

LINK GROUP (EXCLUDING LINK LIVING)

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Link Group and its subsidiaries, Link Housing, Linkwide and Link Homes (referred to as 'Link') aim to provide a first class service to all of its residents and customers, but there may be occasions when you are unhappy about something, and if this is the case it is important for you to tell us.

The aim of this complaints procedure is to give you clear details of the steps you can take to try and get things put right when there is a problem. This procedure also gives us the chance to monitor the quality of service we provide so that we can continually work to improve it.

Who can use the complaints procedure?

Anyone who receives or requests a service from Link can use the complaints procedure. This includes tenants, people applying for housing, owners or sharing owners. Those acting on behalf of a person receiving or requesting a service, such as a councillor, MP, solicitor etc can also make representations on behalf of an individual (but we do encourage you try to sort things out with us first).

Link will not normally deal with anonymous complaints about its service through the complaints procedure. However, anonymous complaints of a serious nature will be investigated and kept on file.

Time Limit

Link will accept complaints about incidents which have occurred within the 6 months before the complaint was registered.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is the expression of dissatisfaction with our procedures, charges, employees, agents or quality of service.

Complaints can be made in writing, by telephone, by email or by the online complaints form. You can also raise a complaint with a member of our staff visiting your home or locality. You can complain about any aspect of our service, which you are unhappy about, for example:

- If a repair has not been carried out properly.
- If you have not received information you have asked for.
- If you feel that a member of staff or a contractor has not behaved acceptably towards you.
- If you feel that your housing application has not been handled properly

Please note that the complaints procedure is not a tool for Link Housing tenants to report a repair. If you wish to report a repair please phone the Customer Service Centre on 08451 400 100.

Legal Action

Link Housing Association will not generally consider complaints about subjects where there are legal proceedings in progress which have a direct bearing on the case eg. Validity of taking eviction action, debt recovery through the legal system etc.

Neighbour Disputes / Anti-Social Behaviour (for Link Housing Only)

Complaints against neighbours/anti-social behaviour will be dealt with under our neighbour disputes/anti-social behaviour procedures. However, if you have a complaint about the way we have dealt with a neighbour dispute, then you can use the complaints procedure.

STAGE 1

Trying to sort things out informally

You have every right to make a formal complaint if you wish, but it can often be quicker and less complicated if the problem is sorted out informally by talking to your contact at Link. You should let them know what the problem is and how you would like to see it put right.

They will let you know how long it should take for the problem to be sorted out and a solution reached.

For Link Housing Sheltered Tenants Only. If you live in sheltered housing, the warden may be the best person to discuss the problem with, however, if you are not happy about involving the warden, you should contact Link Housing's Customer Service Centre.

STAGE 2

The formal complaints procedure

If the problem has not been sorted out informally, you may decide to make a formal complaint. This may be done by:

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- E – mailing feedback@linkhaltd.co.uk
- Writing to the Corporate Services team at:
Link House
2c New Mart Road
EDINBURGH
EH14 1RL
- Using Link's website which allows you to make a formal complaint on line.

When you make a complaint, it is important for you to let us have full details of the problem and how you would like to see it resolved.

Link will write to you within 3 working days to acknowledge that the complaint has been received, and inform you who is dealing with the complaint. In general this will be one of our Managers. Within a further 10 working days we will write to you advising you of either what progress is being made or the outcome. Where appropriate a house visit may be arranged.

Please remember however, that some things may not be entirely within our control and may therefore take longer to sort out. If this is the case, you will be advised of this. If you are not happy with the response you will be able to use the appeals procedure.

STAGE 3

The appeals procedure

If you feel that the Manager has failed to resolve your complaint satisfactorily, you can write back to us, using the same contact address as at stage 2 above. The Director of the subsidiary you are dealing with will be asked to investigate your complaint and will respond to you in writing within 5 working days.

Tenants in Sheltered Housing, or tenants receiving support services at their home, may complain about our services to the Care Commission and / or to the local authority which has commissioned the support provision. This is an additional route for complaints and may be used instead of or as well as Link's complaints procedure.

