

<b>FOLD HOUSING ASSOCIATION</b> <i>Corporate</i>		<b>Document No: HRPO0004</b>	
		<b>Prepared by:</b>	<b>H. Milne</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>  <b>Complaints Policy</b>		<b>Authorised By:</b>	<b>HR Sub-Committee</b>
		<b>Version No:</b>	<b>3</b>
		<b>Date Ratified by Board:</b>	<b>29 Mar 2011</b>
		<b>Page 1 of 9</b>	

This policy can be made available in other formats and languages.

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Policy Statement and Aims:**

FOLD Housing Association is committed to providing the best housing, care and support to those in need of such services. We work continually to improve the service we offer.

We want to hear about the occasions where our service standards do not meet expectations. Please advise us about these occasions as soon as possible so that we have the opportunity to put things right and learn from any mistakes that we have made. We are committed to dealing with all complaints quickly, fairly, effectively and as far as is reasonably possible, to the satisfaction of the person who has lodged the complaint.

Many issues can be dealt with informally by approaching FOLD managers or staff directly.

You can use the complaints procedure if you consider your complaint is too serious to be dealt with informally. If you wish to appoint another person to act on your behalf regarding the complaint, then FOLD's complaints form must be used. Please ask this person to complete all the details required in section 1.2 as a minimum, to allow us to begin dealing with them about the matter on your behalf.

The complaints process is outlined below.

### **Who can use our complaints procedure?:**

Anyone living in a property owned or managed by us, or anyone acting on their behalf and with their consent can complain.

Anyone who receives a service from us or who wants to receive a service from us can also complain.

Any member of the public or stakeholder, who has a legitimate concern about our service provision, or considers themselves disadvantaged through FOLD's actions or inactions over activities that FOLD can legitimately be expected to control.

### **What is a Complaint?**

A complaint will arise when our service levels fail to meet your expectations. In line with the Ombudsman's definition of a complaint in his published Framework for Effective Complaint Handling, FOLD uses the definition:

“Any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction by any person, however made, about the service, actions or inactions of a body or its officers which requires a response”

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		<b>Page 2 of 9</b>	

Examples of causes of complaints include:

- A failure to fulfill statutory or contractual responsibilities (e.g. we have not done something that we said we would do in your tenancy agreement or our contracts with you);
- Delays in our administrative processes (e.g. we haven't called you back when we said we would);
- Attitude of staff or contractors working on FOLD's behalf (e.g. you thought someone was unhelpful or rude);
- Poor workmanship
- Dissatisfaction with the way FOLD has reached a decision or what has happened after a decision has been made.

A request for a service is not a complaint. So the following for example are not classified as complaints:

- A routine request for a service such as the initial request for a repair;
- Reporting an incident of neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour – this will be dealt with under our management procedures and tenancy agreement.
- Employees with complaints or problems relating to employment issues should address this through FOLD's Grievance procedure.
- Reporting an accident on FOLD managed property – this will be dealt with under our incident reporting procedure.

It is difficult to resolve anonymous complaints so please provide contact details.

### **How can I make a complaint?**

You can lodge your complaint in a number of ways, including:

on the telephone

Head Office	028 9042 8314
North West Regional Office	028 9042 8314
South Regional Office	028 9042 8314
North East Regional Office	028 9042 8314
Clones Office	00 353 4752375
Housing-with-Care/Supported Housing	028 9042 8314

in person at the local office (addresses below) or at the care scheme

by fax on 028 9042 8167

by e-mail to [complaints@foldgroup.co.uk](mailto:complaints@foldgroup.co.uk)

via the complaints section on the FOLD website at

<http://www.foldgroup.co.uk/pages/101/complaints-compliments>

through a third party - for example a relative, neighbour, councillor or MP

in writing to this address: Complaints Officer, FOLD Housing Association,  
 FREEPOST BEL 4018, BT18 9BR

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		<b>Date Ratified by Board:</b>	<b>29 Mar 2011</b>
		<b>Page 3 of 9</b>	

If you want to complain, it would be helpful if you could tell us what we can do to improve things.

