

Saint John of God Housing Association clg

Complaints Policy and Procedure



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Complaints

Policy and Procedure

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Complaints

Policy and Procedure

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Complaints

Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

It is the policy of Saint John of God Housing Association to provide safe, secure, suitable, affordable, and quality rented accommodation for tenants with specific needs.

However, the Association recognises that there will be occasions when our tenants are dissatisfied with the service they receive, or with the response to a particular issue or request. Likewise, relatives of tenants, or other people affected by our services, may be dissatisfied about how these are operating. When a complaint about our services is received we will try to address the issues that have been raised as quickly as possible to the satisfaction of both the complainant and Saint John of God Housing Association.

The Association views complaints as providing an opportunity to learn how our services operate in practice and to understand how they might be improved and developed. All complaints will be looked at objectively and fairly.

The Association has in place systems to record complaints, to monitor progress in responding to them, including response times, and to analyse outcomes. The number and

nature of complaints received are recorded by the Association in the periodic reports which it is required to provide to statutory regulatory bodies.

This Complaints Policy and Procedure aims to give guidance on what to do if you wish to make a complaint to the Housing Association.

The text of the Complaints Policy and Procedure is published in leaflet form and is also available from the website of the Saint John of God Housing Association.

2. Scope of the policy

This policy covers Saint John of God Housing Association tenants, family members of tenants, housing applicants, neighbours of tenants, other stakeholders of Saint John of God Housing Association.

3. What can you expect from us?

We will:

- Treat you with dignity, respect and courtesy;
- Be objective and impartial;
- Listen to you and not make assumptions;
- Not let your complaint affect our future relationship;
- Manage complaints in an open and transparent way;
- Be honest and say sorry when we get things wrong and let you know how we plan to put things right.

4. Who can complain?

You can make a complaint if you are:

- A tenant;
- Someone who receives or requests a service from us – for example, a new applicant for housing, a supplier;
- Someone who is affected by a decision or action taken by us;
- Someone affected by our services – for example, a relative, neighbour, or other stakeholder.

Complaints can be made by someone acting on your behalf where you have signed a consent form giving permission for that person to complain or advocate on your behalf.

5. What can I complain about?

We will investigate your complaint if:

- We have not done something that we should have done;
- We did something we should not have done;
- We did not provide the quality of service we said we would.

It is generally more difficult to investigate a complaint if this refers to something that happened some time ago. It is best to make a complaint as soon as possible after something happens or as soon as you become aware of a problem. We will not normally consider complaints regarding something that happened more than 12 months ago unless there are good reasons for a delay in making the complaint.

6. What is not covered by this complaints policy?

This policy does not apply in situations where:

- You are making an initial request for a service – for example, if your heating has broken down and you want it repaired, this would go through our repairs process;
- You are seeking information about our services;
- You want to talk to us about a problem with your neighbour or another resident living on your estate – this is covered by our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

Complaints will not be examined under the procedures outlined under this policy in cases where:

- The same issue has been investigated and closed;
- The issue is part of any legal proceedings;
- We suspect or have evidence that the complaint is based on false information;
- Demands are made that are persistent, unreasonable or distressing;
- We acted as we did because we were obliged to do so by regulatory, legislative or policy requirements.

7. How can I complain?

You can make a complaint in a number of ways – for example:

- Write a letter or fill in a 'Complaint Form' (Appendix 1 of this document and also available on our website for downloading and printing) and send it to:

Saint John of God Housing Association

Gleann na hEorna

Tessa House, Block D

Springfield

Tallaght

Dublin 24

D24 DTN1

- Email us at complaints@sjog.ie

- If you are a tenant, you may choose to submit the complaint via your support worker or programme manager
- Use the form available on our website www.sjoghousingassociation.ie
- Telephone us on 01 223 9138 *
- In person, to any member of our staff *

***If a person initially makes a complaint via a phone call or by speaking to a member of staff, a written record of the complaint will be made.**

In some cases, a person may wish to make a complaint but not give their name or contact details. In these instances, we will record the complaint, investigate the matter in so far as this is possible and make a record of what we do in response to the complaint. However, since we will not be able to obtain additional information from the person making the complaint there may be limitations to our investigation; moreover, we will not be able to give feedback to the complainant. For these reasons, it is preferable that a person who has a complaint, or a person acting on their behalf, gives contact details.

