

Complaints Procedure

Procedural Guidance

1. Complaints

- 1.1. These procedures set out the process by which Stoll customers and stakeholders may complain if dissatisfied with the service they receive. It also lays out the responsibilities of Stoll in responding to complaints.
- 1.2. Stoll will ensure that all customers and stakeholders have access to clear information on how to make complaints. Customers will be provided with the support they need to make their views known. Stoll will ensure that no customers are disadvantaged or treated less favourably because of making a complaint.
- 1.3. Complaints will be investigated and responded to impartially, objectively, and professionally, taking all known circumstances and available information into consideration.
- 1.4. Furthermore, Stoll will ensure that:
 - All complaints are treated seriously and fairly
 - Strictest confidence is always maintained
 - Every effort is made to resolve a complaint at the earliest opportunity
 - Verbal contact with the complainant will be established where possible rather than exclusive contact in writing
 - Complainants are kept updated on any action we have taken and what happens next
- 1.5. Numbers of complaints, and their nature, will be reported at the Senior Management Team meetings where trends in complaints are highlighted so that repeat complaints can be prevented
- 1.6. Stoll will take ownership, apologise where a mistake has been made and aim to resolve the complaint to the customer's satisfaction. Alternatively, where the complaint is not upheld Stoll will ensure that the customer is fully informed of the outcome.
- 1.7. All complaints will be logged, and progress monitored by Corporate Services to ensure that timescales are adhered to, and the complaint is followed through to outcome.

2. Raising a concern

Initial contact

- 2.1. Customers or other stakeholders may raise a concern/issue to any member of staff in the organisation. Stoll will try to deal with the issue right away at first point of contact either by the person receiving the concern or by that person ensuring that the concern is referred to the most relevant person able to deal with it.

- 2.2. If the member of staff dealing with the issue/concern should aim to resolve it within the standard enquiry timescale of five days. If this is not possible the concern should be reported to the relevant manager.
- 2.3. Repeated concerns about the same issue where the complainant continues to feel aggrieved but does not want to make a complaint can be responded to both verbally and in writing; and include direction on how to make a formal complaint.
- 2.4. Responses to repeated concerns must be logged in the Complaints' Tab on the customer's support database file with the copy of the response letter uploaded to the documents section. This will ensure a consistency of approach across the team.
- 2.5. Complaints may also be initiated through media channels such as Twitter or Facebook. Where complaints are received through media channels the complaint will be acknowledged and referred to the most relevant person to ascertain the facts of the complaint and deal with it accordingly or escalate to the formal complaint stage 1 procedure.

3. Formal Complaint Stage 1

3.1. Initial contact

- 3.1.1. On receipt of a formal complaint (which could be received verbally, on a complaint form, by letter or via email) the complaint will be referred to a manager of the relevant service and a copy sent to Corporate Services to log on the Complaints Log.
- 3.1.2. A customer has the option to make a complaint direct to the Director of Corporate Services who will take down all relevant details for the complainant, log the complaint and refer it to the manager of the relevant service.
- 3.1.3. The manager will contact the complainant by telephone, if appropriate, on receipt of the complaint and provide a written acknowledgement within five working days outlining the process and timescales of how it will be dealt with along with a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure. At this stage, the manager will also ascertain if the complainant needs any support with the issue.
- 3.1.4. If a stage 1 complaint has been sent directly to senior management, the recipient must provide a written acknowledgement within two working days outlining the complaints procedure and how it will be dealt with, along with a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure. The complaint will be referred to the relevant manager who will conduct the investigation.
- 3.1.5. Formal complaints must be made within six months of when the complainant was made aware of the incident or allegation.
- 3.1.6. Progress of all complaints must be reported to Corporate Services, who will log and monitor the complaint.

3.2. Investigation

- 3.2.1. Our aim is to investigate and respond to formal complaints within 10 working days. However, if further time is required to investigate a complaint in more detail, or in the event of unforeseen circumstances (e.g., staff absence) the manager concerned will agree a new deadline for the response with the complainant. The extended timescale for the response will then be confirmed to the complainant in writing.