What happens next?

Our complaints process has three stages - every complaint must start at the first stage.

### Stage 1

A member of staff can help you make your complaint if you wish. Your complaint will be dealt with by the manager responsible once your complaint has been received. We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 2 working days and you will be advised who is dealing with your complaint and when you can expect a full response from us. We aim to provide you with a full written response, or response in a format acceptable to you or your appointed representative within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.

RQIA registered schemes will handle complaints as required in the DHSSPS's "Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure Directions (Northern Ireland) 2009". Sometimes it will take us longer to provide a response to you. If this is likely to happen, we will contact you to let you know when you can expect a full response from us and the reason for the delay.

### Stage 2

If you are not happy with the outcome of the first stage investigation of your complaint or if the problem/complaint has continued, you can request that the complaint be considered at the next stage of our process.

Your complaint should be made to the Chief Executive within one calendar month from the date of the response letter to your initial complaint. If possible, please provide the reference number of your original complaint and contact details in case we need to clarify something with you.

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days and we will advise when you can expect a full written response, or response in a format acceptable to you or your appointed representative. The Chief Executive will ensure that an investigation of your complaint will be conducted and you should receive a full response within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. A response may take longer if your complaint is more complex but we will contact you to let you know when you can expect a full response and the reason for the delay.

After the final response, or response in a format acceptable to you or your appointed representative has been sent by FOLD in either stages 1 or 2, if FOLD has not received a response from the complainant within 20 working days of the date of posting of the full written response or response in a format acceptable to you or your appointed representative, the complaint will be considered resolved for administrative

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		<b>Page 4 of 9</b>	

purposes. This does not prevent further re-examination of the issues by either party at a later date, or the complaint being taken forward to another stage.

### Stage 3

If your complaint has been considered at both stages and you are still not satisfied with the outcome, the Ombudsman (the Commissioner for Complaints) may consider a complaint for you.

The Ombudsman will only consider complaints that have already been through the full internal complaint procedure.

The Ombudsman is completely independent of FOLD and FOLD will co-operate fully in the course of any investigation carried out by the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman Service can be contacted at:

NI Ombudsman, Freepost BEL1478, BELFAST, BT1 6BR

Or NI Ombudsman, Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, BELFAST, BT1 6HN

Freephone: 0800 343424

Tel: 028 9023 3821

Fax: 028 9023 4912

Email: [ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk)

Web-site: [www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk)

### Confidentiality

We will respect our duty of confidentiality in dealing with the information you have given us in connection with your complaint. Your name will not be made known to other parties, whether in proceedings relating to the complaint or not, unless it is necessary to assist in reaching a mutually acceptable resolution.

However, if your complaint involves another resident or a member of staff, a fair appraisal of the events will not be possible without talking to that person. Without this, the chances of reaching a satisfactory resolution to your concerns will be much reduced.

### Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints received will be referred to a senior manager of the service department concerned, who will review the complaint and decide if the matter needs to be investigated further.

Anonymous complaints can rarely be properly investigated, because of insufficient verifiable information, and so the benefit of the doubt is likely to be granted to the alleged perpetrator of the incident on the “innocent until proved guilty” principle, because of insufficient reliable evidence.

### How are complaints recorded and the process outcomes monitored?

Complaints can help us to improve. All complaints forwarded to the Association are recorded. In addition to ongoing review of complaints by the monthly Performance review Team, reports analysing complaints, edited to maintain anonymity are presented to the relevant Directorate Sub-committees or Board at least four times per

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		<b>Page 5 of 9</b>	

year, for identification of trends, and confirmation of corrective and preventive actions taken, where necessary.

