



Midsummer Complaints Policy

Introduction

Midsummer aims to provide high quality services for all of our customers but we recognise that we do not get it right all of the time. We believe it is important for us to listen to customers if they are not happy with the service received. If things do go wrong, we need to know so that we can put them right and try to make sure they do not happen again.

Scope of the Policy

We define a complaint as:

- Dissatisfaction with our standard of service or customer care
- Inappropriate action or lack of action by our staff or people acting on our behalf including contractors

We will not investigate events that have occurred more than 12 months previously.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone receiving or affected by our services can complain to Midsummer. However, the Housing Ombudsman Service will only consider a complaint against Midsummer if the complainant is a resident of Midsummer and if we have already considered the complaint through our complaints procedure.

How to complain

The following are ways in which a customer can complain:

- Visit any Midsummer office and ask to speak to a member of the Housing Advice Team.
- Put the complaint in writing to the Housing Advice Team at the address provided.
- Complete the printed complaint form and send it to the Housing Advice Team.
- Telephone the Housing Advice Team on 01980 609577.
- E-mail us using our 'online feedback' form on our website at www.midsummer.org
- Speak to any member of Midsummer who will take the complaint to the Housing Advice Team.

How the Complaints Procedure works

Our Complaints Procedure consists of three stages designed to provide a clear indication of how complaints will be managed. Included are the timescales involved and importantly, whom in Midsummer the case will be escalated to if complainants are not happy with responses to the complaint.

Stage one

- The complaint will initially be handled by our Housing Advice Team who will allocate the case to the member of staff most relevant to the nature of the complaint.
- If we are unable to resolve the complaint 'on the spot' we will send a written acknowledgement of the complaint within 3 working days. The acknowledgement letter will include details of who will be dealing with the complaint, their contact details and a reference number.
- A detailed response will be sent within a further 7 working days.

In some cases, where the complaint is of a particularly complex nature, it may only be possible to provide a partial reply when the above timescales have been reached. If this is the case, we will provide regular updates until a decision has been reached.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at stage one, they should inform the member of staff dealing with the complaint or Housing Advice Team and the complaint will be taken to stage two.

If we receive no further contact from the complainant within 20 working days of our response, the case will be closed.

Stage two

- The complaint will be allocated to a Head of Service or Assistant Director who will investigate.
- We will send a written acknowledgement of the complaint within 3 working days of contact from the complainant, including the name and contact details of the person dealing with the complaint.
- A detailed response will be sent within a further 7 working days.

In some cases, where the complaint is of a particularly complex nature, it may only be possible to provide a partial when the above timescales have been reached. If this is the case, we will provide regular updates until a decision has been reached.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at stage two, they should inform the member of staff dealing with the complaint or the Housing Advice Team and the complaint will be taken to stage three.

If we receive no further contact from the complainant within 20 working days of our response, the case will be closed.

Stage three

There are two options for how the complaint can be investigated. In both options the responses at stage one and two will be reviewed as will the reason why the complainant was not satisfied with the outcome.

OPTION 1 - Investigation of the complaint by a Company Director

- We will acknowledge the request for the complaint to be reviewed in this way in writing within 3 working days.
- We will contact the complainant within a further 7 working days to inform the decision or provide progress of the review carried out by the Director.

Or

OPTION 2 – Investigation of the complaint by the Customer Service Panel.

The Customer Service Panel (CSP) will consist of at least two members of the Midsummer Board plus the option of a Midsummer resident.

- We will acknowledge the request for the complaint to be reviewed in this way in writing within 3 working days.
- The complainant will be offered the opportunity to attend the CSP's review of the case, which will normally take place within 15 working days.
- The CSP will write to the complainant within 5 working days of the review with a detailed and final response to the complaint.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances, review hearings will take place at Henshaw House during office hours.

The above options are only available at stage three.

Note – for properties managed on behalf of The Guinness Trust

Midsummer will investigate and seek to resolve any complaint regarding the management service. Pending a partnership wide complaints policy and procedure, Guinness Trust tenants will have the option of a CSP at stage three but not an investigation by a Company Director. This is to ensure consistency with the Trust's current policy. Any stage 3 complaints will be reported to The Guinness South East Board.

Complaints received by Midsummer from Guinness Trust customers in respect of repairs will be logged and referred to the Trust to investigate. Midsummer will monitor progress including confirmation of closure of the complainants issue.

Housing Ombudsman Service

If, after having been through the three stages of the complaints procedure, the issues have not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, they can refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service where the complaint will be reviewed independently.

Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are outlined below.

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 020 7421 3800 or lo-call 0845 712 5973
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Fax: 020 7831 1942

Midsummer will abide by the final decision of the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Putting things right

If we find that a failure of service has occurred, we will attempt to "put things right". The remedy will differ depending upon the type of complaint. A remedy might, for example, take the form of a written apology with an explanation about what has happened. In certain circumstances, some form of compensation might be appropriate.

It is recognised that this may not always be financial but could be to provide replacement items, such as items that may have been damaged. In all cases, it is the intention of Midsummer to learn from any mistakes made, to ensure that they do not happen again.

Persistent Complainers

Midsummer reserves the right to refuse to deal with complainants who persistently make unwarranted and unfounded claims of poor service.

Linked Policies & Procedures

- ◆ Compensation
- ◆ Service Standards
- ◆ Right to Repair

Legislation

Not applicable

Policy Author:	Customer Services Director
Policy Date:	January 2008
Policy Review Date:	By January 2011