working days; or
- where we are unable to resolve an issue to their satisfaction or they request to make a formal complaint, we will log a Stage 1 complaint.

Support Services Request

Support service requests must be logged on the client's log and the Client Services Manager informed. The Client Services Manager will support Staff to help resolve the matter. Within 3 working days contact will be made with the client to try to resolve the issue to their satisfaction. Where a client is happy to allow additional time to reach a resolution, any agreement must be recorded in the client log.

Complaints

We will have a two stage Complaints Procedure managed and monitored by our Senior Management team.

All complaints will be logged and acknowledged within five working days of them being received.

Employees handling a complaint will:

- act sensitively and fairly towards the client;
- be trained to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset clients;
- know the complaints procedure to facilitate a quick resolution;

Stage 1 complaints will be responded to within 10 working days from the complaint being logged. Where a complaint is complex or further information is required, we may extend by up to a further 10 working days.

Further extensions will only be made in exceptional circumstances and in agreement with the client. If the customer is not in agreement, they will be provided with the contact information for the Housing Ombudsman to allow them to challenge the proposed response date.

Where a client feels we have not adequately addressed their complaint at Stage 1, they can discuss this directly with the investigating manager. Where they remain dissatisfied, they can request to escalate to Stage 2 of our Complaints Procedure, within 10 working days from the date of the Stage 1 decision letter.

We will decide the most appropriate option for escalating a complaint with the focus being on achieving a prompt resolution, client satisfaction and best use of resources.

We may choose **not** to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 if:

- the complaint now falls into one of the exclusions set out in this policy;
- the complaint was upheld at Stage 1 and an appropriate and proportionate resolution was offered to the client;
- the resolution requested cannot be provided, as it is disproportionate, or outside of our control to influence or change;
- a client's behaviour is deemed to be unacceptable and they have refused to engage with us in an acceptable manner during the investigation of their Stage 1 complaint, or their request to escalate is considered to be a vexatious.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 will be acknowledged within five working days from receipt. Where a complaint cannot be escalated the client will be notified of our decision and the reasons for this and given detail of the HOS or other regulatory body.

Stage 2 complaints will be investigated by Business Manager and will be responded to within 20 working days from the complaint being logged. Where a complaint is complex or further information is required, we may extend by up to a further 10 working days. Further extensions will only be made in exceptional circumstances and in agreement with the client. If the client is not in agreement, they will be provided with the contact information for the Housing Ombudsman to allow them to challenge the proposed response date.

If a customer remains dissatisfied with our final response, they have the right to directly contact the following services.

- The HOS or other relevant regulatory body. Information will be provided of their contact details.
- The Regulator of Social Housing, where it is believed our actions may cause serious detriment.

We will maintain an open channel of communication with the client during the investigation of a complaint and all communication with the client will be in plain language, ensuring decisions are clear and easy to understand.

Remedies

- On receipt of a complaint, we will aim to manage the client's expectations so we do not promise anything that cannot be delivered or cause unfairness to other clients.
- We will acknowledge where something has gone wrong and apologise for any failure.
- We will consider a range of remedies to resolve complaints and each complaint will be considered on an individual basis however, we will aim to ensure consistency in our approach.
- When determining an appropriate and proportionate remedy we will take several factors into consideration, to ensure any redress offered adequately reflects the individual circumstances of the complaint.
- A range of remedies will be available and any offers of redress will be fair, appropriate and proportionate to the complaint.
- An apology or an offer of redress will not amount to an admission of negligence or statutory duty.
- We will refer to the Housing Ombudsman guidance when considering what is an appropriate remedy.
- Claims for any personal injury claims will be referred directly to our insurers.
- Clients will be required to provide evidence of any financial loss they claim to have incurred.

Equality and diversity and data protection

We will promote equality and inclusiveness, in accordance with our Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

We will manage customers information in line with current data protection legislation and our Data Protection Policy.

Responsibility for implementation

Our Board of Trustees and Senior Staff Team are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented. It is the responsibility of all employees and those working on our behalf to ensure their work is carried out in line with this policy and any related procedures.

Monitoring

Our Board of Trustees will receive regular monitoring reports to evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in meeting our client's expectations.

We will undertake surveys to monitor the satisfaction of our clients with the service provided and where appropriate we will publish the results.

Where relevant information is available, we will benchmark our performance against other organisations to ensure the highest standards of service delivery.

We will involve clients in the scrutiny of our learning from complaints to ensure actions have been taken to prevent future complaints.

Our Board of Trustees will have oversight of this policy and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment will be presented to them annually.

Review

We will undertake a review of this policy whenever there are any relevant changes to legislation, regulatory requirements, case law or good practice that would impact on this policy or in light of any required service improvements identified through internal audits, service reviews, learning from complaints or regulatory judgements. Considerations will also be made where performance against the policy's measures and targets meet or are forecasted to hit the triggers identified.

Review Date: March 2026 – Completed
Next Review Date: March 2027