



# Complaints Policy and Procedures



## Document Control Summary

<b>Title</b>	Complaints Policy & Procedure
<b>Date Created</b>	August 2013
<b>Version</b>	1.0 August 2013 2.0 Feb 2019 3.0 October 2021 4.0 March 2022
<b>Approved by</b>	Senior Management Team
<b>Date of Approval</b>	
<b>Staff affected</b>	All organisational staff
<b>Responsible Owner</b>	Director of Corporate Services;
<b>Last reviewed</b>	Document: 28 February 2022
<b>Last updated</b>	Document: 28 February 2022
<b>Revision Details V.3.</b>	Change in wording, alignment with Ombudsman Model Complaints Process. Inclusion of escalation process.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction .....	4
2.	Purpose .....	4
3.	Complaint Definitions .....	4
4.	Policy Objectives .....	4
5.	How to make a Complaint.....	5
8.	Responding to a Complaint.....	6
7.	Outcomes of Investigation .....	6
8.	Repetitive or Unreasonable Complaints.....	6

# **TUATH HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

### **1. Introduction**

Tuath Housing Association (Tuath) is an Approved Housing Body regulated by the Approved Housing Bodies Regulation Authority (AHBRA) under the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019. One of Tuath's key strategic objectives is to provide a First-Class Service to our tenants and stakeholders. As part of this, Tuath welcomes feedback from customers about the services we provide. The Policy outlines how Tuath acts on feedback we receive. It also sets out how to make a complaint and advises you on your rights. This policy relates to any complaint received by Tuath regardless of which department the complaint refers to.

### **2. Purpose**

- 1.1 Tuath is committed to providing high quality services to meet the needs and expectations of its customers and ensure compliance with all regulatory and statutory requirements. The Board of Directors and staff have established a culture of best practice. This underpins Tuath's main business objective of delivering first class service. This policy and the following procedure set out clearly how Tuath deals with complaints and enables any issues raised to be dealt with fairly, confidentially and without delay.

### **3. Complaint Definitions**

- 3.1 A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more customers about the standard of service received or lack thereof.
- 3.2 A customer has a right to complain about our service and seek resolution if they feel:
- they have been unfairly treated by Tuath
  - that a service to which they are entitled is not being provided
  - that a service which is being provided is inadequate
  - that a decision made regarding them is wrong or did not take into consideration all the facts
  - that a request for a service/information has been ignored.
- 3.3 Customers are all tenants who legally occupy homes that are owned or managed by Tuath. Customers also include other stakeholders including prospective tenants, industry partners, local authorities, local residents, contractors, government officials etc.

### **4. Policy Objectives**

- 4.1 Tuath welcomes complaints from Customers and we will use the feedback as a way of informing and improving our services.
- 4.2 Tuath seeks to provide a fair and equitable service to all customers irrespective of

their age, gender, marital status, religion, political opinion, race, sexual orientation and whether they have a disability or are responsible for dependants.

- 4.3 Tuath aims to provide a quality service and, if there is any complaint, to deal with it efficiently and quickly.
- 4.4 It is our intention to maintain the highest standard of customer service. However, we recognise that cause for complaints may sometimes arise and to this end we have put in place a system which aims to ensure that complaints are dealt with in a consistent, fair and open manner. We will investigate all complaints in a fair and impartial way. We will treat customer complaints confidentially as far as possible and only discuss it with relevant staff on a “need to know” basis.
- 4.5 We will not meet complaints with hostility or defensiveness. We understand that complaints can generate positive and helpful discussion about the services we provide.
- 4.6 We will uphold the rights & dignity of our staff members and reserve the right to cease responding to unreasonable and repetitive complainants.
- 4.7 We will aim to prevent complaints from further escalation which can be time consuming and costly to resolve for all parties involved.
- 4.8 We will maintain and store complaint files and records in accordance with Tuath’s Data Protection Policy
- 4.9 We will provide feedback to customers about complaints and what changes were made to policy or practice because of complaints.
- 4.10 The making of a complaint will not in any way affect the complainant’s future dealings with Tuath.

## **5. How to make a Complaint**

5.1 Complaints may be made verbally, in writing or by email:

- you can ask for a copy of the Complaints Form from the person you are dealing with
- you can submit your complaint through our website at [www.tuathhousing.ie](http://www.tuathhousing.ie)
- you can telephone Tuath at 01 6761602
- you can email Tuath at [feedback@tuathhousing.ie](mailto:feedback@tuathhousing.ie)
- you can write to Tuath Housing Association, 33 Leeson Street Lower, Dublin 2

5.2 You should include the following in your complaint to Tuath:

- Your name, address and telephone number (and email, if applicable) and whether you are acting on your own behalf or on the behalf of someone else
- A description of what your complaint is about stating relevant dates and times, if applicable
- List your specific concerns starting with the most important concern
- Be clear about what you are hoping to achieve (for example an apology, explanation, etc.)
- State your preferred method of communication
- Attach any information and/or copies of relevant documents to your complaint.