### **Complaints under our Equality Scheme – Section 75 Duties**

From 1 April 2004, FOLD has been designated a public authority and as such has a specific responsibility under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 that requires the Association in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without
- between persons with dependants and persons without

If you feel that you would like to highlight any FOLD policy or procedure which, you feel, breaches the nine groups designated under the Section 75 duties, please contact the Director of HR and Corporate Services in the first instance, in writing, clearly indicating the perceived breach. Where a complainant is unable to forward a written complaint, he/she should contact the Association and arrangements will be made on behalf of the complainant to facilitate the delivery of the complaint.

An internal investigation will be carried out and a response will be returned within one month. The complainant will be kept updated throughout the process.

If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, he/she may speak to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The Equality Commission has the power to refer the case to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. FOLD will cooperate fully with any investigation into the complaint.

If you require any further details please contact the Director of HR and Corporate Services. To access FOLD's Equality Statement access, please visit <http://www.foldgroup.co.uk/publications> where it is listed under the HR publications.

### **USEFUL ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

FOLD Housing Association Tel: 028 9042 8314  
**FOLD House, 3 Redburn Square, Holywood, BT18 9HZ**

FOLD Regional Office North West Tel: 028 9039 7165 or  
028 9039 7166  
**Unit 1, 12 Springtown Road, Springtown Industrial Estate, Londonderry, BT48 OLY**

FOLD Regional Office South Tel: 028 9039 7216  
**Ballybot House, 22 Corn Market, Newry, BT35 8BG**

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		Page 6 of 9	

**FOLD Regional Office North East** **Tel: 028 9039 7147**  
**Deerfin FOLD, Wakehurst Road, Ballymena, BT42 3LJ**

**OTHER ORGANISATIONS WHO MAY BE ABLE TO ASSIST:**

**Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority** **Tel: 028 9051 7500**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Riverside Tower, 5 Lanyon Place, BELFAST, BT1 3BT**

**OR**

**Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority** **Tel: 028 8224 5828**  
**Hilltop, Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital, Omagh, BT79 0NS**

**NIHE** **Tel: 03448 920 900**  
**The Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB**

**AGE NI** **Tel: 028 9024 5729**  
**(combining Age Concern NI & Help the Aged in Northern Ireland)**  
**3 Lower Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NR**

**Citizens Advice Bureau** **Tel: 028 9023 1120**  
**Regional Office, 46 Donegall Pass, Belfast, BT7 1BS**

**Western Health and Social Care Trust** **Tel: 028 7134 5171**  
**Altnagelvin Area Hospital, Glenshane Road, Londonderry, BT47 6SB**

**Southern Health and Social Care Trust** **Tel: 028 3026 0505**  
**5 Downshire Place, Newry, BT34 1DZ**

**Northern Health and Social Care Trust** **Tel: 028 9036 5856**  
**Ballyfore Park, Newtonabbey, BT36 6XU**

**Belfast Health and Social Care Trust** **Tel: 028 9096 0000**  
**Trust Headquarters, Roe Villa, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8BH**

**South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust** **Tel: 028 9055 3100**  
**Ulster Hospital, Upper Newtownards Road, Dundonald, Belfast, BT16 1RH**



## COMPLAINT FORM

**1.1 Name of Complainant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone No:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1.2 Do you want the Association to deal directly with someone acting on your behalf?**

**YES/NO**

**If YES, please ask your helper or advisor to fill in the section below:**

**My relationship to the complainant is:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**My address is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone No:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. Please give details of your complaint below (Attach a separate sheet if required). Remember to include dates, times, names and any other relevant information

#### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

3. Please list below any supporting documentation which you are including with your complaint

## RESOLUTION OF COMPLAINT

4. What action would you like the Association to take to help resolve your complaint?

### DATA PROTECTION

**In order to investigate your complaint and help us deliver efficient services, we need to collect relevant personal details. We comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 when dealing with personal data. This means that your personal data will be processed in accordance with the law. Please note that we may share personal data with other organisations where appropriate.**

**Please tick the box to confirm that you have read the Data Protection information above and are consenting to FOLD Housing Association processing your personal data.**

**Please return the completed form to:**

**Complaints Officer,  
FOLD Housing Association  
FREEPOST BEL 4018,  
BT18 9BR**