

Introduction

We always aim to provide a first-class and customer-focused service. However, problems can arise that can make this difficult.

This leaflet explains what you should do if you want to make a complaint to us, or if you have a comment or suggestion about any of our services. It also tells you what to do if we do not deal with a problem as you expected. As a result, most of this leaflet is about making a complaint rather than a comment.

Who can make a complaint or comment?

Anyone who asks for or receives a service from us can use our comments and complaints procedure. This includes:

- our tenants
- people applying for housing
- owners or shared owners living on our developments
- anyone living in the communities we work with

People who may be acting on your behalf can also use our procedure.

This might include:

- a councillor
- a Member of the Scottish or UK Parliament
- an advice agency
- a solicitor
- a representative
- a friend or relative
- a local tenants' or residents' group

We are happy for them to contact us on your behalf as long as we know that they have your permission. But as you will see later, we do encourage you to try and sort your complaint out with us first.

What can you complain about?

You can complain about any part of our service that you are not happy about. For example, you can complain if:

- a repair has not been carried out properly;
- you have not received information you have asked for;
- you feel that a member of staff, a committee member, or a contractor has not behaved reasonably towards you;
- you have been unfairly discriminated against.

We will deal with complaints against your neighbours under our antisocial behaviour policy. But if you have a complaint about the way we have dealt with a neighbour dispute, you can use our complaints procedure.

You can complain about a service we have delivered or failed to deliver. You can go through four separate stages if you are not able to sort things out with us.

Stage one – an informal complaint

Complain in person, by phone or in writing to the appropriate officer. He or she will let you know how long it should take for the problem to be sorted out, and will try to reach a solution with you.

If you live in supported housing, you should let your support worker know what the problem is. If you do not feel comfortable about involving them, you can speak to their manager or to your housing officer instead.

When you make a complaint, it is really important for you to let us know exactly what the problem is, and how you would like to see it sorted out. Whenever possible, we encourage you to do this in writing. But if this is not easy for you to do, you can complain by phone or in person, and a member of staff will help you to make the complaint if you need them to.

If you have made a complaint in person or over the phone, the staff member who takes a note of it will usually check with you that they have taken a correct record. We will normally ask you to sign to say that you agree it is right. In this way, everyone is clear what the complaint is about.

However you make your complaint or comment, we will send an acknowledgement to you within three working days so that you know it is being dealt with. We will write to you again within two weeks of you making it to let you know the outcome.

We expect that nearly all complaints will be sorted out informally at this stage. But please remember that we cannot control some situations, and so they are not easy to sort out.

Stage two – a formal complaint

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint at stage one, you should contact the director for that service area. However, if your complaint is about a member of staff, you should contact the Chief Executive. If you need to complain about the Chief Executive, you should send it straight to the Chair of our Committee of Management. If the director (or other senior person) you need to make the complaint to is not available, the staff member you speak to will make a note of your complaint and pass it on.

The service area director will normally try to send you a full response within two weeks. If this is not possible, we will contact you anyway to let you know what is happening and when you can expect to get a response.

Stage three – the appeals process

If you still do not think that we have sorted your complaint out properly, you can appeal to our Management Committee. They have a sub-committee to consider appeals against the way we handle complaints. The sub-committee has seven members, who meet when they need to. However, if the complaint is very serious, the full committee may decide to deal with it.



If you write to us with a complaint, the Chair of our Management Committee will write back to you within three days to let you know that we have received your letter and are dealing with it.

Members of the sub-committee will meet as soon as they can to look at your complaint. They will generally try and have a first meeting within two weeks of getting your complaint. They then have a week to make their decision. They may also want some of the members to meet with you to discuss your complaint in person. If you want to bring along a friend, an advocate (someone to speak on your behalf) or an advisor to help you at the meeting, this is fine.

Once the committee members have been able to meet and make a decision about your complaint, the Chair of the sub-committee will write to you within three working days to let you know their decision.

Stage four – Contacting the ombudsman

If you are not happy with the committee's decision, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The ombudsman will normally expect you to have gone through all of our own complaints procedure first.

You can contact the ombudsman's office at:

4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS
Phone: 0870 011 5378
Fax: 0870 011 5379
Email:
enquiries@scottishombudsman.org

If your complaint is about our housing support services, you can also appeal to the Care Commission. The local Care Commission office is at:

First Floor, Castle House,
Fairways Business Park, Inverness,
IV2 6AA. Phone: 01463 227630
Email: enquiries@carecommission.com

Who will know about my complaint?

As far as possible, we will keep the details of your complaint private. While we are looking into it, we will not give your name out more than is absolutely necessary. If your complaint goes to the Chair of our Management Committee or the complaints sub-committee, we will not tell the other committee members who has complained (unless you want us to).

However, you will probably appreciate that if your complaint involves another tenant or neighbour or a member of staff, it may be difficult for us to look into it without first talking to the other person or people concerned. If you ask us not to do this, we will try and respect your wishes. But in this case, it may not be possible for us to take any action to deal with the problem.

It will not normally be possible for us to deal with complaints that are sent to us anonymously (without a name) as it is obviously difficult for us to check things out with the person who has made the complaint.

How do we record and monitor complaints?

Complaints can help us as well as you!

All formal complaints and comments are recorded and reported to our Chief Executive, who will regularly advise the Management Committee about any changes or improvements we need to make as a result.

Improving our service to you

Complaints are not the only way of telling us what you think about the service we provide. We always welcome suggestions about how we can do things. Sometimes we will send a survey to you asking what you think about particular things. You can also give us your suggestions and ideas at any time by writing to our office, or by writing to the appropriate service area manager.



You can contact us at the following offices:

Head office
98-100 High Street
Invergordon
IV18 0DL

Phone: 01349 852978
Fax: 01349 853859
E-mail: office@albynhousing.org.uk

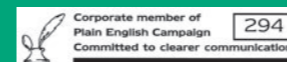
Housing Support Services
68 Maclennan Crescent
Inverness
IV3 8DN

Phone: 01463 712516
Fax: 01463 712667

If you need this information from us in large print, on audio tape, or in any other format, please let us know.



Albyn Housing Society Ltd is a Scottish Charity
Register of Friendly Societies No. 1776R (S)
Register of Housing Associations (Scottish Homes) No. HAL64
Scottish Charity No. SC027123



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Albyn Housing Society Making a complaint or comment



Building homes... Supporting communities