



Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

Hope Into Action: Coventry is committed to providing high quality services. Complaints are a valuable source of feedback, helping us understand how and why things go wrong and enabling us to prevent reoccurrence. Where mistakes have been made, Hope into Action: Coventry will ensure that appropriate action is taken to rectify them.

2. Policy objectives

The objectives of the Complaints Policy are to:

- resolve complaints at the first point of contact wherever possible, without recourse to the formal procedures;
- make it easy to complain and to ensure that all those we work with know how to do so;
- ensure that the complainant (or the person acting on their behalf) has prompt and regular feedback on the progress of the complaint;
- ensure that the complainant is dealt with confidentially, effectively and fairly.
- record all complaints, identify any negative trends in service delivery and take action to maintain and improve service quality and effectiveness,
- deal effectively with vexatious or unreasonable complaints.
- Ensure we are accessible to our tenants and to reduce the risk of un-reported safeguarding issues.

3. Definitions

3.1. What is a complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action or inaction by Hope into Action: Coventry, its employees, board members, contractors, partners or tenants. Examples could include:

- failure to carry out landlord responsibilities;
- failure to achieve our standards of service;
- complaints about the way our policies work;
- acting unfairly, with bias or discrimination;
- anti-social behaviour by a tenant
- complaints about the attitudes of our staff, contractors or others working on our behalf.

3.2. Complaints not covered by this policy

Complaints falling outside of this policy are:

- complaints about issues that are subject to on-going legal proceedings by or against Hope into Action: Coventry are outside the scope of this policy. Hope into Action: Coventry may suspend the complaints procedure in the event of legal action being threatened or initiated, pending legal advice;
- complaints by members of staff, which should be dealt with under the Grievance Procedure as outlined in the Staff Handbook;
- housing benefit assessments or payments, which are the responsibility of the local authority;

- insurance claims, which shall be referred immediately to Hope into Action: Coventry's insurers; or
- Whistleblowing, which should be dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy.

4. Publicising this policy

Hope into Action: Coventry will publicise its complaints procedure in a variety of ways, including:

- the notice in Appendix 2 will be on the noticeboard in every Hope into Action: Coventry home
- information in Tenant / Licence Agreements
- information at our office
- On our website

Hope into Action: Coventry will arrange for the provision of translation services, audio and Braille on request.

5. Informal complaints

Complaints will usually be dealt with at the first point of contact with a member of staff, and the aim is to resolve the issue 'there and then'. If a complaint has not been resolved informally, the person making the complaint shall be directed to the formal complaints process.

Informal complaints shall be recorded whether they were resolved or not (see section 8 below).

6. Formal complaints

6.1. Making a formal complaint

Formal complaints may be made without first going through the informal complaints process.

Formal complaints may be made in writing, by email, letter or on the Complaints Form in Appendix 3. Formal complaints may also be made face to face, on the phone or otherwise to staff, who will use the Complaints Form to record the details of the complaint. Formal complaints should be sent to the City Coordinators or, if the complaint is about a City Coordinator, the Trustees. Contact details are published on the Complaints Notice (Appendix 2).

Complaints should be made as soon as possible and no more than 3 months after the incident which is the subject of the complaint.

a) Accessible complaints process

At all stages, Hope into Action: Coventry will endeavour to remove any barriers to making a complaint. Staff will offer help to those who wish to complain. This may include (but is not restricted to) a staff member taking written details, visiting the complainant, arranging translation services and/or supporting complainants to get help from Citizens Advice. An advocate (such as a relative, case worker or solicitor) may register a complaint if the complainant is unable to do so for themselves. In such cases, Hope into Action: Coventry will need authority to liaise with the advocate in writing, signed by the complainant.

6.2. Staged process for dealing with formal complaints

Staff, trustees or volunteers who are the subject of a complaint will not be responsible for any of the stages below.

a) Stage 1: Registration and investigation of complaint

When a formal complaint is received it will be recorded and the City Coordinator or Trustees receiving the complaint will decide which staff member or trustee should investigate the complaint. That staff member or trustee will contact the complainant, at the earliest opportunity, to:

- discuss and clarify the complaint
- identify facts and information to support the complaint
- understand what remedy or resolution the complainant is seeking
- identify if the complainant requires support (e.g. translation services etc.)
- explain the procedure.

A written response will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days.

b) Stage 2: Review by a manager or trustee

This will be done if stage 1 does not resolve the complaint. The reviewer will contact the complainant again for the reasons listed above and to understand why the complaint has not been resolved. Again, a written response will be provided within 10 working days.

c) Stage 3: Appeal to a panel of trustees

If the complainant is not happy with the outcome of stages 1 and 2, they can appeal to a panel of 2 members of the board of trustees.

