

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Document owner: Head of Tenant Liaison

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Policy statement

We aim to provide a consistently high standard of service to our customers and stakeholders. Ideally, we try to get things right the first time. However, it is recognised that there may be times when users are not satisfied with the service provision. In such a circumstance AIHA encourages customers to raise a complaint so that action can be taken to improve matters.

What is a complaint

A complaint is defined by the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (CHC) as “*an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.*”

What is not a complaint (exclusions)

The following are examples of complaints that may be excluded from the framework of the complaints procedure

- Requests for general services or maintenance repairs
Service requests are only treated as a complaint if AIHA has been informed but failed to deal with them or the tenant expresses dissatisfaction in the way the matter was dealt with.
- Service failure that occurred more than 12 months prior to the complaint being made
AIHA may consider complaints made after 12 months if there is a good reason to do so.
- Matters that have already been considered through the complaints policy
- When a complainant does not agree for their matter to be dealt with through the formal process
These matters will be dealt with informally
- Where a matter is identified as urgent
These matters will be escalated for immediate remediation
- Complaints about a service not provided by AIHA
- Matters already referred to or dealt with by a court or the Housing Ombudsman or when confirmation of a legal action proceeding has been received by AIHA
- Complaints from one resident about another (ASB)
Tenants are advised to contact AIHA's housing management team for advice on such disputes. ASB matters will be treated as a complaint if AIHA has been informed but failed to deal with them in a satisfactory manner.
- Members of the public inclusive of neighbours are excluded from the complaints procedure. However AIHA will respond to these concerns separately.
- Complaints about services, organisations and individuals which AIHA is not responsible for
- Anonymous complaints. *(These will be noted but cannot be responded to)*
- Unreasonable or persistent complaints. *(See Unreasonable Behaviour Policy)*

AIHA will carefully consider individual circumstances before applying an exclusion. If AIHA decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be provided to the complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

A resident has the right to challenge this decision by bringing their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman (contact details below). Where appropriate the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.

How to make a complaint

A complaint can be made in person or by an authorised representative. You may contact us with your complaint by phone, e-mail or in writing. The complainant should be asked for supporting documents where required.

We will take your preferences into account when communicating with you and we will make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010. Our complaint handlers receive training on the Equality Act 2010 and will be able to deal with such requests. We will keep a record of the agreed adjustments.

Residents should specify as much as possible what outcome and remedies they are looking for. The required outcome should be correlating directly to the terms of tenancy agreement as AIHA's responsibility.

How to send us your complaint

POST: AIHA
206 Lordship Rd
London N16 5ES

EMAIL: reception@aihaltld.co.uk

TEL: 020 8802 3819

Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from a representative of the person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative or an advocate, if you have given them consent to complain on your behalf.

Things to know when making a complaint

Respect

AIHA will endeavor to treat tenants who express dissatisfaction with courtesy, respect and compassion. The complainant should feel confident that this will not negatively impact their services.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated confidentially, and identifying details will not be revealed to any third party as far as possible. The information will be disclosed only when necessary to properly investigate the matter.

Conflict of Interest

If the complaint handler perceives a conflict of interest, this will be addressed and measures will be taken to ensure fairness.

Unacceptable behaviour during any stage of complaints

AIHA wishes to respond positively to all complaints and will be monitoring all correspondence and inspection visits. It is important to note that unreasonable behaviour from residents, their family or their representatives will not be tolerated at any stage. The relevant directorate in AIHA will decide whether the complaints should be closed after such events, and the resident will be informed about the decision in writing thereafter. This will remain under review and where we no longer have a concern, we may decide to reopen a complaint.

The following are examples of unacceptable behaviour

(This list is not limited to the following examples)

- Deliberately repetitious complaints
- Unreasonable demands on staff or unreasonable behaviour towards staff
- Threat of or use of physical violence
- Verbal abuse or harassment towards AIHA's staff or agents

In some circumstances complaints escalate to a position where AIHA feels there is no alternative but to protect staff from unacceptable behaviour such as unreasonable persistence or offensive behaviour. In such cases we will follow our Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.

Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and will demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

What happens when I make a complaint

Timescales

AIHA's complaints procedure includes the following maximum timescales for response. We will deal with your complaint as quickly as possible. Sometimes we can resolve the complaint and provide a remedy more quickly than the timescales set out in this policy, and we will do this wherever we can.

Occasionally we may be unable to resolve a complaint within the timescales set out in this policy. We will notify the complainant about what is causing the delay and will continue to communicate with them on regular intervals to provide assurance that we are addressing their concern.

Jewish Holidays and Bank Holidays where AIHA offices are closed will not be considered working days.

Stage 1

Acknowledging your complaint

AIHA will log and acknowledge a stage 1 complaint within five working days from receipt of the complaint. The complaint acknowledgement will include our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If we are unclear about any aspect of the complaint, we will request clarification in the acknowledgement letter.

Where relevant, the acknowledgment letter will notify the complainant if the outcome they are expecting is unreasonable or if we need to apply an exclusion. They will be advised about the services of the Housing Ombudsman and how to contact them for support.

Where an additional complaint is raised during an investigation this will be incorporated in the Stage 1 response only if it is related to the initial complaint and will not unreasonably delay the response. Otherwise this will be logged as a new complaint.

Decision

We will provide a Stage 1 decision within 10 working days from the date that the complaint was acknowledged.

The Stage 1 decision letter will include the following information	
A.	The complaint stage
B.	The complaint
C.	Our decision on the complaint
D.	Our understanding of what occurred and why this decision was made
E.	The details of any remedy offered including timeframes
F.	Details of any outstanding actions
G.	Details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the complainant is not satisfied
H.	Advice about seeking support from the Housing Ombudsman's and contact details

Request for an extension to these timescales

In the event that we are unable to provide a decision within 10 working days of the acknowledgment we will inform the resident of this and request and agree to an extension. We will explain why we

require additional time and agree a date by when the stage one response will be received. This will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. When we inform the complainant about the need for an extension, we will advise them about their right to seek support from the Housing Ombudsman and how to contact them. In exceptional circumstances only, we may need request a further extension. We would explain this to the resident and also provide them with details of the Housing Ombudsman service.

Escalation

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their Stage 1 complaint, they will have the option to escalate the complaint to Stage 2. The Stage 1 decision letter will provide a deadline by which the request for escalation is to be made.

If the request for escalation is made after the deadline, we will advise the complainant if we can still accept their request.

Stage 2

Acknowledging your complaint

AIHA will log and acknowledge a Stage 2 complaint within five working days from receipt of request to escalate the complaint. The complaint acknowledgement will include our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If we are unclear about any aspect of the complaint we will request clarification in the acknowledgement letter.

Decision

We will provide a Stage 2 decision within 20 working days from the date that the complaint was acknowledged.

The Stage 2 decision letter will include the following information	
A.	The complaint stage
B.	The complaint
C.	Our decision
D.	Our understanding of what occurred and why this decision was made
E.	The details of any remedy offered including timescales
F.	Details of any outstanding actions
G.	Details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman service if the complainant is still dissatisfied.

Request for an extension to these timescales

In the event that we are unable to provide a decision within 20 working days of the acknowledgment, we will inform the resident of this and request and agree to an extension. We will

explain why we require additional time and agree a date by when the Stage 2 response will be received. This would not exceed a further 20 working days without good reason. When we inform the complainant about the need for an extension, we will advise them about their right to seek support from the Housing Ombudsman and how to contact them. In exceptional circumstances only, we may need to request a further extension. We would explain this to the resident and also tell them that they can seek support with this matter from the Housing Ombudsman.

AIHA Internal Process

AIHA's has a collaborative and cooperative approach to complaint handling and will ensure any relevant departments will provide evidence to help investigate a complaint.

