

Complaints Policy

1. PURPOSE and SCOPE

- 1.1. This policy serves to provide Staff and Tenants of Accessible Housing Association Inc. (AHA) with guidelines for Tenants wishing to make a complaint to the Association about any aspect of the Association's service.
 - 1.1.1. This policy does not include complaints of disruptive behaviour from Tenants by other Tenants or other Stakeholders as these are dealt with in the policy on Disruptive Behaviour.
- 1.2. The prime objective of the Complaints Policy is to promote conciliation rather than confrontation and to bring a dispute to a speedy and amicable settlement.
- 1.3. The policy also aims to provide a framework by which people wishing to complain to us are able to do so easily and through which AHA staff will deal with complaints quickly and fairly.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Complaint - a grievance lodged with AHA about any situation where a staff member of the Association has not followed policy or procedure of the Association, been rude or inconsiderate to a Tenant or Applicant for housing with the Association, and which has the effect of causing concern, distress or offence to a Tenant, Applicant or other Stakeholder.
- 2.2. Residential Tenancies Tribunal - a court set up to make decisions about Landlord and Tenant disputes or problems according to the Residential Tenancies Act 1995 and Regulations.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. AHA aims to provide an efficient and effective service but acknowledges there will be occasions where people may be dissatisfied and wish to register a complaint.
- 3.2. AHA believes complaints can be an effective way for the Association to learn by experience and to improve our standards of service delivery.

4. POLICY

- 4.1. AHA will take a positive approach to dealing with complaints about the service and will have a procedure for dealing with these.
- 4.2. The Association will endeavour to deal with all complaints within 14 days of having been lodged with the Association.
- 4.3. All complaints will be logged on receipt and placed on an 'External Issues Register'.
 - 4.3.1. Complaints will also be recorded on the Tenant's record on Chintaro.
- 4.4. AHA staff will endeavour to resolve any complaints on the spot if it possible to do so.
 - 4.4.1. If unable to resolve complaints on the spot, AHA staff will follow the process for this policy.
- 4.5. AHA staff will acknowledge receipt of complaints in writing if it is appropriate to do so, or if requested by the person lodging the complaint.

Approved by:

Tenancy Management

Complaints Policy

Section 6

Executive Director of AHA

Document No. 15 Page 1 of 4

- 4.6. The Executive Director of AHA will be advised by AHA staff of all complaints received.
- 4.7. People may lodge a complaint by whichever method suits them best and complaints will be treated with equal seriousness irrespective of how these are made.
- 4.8. Where a complaint is being made about the Tenancy Officer designated as being responsible for responding to the complaint, the complaints procedure will automatically move on to the Tenancy Team Leader/Operations Manager for consideration.
- 4.9. AHA staff will be trained in dealing with complaints effectively.

5. PROCEDURE

- 5.1. The person complaining may register a complaint verbally, by telephone, email, or in writing to AHA Tenancy Officers.
 - 5.1.1. The AHA Tenancy Officer receiving the complaint will fill out a 'Complaints - Grievance Form' with details of the complaint.
 - 5.1.2. The AHA Tenancy Officer receiving the complaint will also register the complaint on the 'Issues Register - External Complaints' and the Tenant record on Chintaro.
 - 5.1.2.1. If the complaint is of a confidential nature, or is more of a feedback nature such as in a Tenant Survey but requiring of acknowledgement, the Tenancy will fill out and Tenancy Issues History Report and place this under the Tenant Folder on T-Drive.
- 5.2. The AHA Tenancy Officer will contact the Complainant by phone, email or in writing to acknowledge receipt of their complaint.
 - 5.2.1. If possible, the AHA Tenancy Officer will try to resolve the issue on the spot.
 - 5.2.2. If the complaint has been due to a deficiency in AHA service, and is immediately resolvable the Tenancy Officer will resolve it and offer an apology verbally or in writing.
 - 5.2.2.1. Any apology given in writing must first be verified with the Executive Director.
- 5.3. If the complaint is not immediately resolvable the AHA Tenancy Officer will discuss the complaint with the Tenancy Team Leader/Operations Manager to seek a resolution to the problem.
 - 5.3.1. Where a more substantial enquiry is required, the following should be referred to for guidance:
 - check for previous complaints from this person or in connection with the complaint;
 - ensure that the complaint is clear;
 - ensure the outcome sought is known;
 - check whether the Complainant needs support of any kind, whether they have poor sight or hearing, or a language difficulty, etc.
 - ensure the investigation and complaints process is clear to the Complainant;
 - consider the need to meet in person with the Complainant;
 - consider the legal and administrative background if applicable;
 - assess whether the complaints procedure is the most appropriate way of handling the complaint and discuss alternatives with the Complainant;
 - consider whether the complaint could be resolved without further investigation;

Approved by:

Executive Director of AHA

- if the complaint is about a proposed action by the Association, consider whether the action should be deferred while the complaint is investigated;
- establish the relevant sequence of events from the files and hold discussions with other AHA staff most directly involved in the matter.

5.3.2. If the complaint is due to a deficiency in AHA service, the Operations Manager and the Tenancy Team Leader will form a strategy for resolution of the complaint and put the strategy in motion.

5.3.2.1. The AHA Tenancy Officer who received the complaint will communicate with the Complainant and advise them of the action being taken.

5.3.3. If the complaint is made from a third party about the behaviour of a AHA Tenant, the AHA Tenancy Officer in consultation with the Tenancy Team Leader/Operations Manager will take up the complaint with the Tenant (if appropriate to do so) and seek an undertaking from the Tenant to correct the offending behaviour.

5.3.3.1. The AHA Tenancy Officer will contact the Complainant and advise them of the steps taken to resolve their complaint.

5.3.3.2. If the tenant is non compliant, the Tenancy Officer will contact the Tenant's Support Worker (if they have one) or next of kin to seek further resolution to the complaint.

5.3.3.3. If the Tenant still persists in the offending behaviour, the Tenancy Officer in consultation with the Tenancy Team Leader/Operations Manager/Executive Director will seek vacant possession through SACAT process.

5.3.4. If the Tenant's behaviour is due to a mental health condition, AHA may seek help for the Tenant through the Mental Health 'Memorandum of Understanding'.

5.3.4.1. If the Tenant is detained on a 'Continuing Detention Order' AHA will follow the process under the 'Institutionalised Tenant Policy'.

5.4. If the Complainant is unhappy with AHA's handling of the complaint or the result of the complaint, the Complainant may appeal through AHA's By-Law 2 Dispute Resolution and Appeals.

5.5. All actions to resolve complaints will be documented at all stages of the process.

6. DOCUMENTATION

- 6.1. Appendix 6.15.1. - Complaints - Grievances Form
- 6.2. Appendix 6.15.2. – Issues Register – External Complaints Form
- 6.3. Appendix 6.15.3. – Tenancy Issues History Report Form
- 6.4. Tenant Records
- 6.5. AHA By-Law 2 Dispute Resolution and Appeals

7. REFERENCES

- 7.1. Mental Health Act 1993
- 7.2. Memorandum of Understanding between Housing SA and South Australian Mental Health Services

Approved by:

Tenancy Management

Complaints Policy

Section 6

Executive Director of AHA

Document No. 15 Page 4 of 4