The Panel will convene within 2 weeks of receipt of the stage 3 complaint, and the complainant will be provided with details of the procedure to be followed in advance. The complainant or their representative may attend to present their case. The outcome will be sent in writing within 5 days of the Panel meeting.

d) Stage 4: Referral to the Housing Ombudsman Service (For tenancy related issues only)

The Housing Ombudsman Service (PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ, Tel: 0300 111 3000) or any successor organisations, will independently review complaints, but only after the above process has been exhausted.

e) Unavoidable delays

In some circumstances the timescales above may be exceeded, for example if there are delays following a request for information from third parties. In such cases, the complainant will be informed as quickly as possible and an estimate of the likely timescale will be provided. Regular updates will be given to keep the complainant informed of any unanticipated or further delays.

6.3. Special cases

a) Complaints about senior or longstanding staff or volunteers

If a complaint is received about a senior or longstanding staff member, trustee or volunteer, the Trustees will consider whether it is necessary to appoint an independent HR firm or other qualified person or body to investigate the complaint.

b) Complaints from neighbours

If a neighbour complains about recurring antisocial behaviour, Hope into Action: Coventry will provide an incident record book (refer to appendix 1).

c) Complaints from tenants

It is vital that tenants know how to complain and that it is as easy as possible for them to do so. The following is in place:

- On their induction check-list the Empowerment Workers are reminded to brief them on complaints.
- Complaint forms will be made available to them at their induction. The complaints form can be found in Appendix 3 of this document.
- Tenants will be encouraged to resolve the issues face-to-face with the person they have a complaint against.
- On their license/ tenancy agreement is included a section on 'how to complain.'
- On the wall of each house is the following notice explaining how to complain.
- All our websites have our complaints policy on the footer.
- Tenants are encouraged to complain via e-mail:
coventry@hopeintoaction.org.uk

d) Complaints from tenants about another tenant.

When complaints from tenants about other tenants they live with are made, HIA: Coventry staff will usually try to resolve these complaints between the two tenants, for example by holding a house meeting to discuss the issues.

If the complaint involves behaviour which is not compatible with being an HIA Coventry tenant, it will be dealt with under our Warning and Eviction Policy if necessary.

If the matter becomes more serious and concerns danger to a tenant or any form of abuse then it will be dealt with under our Safeguarding Policies.

e) Unreasonable, persistent and vexatious complaints

Examples of complaint which Hope into Action: Coventry would consider unreasonable, persistent or vexatious could include those in which the complainant:

- has previously made the same or a similar complaint which has been investigated but not upheld, and there is no further information in support of a new complaint;
- is aggressive or abusive to staff, contractors or others working on behalf of Hope into Action: Coventry;
- fails to engage in the complaints process or uses it as a form of protest.

In such cases the City Coordinators or Trustees handling the complaint shall review each such complaint separately. *It will not be assumed that someone who has been unreasonable or vexatious in the past might be so with the current complaint.* They will decide whether the complaint falls under this definition and if it does write to the complainant advising him/her of this decision. If applicable, information their right to take the complaint to the Ombudsman will be provided. The following courses of action may be taken:

- termination of the complaint;
- restricting all communications to writing;
- declining further communication about a specific issue;
- dealing with the complaint in a different way to that outlined in this policy.

Such complaints shall be recorded and analysed in the same way as all other complaints.

f) Anonymous complaints

All anonymous complaints will be recorded. Any anonymous complaint will only be investigated if it relates to a serious or significant matter and includes documentary or photographic evidence or is otherwise credible.

7. Resolving complaints

Examples of remedies or resolutions may include:

- an apology;
- assurance that the same thing will not be repeated;
- an explanation of what has gone wrong and why;
- a description of the remedial action to be taken;
- the provision of the service originally requested;
- discussion and feedback;
- compensation.

In exceptional circumstances, Hope into Action: Coventry may offer compensation in the form of a goodwill gesture such as a gift of flowers. Such a gesture does not necessarily imply acceptance, guilt, or responsibility for the complaint.

The City Co-ordinators will always consider actions to prevent recurrence. These may include changes to procedures, staff training and feedback to contractors.

8. Record keeping, confidentiality and reporting to trustees and to Hope into Action UK

All formal and informal complaints will be registered as they arise to identify trends and make improvements to service delivery. Informal complaints made to Empowerment Workers by tenants will be recorded in their field notes.

