



Complaints and Feedback Policy

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1. Introduction

Hope into Action - Epsom is committed to providing high quality services in an efficient, effective and economic way, and within approved budgets.

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 - Epsom will ensure that appropriate action is taken to rectify them.

You have a responsibility to report things that you feel are not right, are illegal, or if anyone at work is neglecting their duties.

Staff are always and rightly, going to be worried about repercussions of reporting abuse or poor practice. It can be difficult to be the person that stands up and name someone responsible for poor practice, but Hope into Action – Epsom promotes a culture which values good practice and encourages openness.

a) Other policies

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Grievance section of staff handbook
- Whistleblowing policy

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.

3. Procedures

3.1. Definitions

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action or inaction by Hope into Action - Epsom, its employees, board members, contractors or partners. 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;

- complaints about the attitudes of our staff, contractors or others working on our behalf.

a) Formal and informal complaints

All complaints are usually dealt with at the first point of contact with a member of staff (usually the person handling the enquiry), and the aim is to resolve the issue 'there and then'. If it cannot be resolved at that point of contact then the complaint will need to be escalated to the formal process. Staff should offer help for complaints to be made or support complainants to get advice from CAB.

Formal complaints may arise if the informal complaint process is not resolved satisfactorily, or if the complainant wishes to formally complain about a matter. In such cases the staged procedure will be followed.

All formal and informal complaints will be recorded to identify trends and make improvements to service delivery.

b) Complaints which fall outside the scope of 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 - Epsom are outside the scope of this policy. Hope into Action – Epsom 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: these are the responsibility of the local authority;
- insurance claims, which shall be referred immediately to Hope into Action - Epsom insurers.
- Whistleblowing. This can be found in the whistle-blowing policy.

c) Complaints about Trustees

Where serious complaints are received about the impropriety of Trustees or members of staff, such issues may be dealt with separately under Governance or Human Resources procedures, and may also be referred to regulatory bodies or other appropriate organisations if appropriate.

d) Complaints about staff or volunteers

Staff not considered senior will be investigated by a member of the Executive team. If you have a complaint about a staff member then please inform any of the Trustees.

e) Complaints about franchise partners

A complaint to one Hope into Action partner anywhere is a risk to the reputation of Hope into Action everywhere.

Hope into Action have oversight of the complaints across the network. This will help us analyse trends, support partners through difficult processes and situations and alert us to poor practice.

Complaints monitoring will form part of HIA quality assurance monitoring visits and reporting will be required on an annual basis to HIA support centre. In the event of a particularly difficult, vexatious, risky complaint or when a complaint reaches [level 3 in section 3.8](#) HIA should be informed at the time to offer support and help prepare for or mitigate the risks.

On an annual basis franchisees will be required to send in the complaints, written up. This will then be securely and confidentially filed by HIA in line with the data retention policy. This will mean records are kept in the event of a complaint re-surfacing later.

Tenants ('tenants' are the occupiers and includes 'licensees' where applicable) of franchise partners cannot appeal to us but we must be made aware at the time, as stated above, of any complaint which reaches level 3 or is particularly risky or vexatious.

f) Complaints from neighbours

When a neighbour complains about recurring antisocial behaviour, Hope into Action will provide an incident record book (refer to [appendix 1](#))

g) Complaints from staff

This is covered in the staff handbook.

h) Complaints from churches

A church wishing to complain to Hope into Action should do so via e-mail, to a Trustee, setting out their complaint clearly and concisely.

i) 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 here, in Appendix 3 of this document](#).
- Licensees 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.

j) Complaints from tenants about another tenant.

In reality our tenants will often complain about other tenants. Empowerment workers are encouraged to resolve these complaints between the two tenants, (top-tip: calling a house meeting and putting the complaint on the agenda can work).

If however the matter becomes more serious and concerns danger to the house, the tenant, or any form of abuse then it will need to be treated as a formal complaint and tenants should be encouraged to make a complaint to the line manager of the Empowerment Worker. Please also see [Safeguarding Policy](#) to see if it should be raised as a safeguarding issue.

k) Complaints from Franchisees

We try and resolve all complaints with our franchisees, face-to-face and through relationship. If this fails to resolve a matter then franchisees are asked to complain using the following e-mail address: complaints@hopeintoaction.org.uk

l) Unreasonable, persistent and vexatious complaints

Examples of complaint which Hope into Action 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;
- fails to engage in the complaints process or uses it as a form of protest.

In such cases the relevant Trustee 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.* The Trustee will decide whether the complaint falls under this definition, and write to the complainant advising him/her of this decision. Information about the procedure and the 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 the policy and guidelines.

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

m) Anonymous complaints

The nature of all anonymous complaints will be recorded. Any anonymous complaint will only be referred for investigation or other action if it includes documentary or photographic evidence indicating a serious or significant matter.

3.2. Complaints about a franchisee

Franchisees are encouraged to adopt an adapted version of this policy. Hope into Action: UK will monitor this through our QAMs.

From time to time a complaint will come to Hope into Action: UK about a franchisee. In this instance we will forward the complaint to the 'Franchise lead' and a board member.

We are asked to be made aware, with 24 hours, of any complaint against a franchisee that reaches level 3 of the [table in 3.9](#). Please also note [section 3.3](#) for reporting.

3.3. Reporting

All complaints should be made known to the Hope into Action Church, Tenant and Network Facilitator.

All complaints shall be recorded in share-point folder and the Church, Tenant and Network Facilitator shall report to the Trustee's every Trustees meeting on the complaints received. And once per year a summary from across the network.

3.4. Accessibility

a) Making sure that people know how to complain

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

- information in Tenant / Licence Agreement;
- information about complaints statistics in the Annual Report;
- On our website – the complaints policy is on our website and this includes an e-mail address to lodge a complaint;
- A notice will be on the wall of every home;

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

b) Accessible complaints process

At all stages, Hope into Action will endeavour to remove any barriers to making a complaint. Complaints may be made by the method preferred by the complainant. This may include phone, letter, email, face-to-face and using the website.

Help will be offered to those who wish to complain. This may include (but is not restricted to) a staff member taking written details, visiting the complainant or arranging translation services. 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, the complainant must give Hope into Action authority to liaise with the third party.

- The complaints policy shall be on all websites as a footer.

3.5. Confidentiality

All complaints will be dealt with in the strictest confidence, and in line with GDPR principles. There will be no adverse consequences for complainants such as the removal of a service. Information about trends and types of complaints will be

published, but no individual or groups will be identifiable. More information on this may be found in the GDPR Policy.

3.6. Filing

All filing will be kept confidentially. When the complaint process is finalized, all documentation will be submitted to the Trustees who will file it in the board section of share-point. Once successfully uploaded to this site all other copies will be destroyed.

3.7. Feedback and remedies

Providing a remedy to the complaint is a key element of an effective feedback system. The member of staff investigating the complaint should 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.

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.

The Trustee responsible for the service shall always consider actions to prevent recurrence. These may include changes to procedures, staff training and feedback to contractors.

a) Good-will Gestures

In exceptional circumstances upon approval from the Trustees, Hope Into Action - Epsom 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.

3.8. Timescales

A complaint should be made within 3 months of the service being delivered or requested.

Hope into Action - Epsom will register, and aim to resolve, all complaints informally at the first point of contact. Where a satisfactory solution cannot be, or has not been, achieved, the complainant may wish to escalate the matter to status of a formal complaint.

3.9. The staged procedure for dealing with formal complaints is:

STAGE	PROCESS	TIMESCALE
1.	<p>Registration and investigation of complaint. This will normally be dealt with by a front-line member of staff, as long as they are not the subject of the complaint.</p> <p>The complaint will go first to Church, Tenant and Network Facilitator and she/he will assign an appropriate staff member to lead on the complaint.</p>	Written response within 10 working days
2.	<p>Review by a manager if stage 1 does not resolve the complaint</p>	Written response within 10 working days.
3.	<p>Appeal to a panel of 2 Trustees</p> <p>The complainant or their representative may attend to present their case.</p>	<p>The Panel will convene within 2 weeks of receipt of the stage 3 complaint, and the complainant will be provided with details of the protocol and procedure.</p> <p>The outcome will be sent in writing within 5 days of the Panel meeting.</p>
4.	<p>FOR TENANCY RELATED ISSUES</p> <p>Referral to the Housing Ombudsman Service. 81 Aldwych. London. WC2B 4HN. Tel: 0300 111 3000 or any successor organisations, who will independently review the complaint, but only after the above process has been exhausted.</p>	The Ombudsman, or successor organisation, will advise of the timescales.

In some circumstances, timescales may be exceeded. An example would be delays as a result of the request of information from third parties. In such cases, the complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days of being lodged, 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.

Generally cases will be closed within the following timescales. This may be waived if there is a genuine reason that has been considered at Director level. In all other cases, if a fresh or related complaint is made, that is not unreasonable or vexatious, it will be recorded and dealt with as a new complaint.

