

	Policy Family ADMINISTRATION
	Policy Name Complaints Policy
Effective Date 3 May 2022	Approved By HFHNZ Board
Scope This policy applies to all Habitat employees, volunteers, and families who are involved with our projects.	

1. Definitions:

- **Complaint:** Means an expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products or services, or the complaint handling process itself, where an organisational response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
- **Complainant:** means a person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint
- **Habitat:** Means Habitat for Humanity New Zealand Ltd or one of the NZ Affiliates.
- **Affiliate:** A regional Habitat entity within NZ
- **Stakeholder or Interested Party:** Means a person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation
- **Affiliate Lead:** Means the Senior Manager of the Affiliate eg CEO, GM etc

2. Purpose:

To provide guidance to staff, volunteers and Board members to assist them in performing their roles in situations where they may receive a complaint.

3. Rationale:

Habitat for Humanity New Zealand recognises the importance and value of listening and responding to concerns and complaints. Habitat is committed to achieving the highest standard and continuous improvement in every area of our work whether this in the ReStores, through programme delivery, working with volunteers or other organisations.

If someone is not satisfied with any aspect of Habitat's service, or service they have received from someone acting on the behalf of Habitat, Habitat recognises the right they have to complain.

It is important that communication channels are offered to allow any complaints to be formalised and that processes are in place to handle any complaints in a timely and compassionate manner.

Such complaints offer the opportunity for Habitat to review and refine the service it offers

4. Policy Statements:

Guiding Principles

- Habitat expects its staff and volunteers to fully comply with the Habitat for Humanity International Ethics Covenant and any Code of Conduct or other expectations of Partnering Organisations.
- Habitat recognises the rights of people to complain when they are not satisfied with the service they have received by Habitat, or someone acting on the behalf of Habitat.
- Habitat will address all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner using evidence submitted by both the complainant and our personnel through the complaints handling process.
- Habitat will take complaints in person, over the phone and by any written means.
- Habitat will ensure making a complaint is as easy as possible.
- All complaints are to be handled in a timely manner with understanding and respect.
- When a complaint is received, Habitat will:
 - a) Respond;
 - b) Investigate;
 - c) Endeavour to Resolve; and
 - d) Implement improvements if required.
- Complaints may be made anonymously but this may limit our ability to investigate the complaint.
- Complainants have a right for personal information and details to be kept confidential under the Privacy Act. To this end, this information will only be disclosed on a “need to know” basis in order to resolve the complaint.
- Habitat will clearly publicise information about how and where to complain through its website and by other means as appropriate.
- In the event of a variance between the provisions of this Policy and the Requirements of New Zealand Legislation, the requirements of New Zealand Legislation will prevail.
- It is noted that there are related Policies that deal with circumstances and processes that are subject-specific and that should be applied accordingly as follows:
 - a) Tenant Complaints and Appeals Policy
 - b) Provisions within the Child Protection Policy
 - c) Provisions within the Safeguarding Policy
 - d) Provisions that relate to the operation of a Retirement Village
 - e) Complaints and Complaints Handling Policy relating specifically to the International Projects programme

Responding to a complaint:

- If someone would like to make a complaint, it should generally be directed to the relevant Manager in the first instance or if the Manager is unavailable, it should be directed to the Affiliate Lead (eg CEO, General Manager) or the Chair of the Board with the following exceptions:
 - a) If the matter relates to Harassment or Bullying, Fraud or other criminal behaviour and the relevant Manager is the subject person of the complaint, the complaint should be directed to the Affiliate Lead or the Chair of the Board.
 - b) If the matter relates to a complaint under Child Protection legislation, it should be directed to the Child Protection Officer. The process for handling a Child Protection complaint is specified in the Act and must be adhered to.
 - c) If the matter relates to a complaint in relation to a Safeguarding issue, it should be directed to the Safeguarding Officer.
 - d) If the matter relates to a complaint under the Privacy legislation, it should be directed in the first instance to the Privacy Officer.
- In all cases, if it has not been possible to make contact with the designated people, the complaint may be directed to the National Director of Habitat for Humanity New Zealand.
- Habitat for Humanity New Zealand, in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity International, also operates an anonymous reporting system through the Habitat Ethics and Accountability Line (HEAL). This system can be used when the reporter wishes to remain anonymous or when the regular means of reporting concerns have not resolved an issue. Reports can be made online or via telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - a) Within NZ, call 0800 002 341
 - b) Outside NZ, call collect 1-720-514-4400
 - c) Online at: <https://www.heal.habitat.org>
- Complaints or disputes may be directed to external agencies or Government Departments where this is specifically provided for or required by New Zealand Legislation.

