

## POLICY

# COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

### RECORD DETAILS

<b>Policy</b>	Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy
<b>Date authorised by Executive</b>	October 2015
<b>Review responsibility</b>	Quality and Risk Manager
<b>Date last reviewed</b>	July 2015
<b>Next review date</b>	July 2022
<b>Version</b>	V 6

### PURPOSE

To outline the manner in which a complaint or appeal can be made, and feedback can be provided while upholding Haven; Home, Safe (HHS)'s <sup>1</sup>clients' rights, safety and wellbeing. Ensure that services are delivered and reviewed within the context of continuous quality improvement.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For the purpose of this policy, there are two forms of complaints. A service delivery complaint and a neighbour complaint.

**Service delivery complaint** is a complaint about any service HHS offers and is something that HHS has direct control over. HHS is responsible for the behaviour that has caused the complaint. Resolving the issue is completely within our control.

**Neighbour Nuisance complaint** is a complaint about the way a HHS renter is behaving, a Neighbour Nuisance or Antisocial Behaviour Complaint and is not something that HHS has direct control over.

Complaints about the way the Neighbour Complaints process has been managed by HHS would constitute a service delivery complaint.

*Informal complaints* - A complaint made by external agencies or individuals over minor issues or where they do not yet wish to use the formal procedures. Whilst they will be encouraged to deal with the matter informally at first, they do have the right to use the formal procedures at any time.

*Formal complaints* – A complaint must be dealt with as a formal complaint when a complainant remains unsatisfied once an initial response has been given by the member of staff they are liaising with; or if the issue is considered to be of a serious nature (by either the organisation or individual or the member of staff); or if it is regarding the conduct of a member of staff or simply if they wish to make a formal complaint without going through the informal route first.

HHS views all complaints made as a tool for regular monitoring of its service, and is committed to ensuring no support user is adversely treated as a result of making a complaint. HHS seeks to work with renters and community in a collaborative partnership to resolve difficulties or issues within best practice guidelines consistent with the *Housing Registrar* and HHS's Values and Purpose Statement.

### POLICY

**Feedback and complaints provide valuable opinions about the level of client satisfaction with our services. Along with other forms of feedback, they provide an opportunity to improve the delivery of services. They must be handled effectively and promptly, and recorded for coordination, analysis and reporting.**

<sup>1</sup> "Clients" may include any person who has applied or is applying for housing or support services from HHS. HHS explicitly accepts the role of client advocate whether statutory or voluntary.

HHS is committed to ensuring all clients have access to information and methods to:

- Provide feedback about HHS programs, services and processes
- Make a complaint and have it addressed as per policy
- Lodge appeals and resolve issues
- Access appropriate contact information for advocates and external avenues to lodge complaints and appeals which include the following:

Homeless Advocacy Services

Tenants Union of Victoria

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

The Housing Registrar, if after 30 days a current or prospective tenant feels their formal complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved

HHS values and respects individuals, community members and stakeholders; recognising their right to provide feedback or lodge complaints/appeals while being heard in an open and respectful manner.

It is HHS's aim to improve service delivery and to affirm the organisation's belief that all clients have the right to formally complain and appeal against any action taken by the organisation with regard to the management of the client's case. This includes HHS's staff commitment to resolving issues in a practicable and timely manner, consistent with HHS's Purpose and Vision Statement.

This policy includes all clients and stakeholders wishing to provide feedback on areas which can be improved, working well, make a complaint or appeal decisions.

The service also requires staff at all levels to ensure feedback, complaints and appeals raised are managed in a transparent manner; one that is fully respectful and fair to the complainants/appellant, and which respects their privacy and confidentiality. HHS's aim is to achieve a positive outcome, where possible, within the bounds of HHS' policies and procedures.

### **Complaints or appeals about applications for social housing under the Victorian Housing Register**

HHS participates in the VHR by:

- providing applicants with information about applying for social housing under the VHR;
- assisting applicants to make an application for social housing;
- submitting applications to DFFH with a recommended outcome based on the VHR's eligibility criteria.

Where an applicant wishes to:

- make a complaint about the way in which HHS has provided service to them in making an application for social housing; or
- appeal a decision made by HHS in relation to the person's application for social housing to:
  - recommend or not recommend an application for approval;
  - approve or not approve an application;
  - remove an application from the register; and
  - determine if an offer of social housing is a reasonable offer, then such applicants should first ask that the complaint be reviewed or decision be reconsidered by HHS under the complaints and appeals procedure.

Applicants for social housing who are unhappy with the resolution of a complaint under the complaints and appeals procedure may refer the complaint to the DFFH Housing Appeals Office.

