

Veterans Housing Scotland Complaints Procedure

All complaints must be directed to VHS Central Office and not to the relevant District. This will allow Central Office to properly log and track the complaint and to make sure that a thorough investigation is undertaken. Notwithstanding this, the relevant District may subsequently be asked by Central Office to provide additional information or help to put things right.

Where a Property Management Company is employed by VHS Central Office on behalf of the District Committee, and the complaint being made is against the services provided by the Property Management Company, the Tenant should initially raise the complaint with them using their complaints procedure. At the same time, the Tenant should also send a copy of the complaint to Central Office so that this can be logged and later reviewed with the Property Management Company as appropriate. However, if the complaint remains unresolved with the Property Management Company, the Tenant should then use the VHS complaints procedure.

A complaint is often described as any expression of dissatisfaction about our actions, lack of action or about the standard of service provided by VHS or someone working on our behalf. A Tenant may use our complaints handling procedure to complain about aspects of our service and may involve more than one service or be about someone working on our behalf. Examples of possible complaints might include: -

- Unreasonable delays in responding to your enquiries and requests;
- Failure to provide a service or repair within agreed timescales;
- The standard of service you receive;
- Not adhering to our stated policies and procedures; and/or
- Treatment by or the attitude of a member of staff, including a District Committee member.

There are some things that we can't deal with through our standard complaints handling procedure and some of these might include: -

Should a Tenant have a complaint about our service, or about the service of a contractor or nominated third party who we have instructed to provide goods or services in relation to a property occupied by them, they must write down the details of their complaint and send it to the CEO at the Charity.

Their complaint can be made by letter or by email. If they initially phone us, they will be asked to put the complaint in writing so that we have a comprehensive record. Tenants should be asked to provide us with the following information in support of their complaint: -

- Full name, address and contact details.
 - When did the complaint first arise?
 - As much as they can about the complaint and if possible, any photographic evidence.
 - If the complaint has been previously referred to a District Committee member or appointed Property Management Company.
 - What has gone wrong and how they feel VHS has failed them.
 - How they want VHS to resolve the matter.
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- Normally a complainant must make a formal complaint within three months of the event they want to complain about.

- Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service such as a friend, relative or an advocate. However, written consent from the Tenant must be provided in all cases.
- Central Office must acknowledge receipt of a complaint in writing within 5 working days of receiving it, giving the complainant a named contact who will be investigating the complaint. A copy of our complaint's procedure must be provided with every written acknowledgement of a complaint.
- On receipt of a complaint, VHS must adhere to the following procedure, which contains three stages: -

Stage One – Frontline Resolution

- All complaints must be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days of receiving it, giving the complainant a named contact who will be investigating the complaint. The named contact will typically be the CEO unless delegated by him/her to another member of staff.
- The named contact must investigate the complaint and must send a detailed written reply, including their suggestions for resolving the matter if appropriate, ideally as soon as possible but no later than 10 working days from receipt of the complaint.
- As we will often be required to obtain additional information and/or clarification from the District Committee or a nominated third party, we may not be able to respond within the 10-working day timeframe. If this is the case, we must let the complainant know when we aim to respond and agree any revised time limits with them at this stage.
- Occasionally, there may be circumstances outwith our control, which prevent us from adhering to this (6.3.2 and/or 6.3.3) timeframe. These include: -
 - When the office is closed for public holidays;
 - Where adverse weather or sickness has led to staff shortages;
 - Where we cannot respond in full without the input of a nominated third party (e.g. contractor, Landlord, Property Management Company) or the Tenant who is not available;
 - Where we cannot respond in full without visiting the property and the Tenant is restricting access; and/or
 - Where we cannot respond in full without the input of a key member of staff who is not available.
- Where the complaint is upheld, we must explain clearly in writing what has gone wrong and what action we will take and by when to resolve the problem.
- If the complaint is not upheld, we must tell the complainant why and explain what they can do next.
- If we can't resolve their complaint at this stage because it may be too complex, we will explain why and tell the complainant what they can do next. We might suggest that they progress their complaint to Stage 2 in which case they are at liberty to do this if they so wish no later than one month after the Stage 1 outcome is communicated to them.

Stage Two – Review of Stage One or Complex cases

- Stage 2 will deal with those complaints that have not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1 or those that are more complex and require detailed investigation.
- Under Stage 2, Central Office will arrange for the Chair or a nominated Board Director of VHS to review the decision from Stage 1, or in complex cases, undertake further investigation before a decision is communicated to the complainant. They must receive a written acknowledgement from Central Office of the person dealing within 5 working days of the Stage 2 process commencing.
- The named contact will investigate the complaint and will send the complainant a detailed written reply, including their suggestions for resolving the matter if appropriate, ideally as soon as possible but no later than 20 working days from the commencement of the Stage 2 process. If their investigation will take longer than 20 working days, the named contact must tell the complainant, agree revised time limits with them and keep them updated on progress.
- If the complaint is not upheld, the named contact must tell the complainant why and will explain what they can do next.

Stage Three – First-tier Tribunal

- The complainant may apply to the First-Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing & Property Chamber) if they believe that VHS has breached the Scottish Letting Agent Code of Practice and they remain dissatisfied.
- We should provide the following contact details to the complainant: -

Housing & Property Chamber
4th floor,1 Atlantic Quay
45 Robertson Street
Glasgow,G2 8JB ,0141 3025900 <https://www.housingandpropertychamber.scot>

- The complainant can do this once the two stages of the VHS complaints procedure have been exhausted, or if they believe that VHS has not progressed their complaint within a reasonable timescale and in accordance with this complaints handling procedure.
- As VHS is registered with the Scottish Letting Agent Register (registration number (LARN1901002) and is required to adhere to the Scottish Letting Agent Code of Practice, the complainant should be referred to: -
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/133/schedule/made>.
- VHS is also a member of the Council of Letting Agents (www.counciloflettingagents.com) and the complainant may use their complaints procedure if they remain dissatisfied once the two stages have been exhausted, or if we do not process your complaint within a reasonable timescale.
- In addition, a complainant should also be provided with information about advocates in their area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy