



Complaints policy

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1 Introduction

Alamo Housing Co-operative values what our members tell us, even when they are telling us that they are dissatisfied. This means we see complaints as an opportunity to learn how to do things better.

We aim to make it easy for our members and others to tell us that they are unhappy with the services we provide. We recognise that there will be times when we get things wrong. When this happens we will respond positively to any complaints or other feedback we receive.

In order to make it easy for members to make a complaint when they need to, we will accept complaints over the phone, in person, in a letter or by email.

Although we will always consider each complaint on its own merits, we will not normally accept a complaint about something that happened more than six months ago.

2 Our definition of a complaint

We define a complaint as:

A formal expression of dissatisfaction with a policy, procedure, a service or a contractual duty.

This means that we will not restrict what people can complain about or how they do it, but we do expect people to tell us that they are making a formal complaint rather than simply letting us know about a problem. The first report of a specific problem, such as a repair, will not usually be treated as a complaint.

The co-operative is not able to accept a complaint from any person who is involved in a legal dispute with us. This includes where legal proceedings are already underway, or if we think legal proceedings are a likely outcome of a dispute. Any matter that has previously been the subject of legal action will not be reconsidered under the complaints process.

When someone tells us about antisocial behaviour, whether this is being caused by one of our members or by someone else, we will take action under our *Antisocial Behaviour Policy*.

We are not able to accept complaints about repairs that remain the landlord's responsibility under the terms of the relevant management agreement. However we will do our best to assist in the event that a member finds it necessary to make a complaint to the landlord.

3 Objectives of the complaints policy

The objectives of the complaints policy are:

- To provide an effective, accessible way for co-op members, housing applicants and others to register a complaint.
- To ensure that complaints are dealt with in a courteous and efficient manner and are resolved promptly and with the appropriate discretion and confidentiality.
- To provide the management committee and staff with a effective framework for resolving complaints that results in a positive experience for the complainant.
- To provide guidance for complainants, committee members and staff on the operation of the complaints process, including recording, monitoring and learning from complaints.



Alamo Housing Co-operative

Complaints policy



4 Our complaints procedure

Responsibility for handling complaints rests with the management committee. The committee may choose to delegate responsibility for considering some or all complaints to a complaints panel. The committee may also ask staff to assist with any investigation.

We will aim to respond to complaints within the timescales set out below. However, because we are a small organisation and our management committee is comprised of volunteers, in some cases it may take longer. If it is not possible for us to respond within our target timescales, for instance if we need to carry out a more detailed investigation, we will let the complainant know as quickly as possible.

Stage	Action	Target time
1	Acknowledge the complaint in writing.	Within 7 days
2	Carry out an investigation.	Within 14 days
3	Hold a committee meeting to discuss the complaint and inform the complainant of the date of the meeting.	At next committee meeting
4	Write to the complainant to inform them of the decision that was taken at the committee meeting.	Within one week of meeting
5	Call a special general meeting if required.	Within two months

We will be honest and open about what we can do and what we cannot do to meet the expectations of the complainant. When we respond to a complaint we will set out:

- Whether or not we have upheld the complaint. We may either fully or partially uphold a complaint.
- What, if any, action we intend to take.
- How long it will take us to complete the action we have promised to take.
- Whether any compensation will be payable, and how much the compensation will be.

5 Designated Person / Independent Housing Ombudsman Service

If, at the end of the complaints process, a complainant remains dissatisfied with our response, the regulatory framework set out in the Localism Act 2011 now provides for a number of different options. The complainant may:

- Refer their complaint to a *Designated Person* to assist in the resolution of the complaint at a local level, or
- Give authority to the *Designated Person* to refer their complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service immediately; or
- Wait 8 weeks after completing Alamo Housing Co-operative's internal complaints process before referring the case to the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service.

For more information about *Designated Persons* please visit www.ihos.org.uk or call the Independent Housing Ombudsman on 020 7421 3800 or 0845 712 5973.

Alamo Housing Co-operative

Complaints policy



6 Compensation

Although we aim to provide a consistently high quality service to our members, we recognise that at times there may be delays and sometimes our services may fall short of expectations.

If one of our services fails and this failure causes distress or inconvenience, we may offer compensation. However compensation will not be automatic.

Compensation may be offered in the following circumstances:

- A member has experienced a loss of amenities as a result of an action (or inaction) on the part of Alamo Housing Co-operative.
- A member has not been able to use a room due to disrepair, and the disrepair has resulted from an action (or inaction) on our part.
- We have failed to adhere to one of our policies and this has resulted in damage to possessions or significant distress or inconvenience.

Applications for compensation will be considered on their individual merits. Members will be expected to demonstrate that they have suffered financial loss or significant distress and inconvenience as a result of an avoidable service failure. When considering compensation, we will take into consideration:

- The severity of distress and degree of inconvenience.
- The duration of the service failure.
- Whether the member took reasonable steps to minimise the impact of the service failure.

Compensation will not be payable where the management committee consider that the complainant (or other persons) caused or contributed to the problem which caused the complaint.

In the event that a member or other person suffers personal injury as a result of an alleged failing on the part of the co-operative, the cooperative will be obliged to comply with the terms of its insurance policy. This may mean that we submit an insurance claim in respect of the incident rather than register a complaint.

Claims for compensation resulting from a failure by the landlord to carry out repairs that are the landlord's responsibility under the relevant management agreement should be made directly to the landlord.

7 Monitoring and reporting

The management committee will be responsible for keeping a record of all complaints received by the co-operative. The committee may delegate this responsibility to a sub-committee or to a member of staff.

A file will be created for each complaint and relevant correspondence will be retained on the tenancy file. We will also keep a register (or database) of complaints.

The committee will report to members on complaints received at least once each year. A report will be provided to the annual general meeting which includes the number of complaints received, a summary of what the complaints were about and what action was taken. The report will also highlight the lessons learned and any changes made by the co-operative as a result of a complaint.

Alamo Housing Co-operative

Complaints policy



8 Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually. It will also be reviewed if there are changes to relevant legislation or to the regulatory framework.