Ockley Housing Association Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

Ockley Housing Association (OHA) is committed to providing high-quality services to our residents. However, we understand that sometimes things can go wrong. This Complaints Policy outlines how we will handle complaints in a fair, consistent, and transparent manner in line with the Complaint Handling Code by the Housing Ombudsman Service. See: https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/

2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the housing association, its staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents. A 'complaint' is different from a 'service request' i.e. a request from a resident to the OHA requiring action to be taken to put something right. A complaint will be raised if a resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request. An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint.

A matter may not be considered to be a complaint where: the issue occurred over 12 months ago; legal proceedings have started; or the matter has previously been considered under the complaints policy.

3. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made in any of the following ways:

- **In writing**: Ockley Housing Association, 14 Elmers Road, Ockley, Surrey, RH5 5TL
- **Email Ethical Lettings**: info@ethical-lettings.com
- **Phone Ethical Lettings**: 01483 429157
- **In person**: Ethical Lettings office at 2nd Floor, Council Offices, The Burys, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1HR

4. Complaints Handling Procedure

Residents will be given the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint and be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the OHA.

Stage 1: Resolution with the Managing Agent

1. **Acknowledgment**: We aim to acknowledge all complaints within 5 working days. This will include a complaint definition, and the resolution sought.
2. **Initial Resolution**: Our goal is to resolve complaints quickly and informally at the first point of contact. This may involve direct communication with the resident to clarify and address their concerns.
3. **Response Time**: We will provide a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. If we cannot provide a full response within this timeframe, we will inform the complainant and explain the reasons for the delay, providing a new deadline.

Stage 2: Formal Investigation by a member of the Management Committee

1. **Escalation**: If a resident is not satisfied with the informal resolution, they can request a formal investigation. We will acknowledge all requests for escalation within 5 working days.
2. **Investigation**: The complaint will be assigned to a member of the Management Committee who was not involved in Stage 1. The investigation will be thorough and objective and may involve gathering evidence and interviewing relevant individuals or witnesses. The findings will be reviewed by the Chairman.
3. **Response Time**: A detailed written response will be provided within 20 working days of the request for escalation being acknowledged. If the investigation cannot be completed within this timeframe, we will inform the complainant and provide a new deadline. This is our final response and will include details of how to escalate the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

Stage 3: External Review If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome after the internal process is exhausted, they can escalate the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service:

- **Contact Information**: Housing Ombudsman Service, https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/

5. Learning from Complaints

Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have already taken, or intend to take, to put things right. This may include: Apologising; acknowledging where things have gone wrong; providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; taking action if there has been delay; reconsidering or changing a decision; amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; providing a financial remedy; changing policies, procedures or practices.

A remedy offer will take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman, clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed will be followed through to completion.

We are committed to learning from complaints to improve our services. Complaints will be handled collaboratively, with collective responsibility and following professional standards. All complaints will be recorded and analysed to identify trends and areas for improvement. Regular reports will be presented to the Management Committee to ensure accountability and transparency.

OHA will appoint a member of the Management Committee responsible for complaints (MRC). The MRC will complete a self-assessment annually for review by the Management Committee prior to submission to the Ombudsman at the same time as we publish our financial statements or within 6 months of our financial year end, whichever is the earlier. The self-assessment will be published on our website so that residents can easily access it.

6. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be handled in accordance with our confidentiality policy and data protection laws. Personal information will only be shared as necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint.

7. Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that our complaints procedure is accessible to all residents. If you require assistance in making a complaint, please contact us and we will provide the necessary support.

8. Monitoring and Review

This complaints policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

9. Contact Us

For any queries regarding this Complaints Policy, please contact us at:

- **Phone Ethical Lettings**: 01483 429157
- **Email**: info@ethical-lettings.com

This policy aims to ensure all complaints are handled promptly, fairly, and consistently, providing residents with a clear and accessible route to raise their concerns and have them addressed satisfactorily.