## PROCEDURE

# COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS SOP

### RECORD DETAILS

<b>Policy</b>	Complaints and Appeals SOP
<b>Date authorised by Executive</b>	August 2015
<b>Review responsibility</b>	Quality and Risk Manager
<b>Date last reviewed</b>	July 2019
<b>Next review date</b>	July 2022
<b>Version</b>	V 4

### PURPOSE

To improve service delivery and client satisfaction by ensuring all clients are treated equitably and fairly. To ensure that clients are aware of their right to complain and appeal actions taken by the organisation and are resourced to ensure adherence to the policy.

### SCOPE

This procedure outlines the process for managing service delivery complaints and applies to all staff within Haven; Home, Safe (HHS). Complaints about antisocial behaviour or neighbour nuisance perpetrated by HHS tenants are dealt with under the Neighbour Complaints SOP.

### PROCEDURE

Providing Information:

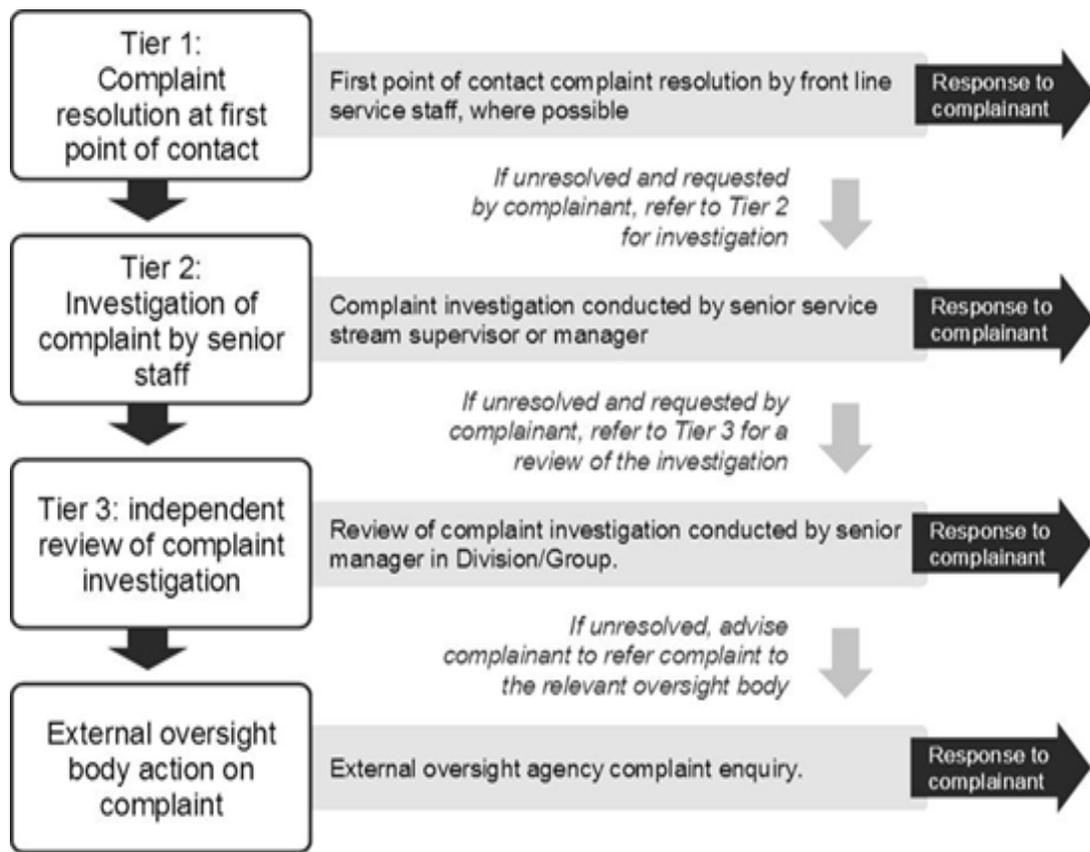
For all clients entering our service:

- Staff will ensure clients receive HHS Brochure concerning Client Privacy and Rights this has been made available in the following languages:
  - Arabic
  - Greek
  - Persian
  - Chinese
  - Somali
  - Vietnamese
- Staff will ensure that clients who are referred from one internal program to another have been provided with this information.
- Staff will ensure the information is explained and understood by the client. In addition the client is to sign a declaration to that effect that is retained in their records.
- Workers will continuously remind and discuss with client their right to express dissatisfaction with the service and their right to make a formal appeal.