Considering a complaint

The complainant will have the opportunity to set out their position and to provide evidence. At each stage of the complaints process we will carefully consider the information relative to the circumstances of the resident and how they have been affected from the way a service was provided or by a service that we didn't provide.

Where we acknowledge that something has gone wrong, we will attempt to put things right. Some of the actions we may take include:

- An apology
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Provide an explanation for our actions
- Take action if there has been a delay
- Amend a record
- Provide a financial remedy or compensation
- Amend a policy or improve procedures or practices.

Remediation

Any remedy offered will reflect our understanding of the impact on the resident as a result of a disservice. Where available we will look at guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman on similar complaint circumstances.

The complaint handler will ensure the remedy is actioned and will follow the progress through to completion.

Mediation

We will explore the use of mediation by an external organisation where it is appropriate. This will be communicated to the complainant and we will only proceed if we have consent.

Compensation

We may consider an offer of compensation or good will when we have, through our own actions or inactions, failed to deliver services of an acceptable standard.

Internal escalation and appeals

There may be rare and exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to immediately escalate a new complaint to Stage 2 of the internal process. This will be at the Head of Tenant Liaison's discretion.

Managing the procedure and record keeping

An officer within AIHA will be assigned as a complaint coordinator and will ensure complaints are acknowledged, recorded and responded to within the specified timescales.

The process for responding to complaints

Stage 1

To be responded and resolved by the Head of Tenant Liaison in consultation with managers of the relevant department.

Stage 2

To be responded and resolved by the CEO in consultation with managers of the relevant department.

The process for responding to complaints raised in a care, supported or sheltered facility

If you are a resident, or representing a resident of a care, supported or sheltered home, please refer to the complaints policy of your facility.

Agency Schemes are required to submit their complaints policy and procedure to be approved by AIHA, or alternatively adapt this policy.

What if I am still dissatisfied

If, after we have fully investigated your complaint, you are still dissatisfied with our decision you will have the choice to have this dealt with by a Beis Din or to proceed to the Housing Ombudsman.

Housing Ombudsman Information

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Beis Din Hearing

As an organisation serving the Orthodox Jewish Community, AIHA believes this service is providing the complainant with a resource that they strongly believe in. It is important to note the following:

- There are choices of Beis Dins, the complainant will provide details to AIHA of the Beis Din in which they wish to have this dealt with
- The time delay when a Beis Din convenes is out of AIHA's control. Delays caused by the Beis Din scheduling will be taken into consideration
- Non-attendance in the hearing by the complainant, for any reason, shall mean the closure of the complaint
- A complainant will still be able to escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman during or after a Beis Din proceeding

Learning and improvement

AIHA views the complaints procedure as an opportunity to identify areas of improvement. We therefore regularly review complaints and share the analysis across service departments to establish trends and consider whether any service improvements can be made.

AIHA's objective in relation to complaint handling is to ensure matters are fairly investigated and that appropriate lessons are taken from the tenant's experience. The complaints officer encourages members of all departments to work together when resolving complaints and to develop shared responsibility for AIHA's service.

Reporting

The designated Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) sits on AIHA's board of trustees and has lead responsibility for complaints. The Board is regularly provided with an update of AIHA's complaints performance including the volume and category of complaints and their outcomes alongside compliance with the Complaint Handling Code. The Board will also receive details of any relevant feedback or lessons learned. They will also be informed of any Ombudsman investigations.

Monitoring

AIHA will carry out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code to ensure compliance with the scheme. An annual Complaints Performance Report will be produced and presented to the Board. Their response will be published alongside the report for scrutiny by tenants. In the event of a significant restructure and/or change in organisation

procedures, we will carry out an additional self-assessment to ensure we are meeting the requirements.

As a member of the Housing Ombudsman scheme, AIHA shall comply with the conditions of membership fully.

Agudas Israel Housing Association

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Registered with the Regulator of Social Housing under the Housing and
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Housing
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