- 3.2.2. Stoll will provide a full written response in easy to understand English. It will contain a summary of the complaint, the response including any action we are taking, an apology if appropriate. If the complaint is not upheld the reason will be explained and details given of how to appeal against the decision. Where appropriate a meeting should be convened to discuss the outcome.
- 3.2.3. The outcome letter should also include a time limit of 20 working days, for the complainant to respond to the decision or the complaint will be closed. The Manager will sign off the complaint once the outcome has been accepted by the complainant or there has been no further response after 20 working days.
- 3.2.4. All communication must be passed on to Corporate Services who will log that the outcome has been communicated if the complainant is satisfied or intends to appeal against the decision. All complaints will be filed confidentially with Corporate Services.

3.3. The timescales for investigations are as follows:

Complaint responses	Response timescales
Initial enquiry	As soon as possible and within 5 working days
Initial acknowledgement of formal complaint	Written and verbal acknowledgement provided within - 5 working days
Standard investigation	Investigated and responded to, in writing, within 10 working days
Long investigation in agreement with the complainant	No longer than 20 working days unless there are extreme circumstances
Complainant response to outcome letter	20 working days

4. Formal Complaint Stage 2

4.1. Appeal

- 4.1.1. If the complainant believes Stoll has not provided them with an adequate response, or they believe that the response is wrong, they can appeal. On receipt of an appeal, Stoll will contact them to establish the reasons. If Stoll cannot easily resolve any outstanding actions, the appeal will be referred to another Investigations Officer, usually a member of the Senior Management Team.
- 4.1.2. After establishing the reason, the Investigations Officer will either:
- Review the original decision and advise that no further action will be taken; if the manager decides that the complaint has been dealt with fairly, and in accordance with relevant policies and procedures, or
 - Review the original decision and decide to re-Investigate the matter.
- 4.1.3. If the decision is taken that no further action will be taken the complainant will be informed of the reason and what to do to appeal against the decision. Where appropriate a meeting should be convened to discuss the outcome.

- 4.1.4. If the decision is taken to re-investigate, the member of the Senior Management Team will contact the complainant to agree timescales. The senior manager will provide a full written response in easy to understand English.
- 4.1.5. Following any further investigation, the senior manager will respond to the customer within 20 working days with the outcome of their investigation containing a summary of the complaint, the response including any action we are taking, an apology if appropriate. If the complaint is not upheld the reason will be explained and details given of how to follow the external appeal process. Where appropriate a meeting should be convened to discuss the outcome.
- 4.1.6. All communication must be passed on to Corporate Services who will log that the outcome has been communicated if the complainant is satisfied or intends to appeal against the decision.
- 4.1.7. All complaints will be filed confidentially with Corporate Services.

4.2. The timescales for appeals are as follows:

Type of Appeal	Response Timescales
Written acknowledgement of receipt of appeal	5 working days
Further investigation	20 working days
No further action	5 working days
Complainant response to outcome letter	20 working days

5. Formal Complaint Stage 3

5.1. Appeal

- 5.1.1. If the complainant believes Stoll has not provided them with an adequate response, or they believe that the response is wrong, they can appeal. The appeal should be made within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint outcome. The complainant should appeal in writing to the Chair of the Housing and Services Committee who will review the investigation and complaint outcome.
- 5.1.2. The Chair of the Housing and Services Committee (or designated member) will either:
 - Review the original decision and advise that no further action will be taken; if the member decides that the complaint has been dealt with fairly, and in accordance with relevant policies and procedures, or
 - Review the original decision and decide to re-Investigate the matter.
- 5.1.3. If the decision is taken that no further action will be taken the complainant will be informed of the reason and what to do to appeal against the decision. Where appropriate a meeting should be convened to discuss the outcome.
- 5.1.4. If the decision is taken to re-investigate, the Chair of the Housing and Services Committee (or designated member) will contact the complainant to agree timescales.