All complaints will be dealt with in the strictest confidence, and in line with our GDPR policy. There will be no adverse consequences for complainants such as the removal of a service. Information about trends and types of complaints may be published, but no individual or groups will be identifiable.

All files related to a complaint will be kept securely. When the complaint process is finalized, all documentation will be filed in the Management section of SharePoint. Once successfully uploaded to this site all other copies will be destroyed. Hope into Action: Coventry will retain these copies in line with the GDPR policy.

The number of complaints received will be included in reports to the board of trustees. Annually, a review of complaints will be presented to the Board with an action plan for improvements.

Hope into Action: Coventry is a franchise of HIA UK and details of all complaints received under this policy will be shared with the Franchise and Safeguarding Lead at HIA UK. This shall be done:

- On an annual basis; and
- At the time of the complaint, in the case of complaints which reach level 3 in the staged process (see section 6.2) or are otherwise 'substantial'.

HIA UK will keep all information shared in this way in line with the same standards of privacy, security and confidentiality.

9. Appendices

1. Anti-social behaviour incident record book
2. Safeguarding and Complaints house notice
3. Feedback and Complaints Form

Appendix 1 –Anti-Social Behaviour Incident Record Form for neighbours

The cover sheet and form on the next two pages shall be given to neighbours of Hope into Action: Coventry's houses if there are complaints about anti-social behaviour by tenants. Provide as many copies of the second sheet as necessary.

Anti-Social Behaviour – Incident Recording



Case Number	
Manager	
Manager's Contact Telephone Number	
Date of Issue	
Date the forms will be returned or collected	

Please use these forms to keep a careful note of any incidents you see or hear yourself, which are directly relevant to the report you have made. Please give your best description of what happened and who was involved, including names and addresses wherever possible.

Please send in the complaints to us at: Hope into Action: Coventry, The Halo Centre, Progress Way, Coventry, CV3 2NT. Your records are vital in helping us assess how best to manage your case and will be essential if the case requires legal action.

If you need any help completing the forms or require additional copies, please contact us using the details above.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Incident Record Form

Case Number:	Your name:	Date of Incident:	Time of Incident (Start and Finish):
Name (or description) of person you are complaining about: <i>eg 'A man over 6' tall with brown hair and a tattoo on his right arm'</i>		Location: <i>Address or location the incident occurred at; please include a house or flat number if possible.</i>	
Nature of disturbance <i>Eg 'Loud music', 'people shouting' or 'It was so loud that I could not hear the TV.'</i>			
How were you affected? <i>Eg 'It woke me up and I could not get back to sleep.'</i>			
Name & address of witnesses or police involved. Please include a crime or incident number if you have one:			

Appendix 2 – Safeguarding and Complaints Notice

The notice on the next page notice will be put up on the noticeboard in every Hope into Action: Coventry home.

Safeguarding and Complaints



COVENTRY

Enabling churches to house the homeless

Your safety and wellbeing are our priority.

If you have any concerns for your personal safety or about abuse taking place and would like to report it to us, you can contact the Safeguarding Lead at any point during office hours. In an emergency, call 999.

You can report any complaints about the service received from Hope into Action to either of our City Coordinators, Jo Locke-Wheaton and Adele Harris. These will only be seen by the City Coordinators, although they will speak to you and other people to investigate the complaint if appropriate. If you have a complaint about a City Coordinator, please send your complaint to the trustees using the email address below.

You can access our Safeguarding & Complaints policies via our website (coventry.hopeintoaction.org.uk) or call us to ask for a paper copy.

We appreciate any comments or suggestions regarding your experience, as we love to hear praise and constructive criticism equally.

Contact details:

Adele Harris: adele.harris@hopeintoaction.org.uk, 07305 925777

City Co-ordinator and Safeguarding Lead

Jo Locke-Wheaton: jo.locke-wheaton@hopeintoaction.org.uk, 07490 510443

City Co-ordinator

Hope into Action: Coventry Trustees: coventry.trustees@hopeintoaction.org.uk

Appendix 3 – Feedback and Complaint form

The form on the next page should be:

- Available to tenants and given to them when they move in.
- Used by staff to record formal complaints made to them verbally.

Hope into Action: Coventry Feedback and Complaint Form

Name	Date
Address	
Incident Date	Incident time
<p><i>Please write your complaint or feedback below. For complaints, please include details of what happened, who was involved, and how you would like the issue to be resolved. Continue on a separate page if necessary.</i></p>	