



Complaints Have your say



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Complaints leaflet for Tenants

Choice Housing is committed to monitoring the quality of service delivery we provide so we can continually work to improve it. We recognise the importance of feedback and welcome complaints which we aim to handle quickly, effectively, and in a fair and honest way.

Choice will accept complaints from people acting on a complainant's behalf such as a Councillor, Advice Agency or Solicitor. Complaints received from an anonymous source may be dealt with where the issue is deemed to be one which identifies systemic issues of concern. As it is anonymous, we will be unable to acknowledge the complaint, however it will be passed to management to investigate and action as appropriate.

Choice aim to resolve all enquiries and repairs as quickly as possible. On occasion we may fall short of this and when this is raised with us, we will raise a Service Request as opposed to a complaint to take action to put this right. If the Service Request is unsuccessful in resolving an issue, a complainant can raise a formal complaint.

Choice welcomes complaints however, we recognise that a number of complainants may use the process in a way that is unacceptable, such as persisting with complaints that have been previously addressed, continually changing the substance of complaints or making complaints in order to cause difficulty for others. Such complaints place a strain on time and resources and cause undue stress for staff.

Choice's staff will respond professionally and sympathetically to all complaints however, there are times when there is nothing further that can be reasonably done to assist a complainant or rectify a perceived problem. We have a policy for dealing with unreasonable complainant conduct.

What you can complain about:

- ✓ a failure or refusal to provide a service
- ✓ inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- ✓ dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual (Equality Scheme complaint)
- ✓ failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- ✓ failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- ✓ conduct, treatment by, or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves)
- ✓ a concern about the actions or service of an organisation who is delivering services on our behalf
- ✓ disagreement with a decision (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).

What you cannot complain about:

- ✗ a routine first-time request for a service or repair
- ✗ the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 6 months ago
- ✗ a request for compensation only
- ✗ anti-social behaviour (this will be dealt with through our Anti-social Behaviour Policy)
- ✗ issues that are subject to legal proceedings or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process)
- ✗ disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as Subject Access Requests)
- ✗ a request for information under Data Protection and / or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- ✗ a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
- ✗ a concern raised internally by a member of staff (that was not about a service they received, such as a whistle blowing concern)
- ✗ a concern about a child or an adult's safety
- ✗ abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our Zero Tolerance to Violence and Aggression Policy
- ✗ unacceptable behaviours or actions that repeatedly raise issues that have already been investigated and closed, or matters that have been reviewed and determined not to constitute a valid complaint. In such cases, we may take an alternative approach to reach a resolution
- ✗ circumstances where Choice are unable to provide a resolution to their complaint. For example when we are being asked to encourage other statutory bodies such as PSNI - to take actions outside our control
- ✗ challenges to decisions made via formal decision-making channels i.e., an application made under the Housing Selection Scheme.

How to make a complaint:

If your issue falls outside the definition of a Service Request (see introduction), you may complain via a number of ways including verbally, face-to-face, in writing, by phone, email or letter. Where you make a complaint verbally, the staff member recording the complaint will ask you to sign your agreement that the complaint has been recorded accurately. This is called a Stage 1 complaint.

Unless exceptional circumstances apply, you must make the complaint within six months of when you first knew of the problem or within two months of a Service Request response, whichever is later.

Once your complaint has been recorded, the Corporate Services Complaints Officer (CSCO) will be in touch with you to acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days and to clarify the outcome you would like to see.

Where the points of the complaint and outcome sought are not clear, the CSCO will normally need to speak to you (by phone or face-to-face). In some cases, it may be possible to clarify complaints in writing. This is to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the complaint between you and Choice.

Responding to your complaint:

A full response will be provided to you as soon as possible but not later than 20 working days from the time your complaint was received for investigation. If your complaint is complex and it becomes clear that it may not be possible to meet the 20-day timeframe, the CSCO will advise you of the delay including an explanation for this delay.

The response provided to you will explain if your complaint is resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

If you are not satisfied with the response:

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the process, you may seek to escalate your complaint to Stage 2. This is a review by an Independent Panel, within 28 days of receiving the response at Stage 1.

In order to have a complaint reviewed by the panel at Stage 2, you must present **new evidence** that was not considered at Stage 1 and explain why you are not satisfied with the response and how you would like to see it resolved.

A Stage 2 Panel Review:

If your request for a Stage 2 Panel Review is accepted, the CSCO will acknowledge this within three working days. The Independent Panel (IP) will review the complaint, the response to the complaint and the new evidence presented and provide recommendations for consideration.

The CSCO will provide you with a response within 20 working days along with a copy of the IP report. The response will set out clearly whether your complaint is upheld etc. Choice's internal complaints process is now complete. Your complaint will now be closed.

Post Closure:

If, after exhausting the internal complaints process, you are dissatisfied with the response or do not accept the findings, you will be signposted to the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO). NIPSO will decide whether to investigate further.

This procedure is to ensure complaints are dealt with appropriately and that all tenants have access to clear information on how to make a complaint. Additional assistance will be offered where necessary to facilitate tenants.

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choice 
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