If you need help to make a complaint, we can:

- Provide additional information to clarify the process for making a complaint;
- Offer you support to make the complaint;
- Signpost you to advocacy services.

You are welcome to say how you would like to receive the Housing Association's response to your complaint.

8. What happens when I make a complaint?

Where a complaint is made in person or via a telephone call, it may be possible for the member of staff receiving the complaint to resolve the problem straightaway. However, if this is not possible or you prefer that we deal with your issue as a formal complaint the process will be as follows.

Stage 1

We will:

- Write to you to acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of receiving it.
- Ask a staff member to investigate your complaint thoroughly and consider:
 - ✘ What has happened?
 - ✘ What should have happened?
 - ✘ What is the difference?
 - ✘ What lessons have been learned and what needs to change?
- Issue a written response to the complaint within a further 10 working days.

If more time is needed, you will be informed of this in writing.

While you await a response to your complaint, you are welcome to contact the Association to ask for an update on the progress of the investigation.

Initially, a complaint will be dealt with by the Development Officer or Housing Officer, unless the complaint directly involves these staff members. In that case, the complaint will be dealt with by a more senior member of staff.

Stage 2

If you are not happy with the Housing Association's response from **Stage 1**, you may write to the staff member who has dealt with the complaint within 20 days of the date on which the Stage 1 response was issued, stating why you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 of the investigation. State what you would like the Housing Association to do. Ask for a more senior member of the staff of the Housing Association to investigate the matter; in most cases, this will be the Housing Manager. The senior manager then has 5 working days to acknowledge your letter and a further 15 working days to respond to your complaint. If, however, they need additional time to investigate the matter, you will be informed of this in writing.

Stage 3

If you are not satisfied with the response from the senior manager, send a reply in writing within 20 days of the date on which the **Stage 2** response was issued, stating why you are not happy with the response and/or the possible outcomes and asking that the Chief Executive Officer should now investigate the matter. Alternatively, you may write directly to the Chief Executive Officer regarding your complaint and how it has been handled.

An acknowledgment of your letter will be issued within 5 working days of being received. The Chief Executive Officer will then provide a response to your complaint within 15 further working days. If, however, more time is needed to investigate the complaint, you will be informed of this in writing. The response of the Chief Executive Officer will be final.

Stage 4

If you are a tenant and if you are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately dealt with, you may at this stage address your complaint to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). The RTB investigates disputes between landlords and tenants and may be contacted in any of the following ways:

- ✧ *By phone on 0818-30-30-37*
- ✧ *Through the Residential Tenancies Board's website on www.rtb.ie*
- ✧ *By email at disputes@rtb.ie*
- ✧ *In writing addressed to: Residential Tenancies Board, PO Box 47, Clonakilty, Co. Cork*

Note: There is no public office for the RTB. Therefore the methods of communication listed above are the only options available to you.

9. What happens if a complaint is withdrawn?

At any stage, a complaint may be withdrawn by the complainant. If this happens, the person investigating the complaint must inform the Chief Executive Officer that the complaint has been withdrawn. The investigator will provide a report to the Chief Executive Officer and either seek approval for ending the investigation or explain that the enquiries so far would indicate that the public interest would be best served by continuing to investigate. The decision on ceasing or continuing the investigation will be made by the Chief Executive Officer and the complainant will be informed of this decision.

10. What are the possible outcomes of a complaint?

Remedial actions in response to a complaint may include one or more of the following responses:

- ✦ An explanation
- ✦ Mediation
- ✦ An apology
- ✦ Correction of the error identified
- ✦ Improvements in the service provided
- ✦ A change in policy or procedure

Please note: The above list is by way of example only.