## **6. Responding to a Complaint**

- 6.1 Tuath will formally acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- 6.2 Complaints received by phone or in person will be logged and stored in Tuath's IT system database and will be retained in line with our Data Protection Policy.
- 6.3 The complaint will be addressed in the first instance by the best person to respond and resolve the complaint e.g. the front-line person responsible for the service in question or the direct line manager. We will tell you who we have asked to investigate your complaint.
- 6.4 We will set out to you our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.
- 6.5 We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 30 working days.
- 6.6 If we think it may take longer to investigate than the initial 30 working day period we commit to:
  - tell you how long we expect it to take
  - give you regular updates at least every 20 working days on any progress made
  - outline the next steps and actions to investigate and/or resolve the complaint in greater detail including timeframes for follow up actions.
- 6.8 In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

## **7. Outcomes of Investigation**

- 7.1 When the investigation is complete the staff member will contact the complainant and confirm the full details and findings of the investigation.
- 7.2 We will let you know what we have found and if necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain the conclusions reached.
- 7.3 If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you can write to the Director of Corporate Services within 15 working days of receiving the response to your complaint. The Director will review the complaint and response and a reply will be sent within 10 working days. In some cases additional time may be required to ensure a thorough and robust review. If delays are likely, you will be advised of this and when an outcome is expected.
- 7.4 Where a complaint involves serious allegation about staff, our Human Resources Department must be informed. Tuath reserves the right to handle serious complaints about staff in a different manner than the process set out above.

## **8. Repetitive or Unreasonable Complaints**

- 8.1 This section of the policy relates to a minority of customers whose actions or behaviours are unacceptable and cause inappropriate use of time and resources by the staff of Tuath.

- 8.2 Tuath reserves the right to exclude some complaints from the standard complaints procedures and consider a different course of action. This relates to complaints which are being pursued in an unreasonable manner.
- 8.3 While believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We, therefore will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.
- 8.3 To determine whether complaints are pursued unreasonably, Tuath will take into account whether:
- the complaint is made (or conducted in a manner) as to harass or annoy, to cause delay or detriment, or for any other inappropriate purpose
  - the complaint is pursued without reasonable ground
  - the complainant is aggressive or abusive
  - the complainant makes unreasonable demands or shows unreasonable persistence
  - the complainant impedes complaint resolution by refusing to cooperate with the investigation, excessively changing the nature of the complaint or raising subsidiary issues.
- 8.4 Any decision to cease dealing with a complainant because of repetitive or unreasonable complaints as outlined above will therefore only be taken in consultation and approval by the appropriate Executive Director.
- 8.5 If a decision is made to restrict access or cease dealing with you, we will write to explain why this decision has been made, for how long the restrictions will be in place and any other terms. It is important that you are not put at any undue risk or disadvantage through this approach. Arrangements for dealing with emergency situations and other essential services will therefore be identified. This decision can be reconsidered if the person in question demonstrates a more acceptable behaviour.

## **9. Mediation**

- 9.1 Mediation is an independent service that will aim to identify a solution by listening and talking to both sides in a dispute. This may be useful to identify underlying issues that manifest in complaints and to seek creative solutions that will improve relationship between you and Tuath.
- 9.2 Mediation by the Residential Tenancies Board may be suggested where the complaint relates to a landlord-tenant relationship and where Tuath's responses do not successfully resolve a complaint.
- 9.3 If the complaint is not of this nature, other appropriate options for mediation will be considered and recommended to you.

Standard Complaint Procedure

Receive Complaint	Receive complaint- Day 1, note this date in the trackers. <i>*this should always be a working day Mon-Fri</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Identify if this is a complaint and all the required information has been provided including name, address etc.</li> <li>➤ If this is from a third-party check to confirm there is authority on file to deal with this party</li> <li>➤ Identify what the complaint is in relation to and which department this is most suited to for a formal response</li> <li>➤ Update tracker</li> </ul>
Issue written acknowledgement of complaint	Required within 5 <u>working days</u> from receipt of the complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Complete standard response to complainant ensuring dates and timelines are accurate</li> <li>➤ Where required, issue a form for third party to complete with the complainant for authority to respond with specific details</li> </ul>
Review complaint	Allocate to department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Allocate to appropriate department by email</li> <li>➤ Confirm date for final response review, 20 working days to provide an update</li> </ul>
Update in writing	Within 20 working days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review if complaint response will be finalised within the permitted 30 days</li> <li>➤ Issue letter advising of additional time required and outlined the timeline they can expect a response</li> </ul>
Final Response in writing	Within 30 working days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure response address the parameters of the complaint</li> <li>➤ Review and insure it is within the allowed time period of 30 working days</li> <li>➤ Advise of the appeals process</li> <li>➤ Record registered post tracking number on tracker along with updating final response date</li> </ul>

Appeal	Day 1- receive appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Check was this received within 15 working days or the final response</li> <li>➤ Notify Director of Corporate Services of appeal and confirm the required response time, by email</li> <li>➤ Update tracker to show appeal of final response has been received</li> </ul>
Final Response in writing	10 working days from receipt of the appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Final response for appeal and findings to be issued by the Director of Corporate Services</li> <li>➤ Further appeal option available, will be reviewed by the Director of Corporate Services and escalated as required</li> </ul>