- 5.1.5. Following any further investigation, the Chair of the housing and Services Committee (or designated member) will respond to the customer within 20 working days with the outcome of their investigation containing a summary of the complaint, the response including any action we are taking, an apology if appropriate. If the complaint is not upheld the reason will be explained and details given of how to follow the external appeal process. Where appropriate a meeting should be convened to discuss the outcome. The Chair of the housing and Services Committee (or designated member) will provide a full written response in easy to understand English.
- 5.1.6. All communication must be passed on to Corporate Services who will log that the outcome has been communicated if the complainant is satisfied or intends to appeal against the decision.
- 5.1.7. All complaints will be filed confidentially with Corporate Services.
- 5.1.8. If the complainant appeals against the decision at Stage 3 the complaint and reason for appeal must be reported to the Chairs of the Housing Services Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee.

6. Formal Complaint relating to the Chief Executive or the Trustees.

- 6.1. Any complaint relating to the Chief Executive, or the Board of Trustees would be investigated by a member of the Board of Trustees following the stage 1 procedure and any appeal would be referred to the relevant external agency.

7. Anonymous complaints

- 7.1. Anonymous complaints may highlight a problem with one of our services, or it might raise a 'whistle-blowing' issue that needs to be followed up. Stoll will therefore record, investigate, and monitor anonymous complaints in the same way, and report any action to the Senior Management Team. Where appropriate and where action taken affects tenants, the outcome of the complaint will be communicated at the relevant Tenant Q & A session.
- 7.2. All communication must be passed on to Corporate Services who will log that the outcome has been communicated.
- 7.3. All complaints will be filed confidentially with Corporate Services.

8. Media involvement

- 8.1. If the complaint refers to a media story, or involves media coverage, the responding officer must refer to the Director of Fundraising and Communications for advice.
- 8.2. If the complaint carries a reputational risk the Manager dealing with the complaint should inform the Director of Fundraising and Communications and the Chief Executive.
- 8.3. Any serious risk to reputation must be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee and Charity Commission following the Accident and Incident Reporting and Investigation Policy.

9. External support for Housing Complaints

- 9.1. Complainants have the right to contact the Housing Ombudsman throughout the handling of their complaint for guidance and support, and do not have to exhaust our complaints process before doing so. This affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors for impartial advice.
- 9.2. If complainants have been through all three stages of our complaints procedure but are still unhappy, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman is responsible for investigating social housing complaints. This referral may be by a designated person or directly by themselves.
- 9.3. Stoll is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme under the name, Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation.

5.4.3. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted:

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Online: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Post: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Or visit their website: <http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk> for further information.

10. Complaints to the Charity Commission

10.1. The Charity Commission's involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity's customers, assets, services, or reputation. The commission deals with:

- complaints received from members of the public
- whistleblowing' - disclosures made by charity staff under the Public Interest Disclosure Act

Charity Commission First Contact

PO Box 1227

Liverpool

L69 3UG

Or visit their website: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

11. Monitoring and learning from complaints

- 11.1. Gathering feedback from our customers on their experience of our services is important. We use this feedback to improve the service we provide. All complaints received are reported to the Corporate Services Team who monitor the progress and outcomes of the complaints and report to the Senior Management Team at their monthly meetings, where lessons learned can be disseminated through the teams.
- 11.2. The executive will report annually on the volume, trends, categories, and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders
- 11.3. Stoll will conduct an annual assessment (or following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures) The results will be published on our website and in our Annual Report.

12. Assistance with complaints

Tenants who need help, other than that provided by staff, can contact the local Citizens Advice Bureau.

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

Tel: 0808 278 7832

www.citizensadvicehf.org.uk

London Borough of Hounslow

Tel: 0808 278 7830

<http://www.hounslowcabs.org.uk>

Rushmore Borough Council

Aldershot main telephone number is: 01252 333 618

Nepali Language Adviceline: 01252 894 280

<https://citizensadvicrushmoor.org.uk/>

Other help available to Tenants could include:

<https://www.advicenow.org.uk/help-deal-housing-problems>

Local Law Centres

Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre:

Hammersmith Library, Shepherds Bush Rd, London W6 7AT

020 3880 1727

Hounslow Law Centre

51 Lampton Rd, Hounslow TW3 1LY

020 8570 9505

Kingston and Richmond Law Centre

St Peters Church Hall, London Road, KT2 6QL

Tel: 020 8767 2777

The Royal British Legion Helpline 0808 802 8080

Shelter Helpline 0808 800 4444

https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/webchatcall