



Tenant Complaint Policy Statement

Introduction

Respond! services are provided in accordance with the Respond! Tenant Handbook and other Respond! policies which are available on the Respond! website www.respond.ie. Respond! Housing Association aims to give an excellent service to our tenants. We want to know if we get things wrong or if tenants are unhappy with the service they have received from us. The aim of this statement is to set out how we will listen, respond and learn from problems and mistakes we may have made in order to provide a better service in the future. *A request for a service or a maintenance request is not covered in this policy.*

How we identify a complaint

A complaint could be when a tenant feels:

- We have failed to respond to their initial enquiries
- Our staff were unhelpful or not polite
- We have failed to meet one of our tenant service promises
- Our policies / procedures are incorrect or unfair
- Unhappy with our actions / decisions

Please note: A complaint is not a request for a service or an enquiry. Malicious and vexatious complaints will not be entertained.

How we will view a complaint

When we receive a complaint, we view it as an opportunity to improve our relationship with our tenants and to improve our service.

What we will do when we receive a complaint

When a tenant informs a member of our staff that they are unhappy with something, that staff member will take responsibility for responding. The tenant can tell us about their complaint:

- (i) on the telephone by calling 051 840200
- (ii) in writing to Airmount, Dominick Place, Waterford
- (iii) by email to feedback@respond.ie
- (iv) or during an estate visit.

How we will learn from complaints

A tenant complaint provides an opportunity for Respond! to learn about what or how we can improve our service. In order to do this, we will record and monitor every complaint including details such as what the complaint was about, how it was resolved, how quickly it was resolved and what we learnt. We will contact tenants after they have complained to find out about their experience of the process and we will seek to learn from this feedback and to change our processes and approach to reflect tenants' views.

How we will make sure our complaints' approach is fair and easy to access

We will provide tenants with any support they need throughout their complaint. This could include translating information or providing an interpreter if English is not their first language. We will also provide where necessary a tenant advocate who will assist the tenant in preparing their complaint.

Respond! Housing Association Complaints Procedure

Stage 1:

The tenant will inform the **Resident Support Worker** what the issue is that they are unhappy about and then the Resident Support Worker will clarify the issue with the tenant, agree how it will be resolved and when it will be resolved. Where possible we ask that the Tenant will fill in a Respond! Housing Association Complaint Form in the form attached giving the tenant's name, address, contact details and details of the complaint including when and where the matters complained of took place. We ask tenants to please ensure that complaints made are fair and reasonable and to be aware that details of complaints may have to be made available to those involved in the complaint.

If for any reason the tenant is unable to contact the Resident Support Worker or indeed if the complaint relates to the Resident Support Worker the tenant should call 051 840200 and ask for Resident Support Services Co ordinator.

Stage 2:

If the tenant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, they can ask for it to be escalated to stage 2. At stage 2, the **Regional Manager** will:

- Speak to the tenant to clarify why they are dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response and seek to agree how the complaint will be resolved at Stage 2
- Ensure any actions agreed with the tenant are carried out
- Write to the tenant confirming how the complaint has been resolved, within 10 working days of when the tenant advanced the complaint to Stage 2

Stage 3: (Appeals Panel)

If the tenant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint at stage 2, they can ask for it to be escalated to stage 3. At Stage 3 an independent complaint **Appeal Panel** hearing will be arranged for the tenant to attend. The Panel will be made up of 2-3 independent persons selected by Respond! and will not include either the Resident Support Worker or the Regional Manager involved in the case.

The Panel will:

- Give the tenant the chance to explain their dissatisfaction and the solution they are looking for
- Give the tenant an opportunity to be accompanied by a friend, advisor or tenant advocate (at the tenant's choice) to assist them at the hearing
- Give the Regional Manager the chance to explain how the complaint has been dealt with up to Stage 2

Following a hearing the panel will make a decision and advise the tenant accordingly. They will also confirm in writing to the tenant within 10 working days of the panel meeting, how the complaint should be resolved and will recommend any further actions which need to be taken.

The decision of the panel shall be binding on all parties, without prejudice to any other remedies which may be available. In reaching a decision the panel will be entitled, if appropriate in a given case, to take into account any breach by the tenant of his or her letting conditions.

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the complaint to be referred to a formal mediation process and should this be the panel's decision then the tenant will be provided with a tenant advocate to guide him or her through that process.

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Respond! Housing Association Complaints Form

Respond! Housing Association is committed to providing an efficient and courteous service to all our tenants. If you are dissatisfied with the quality of service you received, and wish to put your complaint in writing, please use this form to provide us with details of the nature of your complaint. This will help us deal with your complaint efficiently, effectively and promptly and we will do our best to rectify things as soon as possible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Is this the first time you made the complaint? Yes No

COMPLAINT

Please give details of your complaint, including any contact with Respond! Housing Association (for example dates, names of individuals that you have had contact with, whether by telephone, in person or otherwise). Please include details of when and where the matters you are complaining about happened.

(attach more pages if necessary)

You can submit your complaint to us in any of the following ways:

By calling: 051 840200

By posting: Airmount, Dominick Place, Waterford.

By email: feedback@respond.ie

Form available on website @ www.respond.ie

The information you supply will only be used for the purpose for which it is given and will be managed in keeping with our Data Protection Policy.

Letter of Appeal – for Stage 3 (Guidance Notes)

Dear Appellant,

Under the Respond! Appeals Procedure, a complainant may avail of one appeal only in relation to the housing association's handling of a particular complaint. As such, it is important that you inform me of all matters of concern to you. In this respect you should consider if there is any further information or argument that you can supply that would benefit the Appeal Panel hearing in reviewing your case.

In deciding to look again at a case I must be satisfied that an appeal application demonstrates that:

1. New relevant evidence/information has become available which might have had a bearing on the original decision in the case,
2. There was a failure on the part of Respond! to examine a relevant and substantial issue,
3. There was a failure on the part of Respond! to obtain relevant and necessary information from the body concerned,
4. The body's stated position is incorrect; this should be supported by evidence of some nature,
5. The complaint has been misunderstood or misinterpreted by Respond!,
6. The decision of the Respond! was incorrect or unreasonable in the context of the complaint made or the particular circumstances of the case,
7. The appeal is made in reasonable time i.e. not more than one month since the date of the decision.

I appreciate you may feel that you have addressed some, or all, of these points in your original application. If that is the case, there is no need to restate them. The purpose of this letter is to allow you consider your views fully and to set down (if you have not already done so), all relevant arguments and/or additional information as you see fit.

I would be grateful if you would revert to me within 10 working days in this regard even if you simply wish to advise that you have already set out the basis for your appeal.

On receipt of your response, I will examine the case matter fully and process it as speedily as possible.

Yours sincerely
Appeals Panel

The Independent Appeal Panel members:

Sarah-Jane Hillery	Practicing Barrister-at-law
Lorraine Lally	Practicing Barrister-at-law
Donal Connolly	Retired County Manager, Waterford County Council
Ruairi De Burca	Practicing Solicitor
Matthew Merrigan	Retired Civil Servant (Previously worked in the State office of the Ombudsman)