Timeframes:

- Habitat will acknowledge written complaints within 5 working days of receipt.
- Habitat will aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible within 20 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- If a complaint is not resolved within 20 working days we will inform the complainant of progress and keep them informed of progress every month.

Investigating a complaint

- The primary person responsible for investigating the complaint in the first instance is as follows:
 - a) General complaints: The Manager who is responsible for the department that is the subject of the complaint
 - b) Child Protection accusations and complaints: The Child Protection Officer will ensure that the investigation is carried out in accordance with the Child Protection Policy
 - c) Safeguarding complaints: The Safeguarding Officer will ensure the investigation is processed in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy
 - d) Privacy Complaints: The Privacy Officer will investigate
- Complaints will be considered confidential in nature.
- At all times, Habitat will follow the principles of procedural fairness in the handling of complaints received. These require that:
 - a) If a person is the subject of a complaint, they are advised the detail and are given full opportunity to state their case.
 - b) All people who are parties to the complaint must be given the opportunity to be heard.
 - c) All relevant information and evidence that is offered must be considered.
 - d) Decisions are to be made only on the basis of relevant information that is available.
 - e) Decision-makers must be fair and free from bias as they come to their conclusions.
- Complainants are to be permitted to have an advocate of their choice or culturally appropriate representative assist them.
- A complainant must not be penalised for having made a complaint.
- If the complaint has the potential to implicate other key partners and/or stakeholders, this complaint should also be communicated to them as part of the investigation process.
- Information relating to complaints should be kept by the Manager in the relevant Sharepoint folder in a password protected file, until the end of the next financial year or longer if required by law.

Endeavouring to resolve a complaint

- Once the investigation stage has been completed, then the complainant must be advised of the outcomes in terms of:
 - a) Complaint resolved and how this has been achieved.
 - b) Complaint not upheld and the reasons for this.
 - c) If no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.

- If a complaint cannot be resolved within a reasonable period of time and to the complainant's satisfaction, an Appeal process is to be made available. This will involve the complainant submitting an unresolved complaint to the Affiliate Lead, Board Chair or National Director.
- The Affiliate Lead, Board Chair or National Director will be expected to make decisions aimed at resolving the complaint without any further undue delays.
- Any complaint about alleged breach of this policy should be made directly to the Affiliate Lead, the Board Chair or National Director.

Recording Complaint data:

We will register all complaints in a Complaints Register. We will ensure that the following information is contained in written complaints and if not, and in the case of oral complaints, record this information ourselves:

- date of receipt
- a description of the complaint and relevant supporting data (to include location, who is involved, witnesses, how many times it happened, supporting documents)
- the requested remedy
- the person(s), service(s) and/or good(s) and/or practice or procedure complained about
- the due date for a response
- immediate action taken (if any) to resolve the complaint.

Implementing improvements

- Complaints should be viewed as a chance to improve Habitat's services and to identify wider areas within our organisation that may need to be reviewed and/or improved.
- Habitat should seek feedback on how we handled their complaint and use this to make our complaints process more effective.

Accessing the Policy

- The policy and process for handling complaints will be communicated to all staff and volunteers.
- Information about the policy and process will be available on the habitat.org.nz website and our social media platforms.
- The full policy will be made available on request.
- Reference to the policy and process will be made in other key documentation such as Handbooks.

5. Related Policies/other Documents

Habitat New Zealand:

1. Complaints and Complaints Handling Policy Habitat New Zealand
2. Child Protection Policy
3. Safeguarding Policy
4. Privacy Policy

Affiliates:

5. ReStore Operations Handbook
6. Employee Handbook
7. Volunteer ReStore Handbook
8. Volunteer General Handbook
9. Tenant Handbook
10. Tenancy Management Manual
11. Policy Statement Tenancy Complaints and Appeals
12. Programme Operational Manuals

6. Change History

Date Created	Last Updated	Next Review Date
10 th March 2022		March 2025