STAGE 4

If you still feel dissatisfied, you can request that your case is referred to the Chairperson (or for Link Housing, the Complaints Panel) of the Link subsidiary Board you are dealing with. Your request will be acknowledged within 5 working days and you will be advised of the date of the next meeting. The board meets every month (or for Linkwide and Link Homes, bi-monthly) and your complaint will be discussed at the next available meeting and you will be advised of the outcome within 5 working days of the meeting.

Please note, if you write to the Director, the Chairperson or the Board in the first instance, your complaint will be referred to the appropriate official and will be channeled through the formal procedure outlined above.

STAGE 5

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If you have completed the above procedures and are still not satisfied with our response, you may appeal to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman on procedural grounds or to an appropriate independent specialist mediation or arbitration service (Please note, the Ombudsman is not able to deal with complaints about Link Homes). Link will be able to advise you if a service other than the Ombudsman is appropriate. The Ombudsman service is free but other services may make charges which you might have to pay.

You can write to the Ombudsman's office at SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh, EH3 0BR or you can call them on 0800 377 7330.

The Ombudsman will not normally deal with complaints until you have gone through Link's own complaints procedures.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH MAY HELP YOU USE OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

Will my complaint be treated as confidential?

We will, as far as possible, respect the confidentiality of your complaint, however, you will appreciate, that if a complaint involves another tenant or a member of staff, it may be difficult for us to look into this without talking to that person.

If you wish us not to, we will respect this, however, it may not be possible for us to take any action to tackle the problem.

We will always try to deal with complaints sympathetically, but there are some circumstances where we cannot disclose information. For example, it would be wrong for us to discuss with you details of someone else's housing application, as this would be a breach of confidentiality, but we can of course talk to you about how our lettings procedure works.

How do we record and monitor complaints?

All formal complaints made, are recorded and reported to the Board regularly. We also log informal complaints (and praise!) to give us as broad a picture as possible of how well we deliver our services.

This information can help Link to make changes or improvements in its policies and procedures.

Complaints made by / about a Board Member

If a Board Member is subject to a serious complaint, guidance will be sought from the Scottish Housing Regulator. For non-serious complaints, the appropriate Director should be contacted to investigate the complaint.

Tenant Board members who are complaining about a personal housing issue or on behalf of another tenant the normal complaints procedure will be followed.

Closing a Complaint

Link will only close a complaint if, at any of the stages 1 to 4 described above, we have not received any further correspondence from the complainant four weeks after our response is issued. If a complaint is taken to the Ombudsman or other external arbiter their decision will determine what action, if any, is needed to conclude the complaint.

Other Circumstances

There may be other circumstances where there will be variations to the procedures due to the circumstances of the complaint or staff availability, however we will inform you in writing if that is the case.

Unacceptable / Unreasonable Behaviour

Link retains the right to restrict or change your access to our service if we consider your actions to be unacceptable or unreasonable.

Unacceptable Behaviour

While we understand expressions of frustration and anger and take this into account, we will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour from you.

Link considers the following to be unacceptable:

- Verbal Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Threats

This is unacceptable face to face, over the telephone, by letter, by email or any other form of communication.

Unreasonable Demands

Link are committed to working towards the resolution of complaints but some demands may be unreasonable. In such cases we will take account of the circumstances of the situation and write to you explaining why those demands are deemed unreasonable.

Link considers the following to be unreasonable:

- Demanding responses in unreasonable timescales
- Persistent phone calls, emails or letters etc
- Not following the complaints procedure
- Demanding to deal with certain members of staff
- Pursuing complaints without producing evidence
- Refusing to co-operate with investigations
- Repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint.

What will Link do if we deem your complaint to be Unacceptable or Unreasonable?

Link may take the following actions if we deem your behaviour to be unacceptable or your demands unreasonable:

- Advise you in writing that we consider your actions unreasonable/unacceptable and generally give you the chance to change your behaviour
- Staff may end telephone calls or interviews where you are aggressive, abusive or offensive
- Take legal action if concerned about physical or verbal abuse and/or report it to the Police
- Require contact through a particular method eg. by letter or email instead of in person or by phone
- Restrict access to particular staff members
- Require contact be third party only.

We will record and monitor all such assessments and actions. If you are aggrieved by any such decisions then a written submission should be made to the appropriate Director listed at Stage 3 above.

And finally....

We hope that you have no cause to complain to Link, but if you do have, you can be assured that your complaint will be dealt with quickly, fairly and with the minimum of fuss.