



# Do you have a complaint?



## We're here to help!



CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE<sup>®</sup>



## Scottish Borders Housing Association is committed to providing high-quality customer services.

We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

### What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

### What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- failure or refusal to provide a service
- inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- delays in responding to enquiries or requests
- unfairness, bias or prejudice in service delivery
- lack of provision, or the provision of misleading, unsuitable or incorrect advice or information
- a repair that has not been carried out properly or in an agreed timeframe
- dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual
- 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); or
- disagreement with a decision, (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).

Your complaint may involve more than one service or be about someone working on our behalf.

### What can't I complain about?

There are some things that we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedures. These include:

- a routine first time request for a service, e.g. a first time request for a housing repair or action relating to anti-social behaviour
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- a concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf)
- requests for compensation from SBHA, and
- matters that can be looked at by an alternative right of appeal, e.g. if you are not happy with the level of priority you have been given when applying for a house, you have the right to appeal against the decision.

Where alternative processes, or rights or appeal can help you resolve your concerns (see the examples above), we will give you the appropriate information and advice to help you.

### Who can complain?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser). If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent. Please also read the section on **Getting help to make your complaint** on the back page.

## Contacting us

You can complain in person at our office in Selkirk, by phone, in writing, by email, or via our complaints form available on our website - [www.sbha.org.uk](http://www.sbha.org.uk)

It is easier for us to address complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve the issue.

### When complaining, please tell us:

- your full name and contact details
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong; and
- what outcome you are seeking.

You can make a complaint in person to any member of SBHA staff, by phone, email or in writing. Our contact details are:

**Scottish Borders Housing Association**  
**South Bridge House**  
**Whinfield Road**  
**SELKIRK TD7 5DT**

**Tel: 01750 724444 / Freephone 0800 0193 222**  
**e-mail: [enquiries@sbha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@sbha.org.uk)**

## How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about; or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

### Stage 1: Frontline response

We aim to respond to complaints quickly (where possible, when you first tell us about the issue). This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to stage 2. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at stage 2 either:

- within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
- within two months of receiving your stage 1 response (if this is later).

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

### Stage 2: Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: where the customer remains dissatisfied after stage 1 and those that clearly require investigation, and so are handled directly at this stage. If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at stage 1, you can ask us to handle it at stage 2 instead.

When using stage 2:

- we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- we will confirm our understanding of the complaint we will investigate and what outcome you are looking for
- we will try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation); and
- where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will tell you our revised time limits and keep you updated on progress.

## What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have given you our final decision, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)** to look at it. The SPSO are an independent organisation that investigates complaints. They are not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if:

- you have gone all the way through SBHA's complaints handling procedure
- it is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and
- the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

The SPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint. You can do this online at [www.spso.org.uk/complain/form](http://www.spso.org.uk/complain/form) or call them on **Freephone 0800 377 7330**.

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint. See the section on **Getting help to make your complaint** below.

The SPSO's contact details are: **SPSO**  
**Bridgeside House**  
**99 McDonald Road**  
**Edinburgh**  
**EH7 4NS**

(if you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment first).

Their freepost address is: **FREEPOST SPSO**

Freephone: **0800 377 7330**

Online contact [www.spso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spso.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.spso.org.uk](http://www.spso.org.uk)

There are some complaints about housing that have an alternative route for independent review. We will tell you how to seek independent review when we give you our final response on your complaint.

## Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**: Tel: **0131 510 9410** Website: [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)

You can find out about advisers in your area through **Citizens Advice Scotland**:  
Website: [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk) or check your phone book for your local citizens advice bureau.

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services.

If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please tell us in person, contact us on **01750 724444 / Freephone 0800 0193 222** or email us at [enquiries@sbha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@sbha.org.uk).