11. Who will know about my complaint?

The Housing Association is committed to respecting the confidential nature of complaints and the process for investigating them. During the investigation of your complaint, your name will not be divulged unless this is necessary. You will appreciate, however, that if your complaint involves another tenant or a member of staff, it may be difficult to investigate the complaint without telling the tenant or staff member concerned who it is that has made the complaint. If, in these circumstances, you decline to give us permission to reveal your identity, it may not be possible for us to resolve the problem.

In the reports that the Housing Association makes to statutory bodies in regard to how it is meeting required standards, the Association is obliged to state if it has received any complaints during the period covered by the report. In doing so, the Association indicates the number and nature of complaints received but does not disclose any detail that would reveal the identity of the people who have made complaints.

12. Should I get advice before making a complaint?

We would always hope that any problem you are experiencing can be rectified before it becomes necessary for you make a formal complaint.

The Association recommends that you consider seeking information and/or advice from an independent source before making a formal complaint; such information or advice can help you in deciding if a formal complaint is the appropriate route for you to take.

If you are a tenant, we would advise you to discuss with your support worker or programme manager and/or advocate any issues or difficulties you are experiencing.

Below is a list of the information and/or advice services available:

- ✕ Residential Tenancies Board – www.rtb.ie (Free)
- ✕ Threshold – www.threshold.ie (Free)
- ✕ Citizens Information – www.citizensinformation.ie (Free)
- ✕ Legal Aid Board – www.legalaidboard.ie (Please note, there may be a fee for legal advice from the Legal Aid Board.)

Please note: This list is for example purposes only.



Appendices

Appendix 1

Checklist for Complaints Policy and Procedure

	Tick 
Who can use this Complaints Policy and Procedure? This Complaints Policy and Procedure applies to Saint John of God Housing Association tenants, family members of tenants, applicants for housing, neighbours of tenants, other stakeholders of Saint John of God Housing Association. If you are a tenant, it is suggested that you first speak to your support worker or programme manager regarding the issue you are concerned about; they can give you information to guide you in making a complaint.	
How to contact us: By phone, in person, in writing, by email, or through an advocate.	
How to make a complaint: Complete the Housing Association's Complaint Form or write a letter or an email and send it to the Association. You may also make a complaint by telephone or in person to a member of staff of the Association. If you a tenant, you may choose to submit the complaint via your support worker or programme manager and/or advocate.	
Investigation of a complaint: Stage 1 Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days and investigated by the Housing Officer or the Development Officer. A written response will be issued within a further 10 working days. If more time is needed, you will be informed of this in writing.	
Stage 2 - If you are not happy with the outcome from Stage 1, send a response in writing to the Housing Officer or Development Officer within 20 working days of the date on which the letter informing you of the outcome was written. State why you are dissatisfied and what outcome you would like to see. - Your letter will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. Your complaint will then be considered by the Housing Manager or another senior manager, who will issue a response within a further 15 days. If they need additional time to investigate the matter, you will be informed in writing.	
Stage 3	

• If you are not happy with the outcome from Stage 2, send a letter within 20 working days asking for the matter to be considered by the CEO of the Housing Association. • Your letter will be acknowledged within 5 working days. The CEO will normally provide a response to the complaint within a further 15 working days. If more time is needed for investigation of the complaint, you will be informed in writing.	
Stage 4 • If you are a tenant and are unhappy with the response from the CEO you are entitled to lodge your complaint with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).	

Appendix 2

Complaint Form

		SAINT JOHN OF GOD HOUSING ASSOCIATION clg COMPLAINT FORM	
		Please complete this form, sign it and return it to the address below.	
Name:			
Address:			
Mobile Number:			
Landline Number:			
Email:			
Are you acting on behalf of another person?		Yes	No
Name of the person on behalf of whom you are acting			
Address of the person on behalf of whom you are acting			
Contact details of the person on behalf of whom you are acting			
What would you like to tell us? (Use a separate sheet if necessary)			

What action do you want to see taken in response to your complaint?	
<i>I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge, everything stated in this form is correct.</i>	
Signature:	
Date:	

Please return completed form to: Saint John of God Housing Association clg,

Tessa House, Block D, Springfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24, D24 DTN1

or email it to: housing@sjog.ie

Tel: 01 223 9138; Web: www.sjoghousingassociation.ie





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