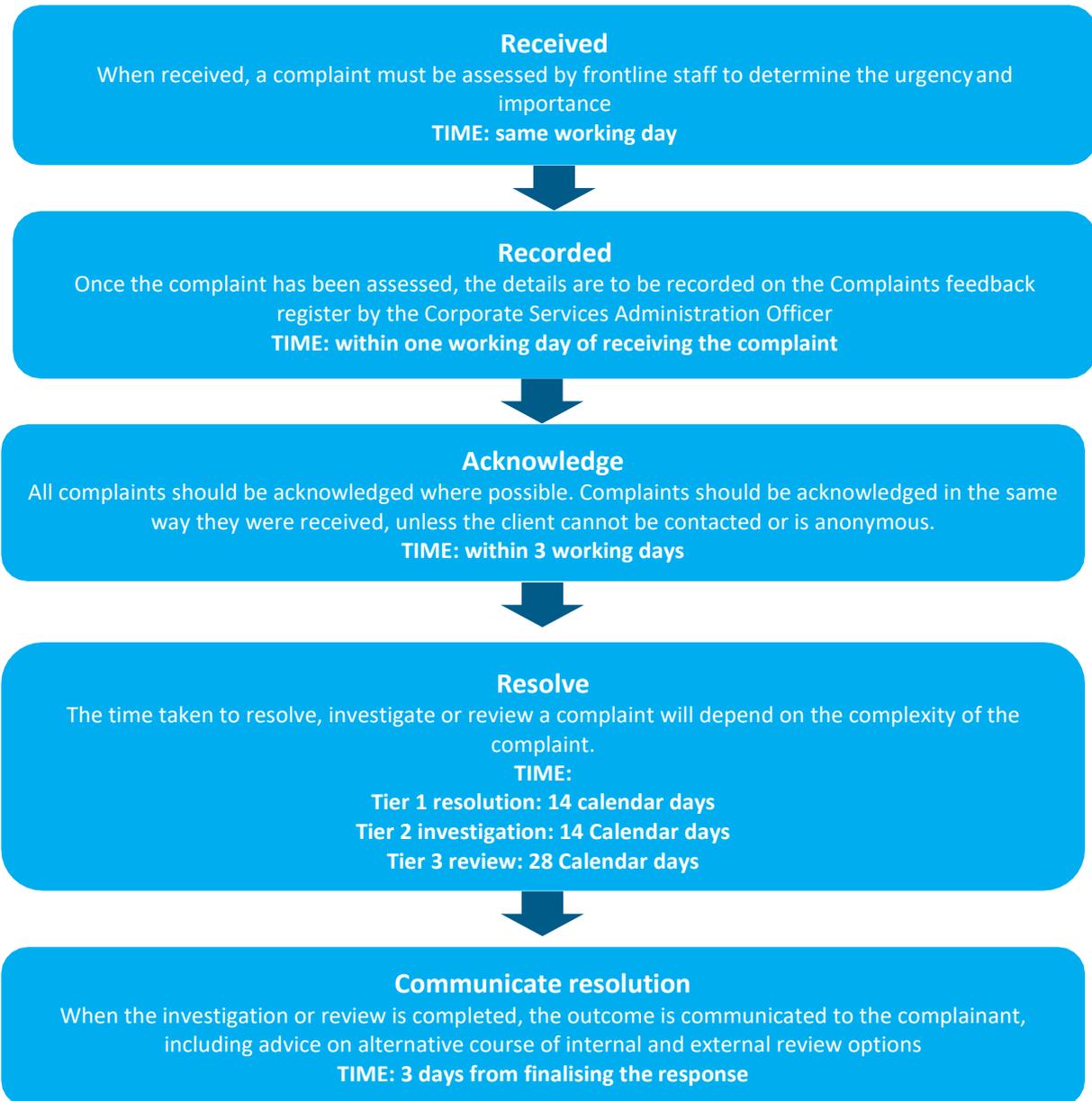
Complaint procedures:

HHS' complaint management process promotes the resolution of complaints at the local level prior to issues being escalated to higher levels of management. The complaint management tiers are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Complaint Management Tiers



The complaint management process is shown in Figure 2 below.



All clients wishing to make a formal complaint are to be provided with a HHS Consumer Complaints Form and a Privacy and Rights Brochure which provides comprehensive information about how to make a complaint and also information to assist the client with the process.

The client must again be reminded by the line manager of their right to gain external assistance/advocacy or to make a complaint externally. Options include:

- Council To Homeless Persons (HAS) 1800 066 256 or ONCALL Interpreting services 03 9867 3788
- Housing Justice (ARC) 5444 4364
- Housing Registrar 03 9651 1402 or [housingregistrarcomplaints@dtf.vic.gov.au](mailto:housingregistrarcomplaints@dtf.vic.gov.au)
- Their local member
- Advice from a legal person e.g. Justice Connect or Legal Aid.
- Rights Information and Advocacy Centre Inc. (RIAC) Geelong 03 5222 5499, Bendigo 03 5443 0550, or Mildura 03 5021 0265
- Disability Services Commissioner 1800 677 342