Complaints will be included in Trustee meetings. Annually, a review of complaints will be presented to the Trustees with an action plan for improvements.

Appendix 1 – To be given to neighbours in the event of Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-Social Behaviour – Hope into Action Incident Record Book

Case Number	
Manager	
Contact Telephone Number	
Date of Issue	
Date to be returned or collected	

You have been asked to keep a careful note of any incidents you see or hear yourself, which are directly relevant to the report you have made. We need to know who was involved. Please give your best description and especially names and addresses wherever possible.

We also need to know exactly what happened and when. FOR EACH INCIDENT, please keep a note of:

- Frequency: how often does it happen?
- Intensity: how severe is it?
- Extent: how large an area is affected?
- Nature: what happened?
- Duration: how long does it last?
-

Please send in the complaints to us at: Hope into Action - Epsom, c/o Epsom Methodist Church, 11-13 Ashley Road, Epsom KT18 5AQ. Your records are vital in helping us assess how best to manage your case and will be essential if the case requires legal action.

Thank you for your co-operation.

4. Guidance notes on how to complete these forms:

4.1. Introduction

It is vital that an accurate record is kept for two reasons:

- To provide evidence in a court of law (if necessary) that anti-social behaviour is occurring, and
- To help the manager to decide the most appropriate course of action.

If you need any further forms please contact us. If you have any difficulty in completing this form please ask us for help. The manager will agree with you when and how the completed forms should be returned.

4.2. Example incidents report forms

a)	b) GOOD EXAMPLE	c) BAD EXAMPLE
Date of Incident	10.01.07	1.07
Time of Incident	9.30pm – 10pm	
Nature of disturbance	I saw Mr X of 10 White Lane drive his blue Mondeo, reg AB12 CDE into the 'residents parking only' sign outside 4 White Lane.	Mr X damaged the 'residents parking only sign' this evening.
How does this affect you?	It frightened me and woke my child	I saw it
Name and address of witnesses and / or police stating crime or incident number	Yes, to Hope Into Action and the local police. PC Dodd, Incident number 341	Yes

4.3. Completing the incident record forms

Ensure that what you write is correct. Please sign the back page of the booklet to confirm that the details are an accurate account of the events.

INCIDENT RECORDING FORM		Case Number:		
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>		Address: <i>Address the disturbance came from. Include the house or flat number.</i>		
Your name:		Address:		
Date of Incident	Time of Incident Start and Finish	Nature of disturbance	How does this affect you?	Name & address of witnesses or police involved, stating crime or incident number
<i>Day, month and year.</i>	<i>Was it day or night? Make sure that you are clear.</i>	<i>eg 'Loud music' or 'people shouting.' <i>eg 'It was so loud that I could not hear the TV.'</i></i>	<i>eg 'It woke me up and I could not get back to sleep.'</i>	

Appendix 2 - Tenant Complaints Notice

Hope into Action Complaints Notice

This notice will be on the wall of Hope into Action – Epsom's home.

Appendix 3: Feedback and Complaint form to be given to tenants at move in.

Hope into Action Feedback and complaint Form

Name		Date	
Address			
Incident Date		Incident time	

Please write your complaint below. Please make sure that your complaint is completed in as much detail as possible. Continue on a separate page if necessary.

Appendix 4 -Response to complaint template

Please ask for:

Direct Line:

Our Reference:

Your Reference:

A N Other

Address

Address

Address

Post Code

Dear A N Other

New Complaint Acknowledgement

I write to acknowledge receipt on (date) of your complaint about your neighbour living at _____.

Hope into Action – Epsom takes complaints seriously and we will try to resolve this issue as soon as possible. We have given your complaint a case number (Insert Date/Month/Year/Post Code). It would help us if you could use this number when contacting us about your complaint.

The person leading the case is _____ who will contact you shortly. If an incident relates to criminal activity you should also report this to the police.

I have enclosed an advice leaflet on (Anti-Social Behaviour) for your information.

Yours sincerely

_____ (Mrs/Mr)

Encs

Please ask for:

Direct Line:

Our Reference:

Your Reference:

A N Other

Address

Address

Address

Post Code

Dear A N Other

Anti- Social Behaviour

I write further to your complaint of Anti-Social Behavior from your neighbours living at _____.

I would like to confirm that I have closed this complaint as I have not received further reports of Anti-Social Behaviour and the residents have resolved their issues independently.

Yours sincerely

_____ (Mrs/Mr)

Encs