

Horton Housing Association

Client Appeals Procedure

About this Procedure

This procedure explains what you can do if you disagree with any decision we have made. It applies equally to those applying for our services and those already in receipt of a service.

- If you have applied to us for housing, support or other services and we have decided that we cannot offer you a place, you may not agree with our decision.
- If you are living in any of our housing schemes, receiving support in your own home or accessing any of our other services, we will have already made some decisions about the service you receive from us that you may not agree with.

This procedure tells you what you can do if you think any of our decisions are wrong.

These decisions start from the first time you come into contact with our organisation, which is usually when we undertake an assessment of your needs and decide whether we can offer you a service. These decisions continue to be made as long as you receive housing or any kind of support service from us.

Amongst other things, this could include decisions about:

- the support needs and risks which have been identified during your assessment
- the priority of your needs, i.e. how long you may have to wait for a place in service
- whether we can offer you a service
- ending your support or occupancy agreement
- exclusion (barring you) from a service

As far as possible, we try to work through these areas with you and reach agreement about what has been discussed or what the next step will be. However, there may be times when we decide to follow a course of action which you do not agree with. If that happens, you can appeal.

If you are unhappy about the standard of service you have received from us, rather than a decision that has been made, you can raise it using our Complaints Policy and Procedure (available on our website and in the Client Handbook). Please speak to a staff member if you need help with this.

Overview - If you think our decision is wrong

If you think our decision is wrong or you just do not understand it, you can ask us to explain it either verbally or in writing. We will be happy to explain the reasoning behind any decision, together with any factors that influenced it, such as tenancy conditions or the eligibility criteria for the service. This is Stage 1 and is carried out informally.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally and you are not satisfied with the explanation, you can appeal against the decision and have it looked at by someone other than the person who originally made it. This is Stage 2, the formal appeal procedure.

If you are still not satisfied with the decision made through your appeal, you can ask for it to be reviewed again by a more senior member of staff. This is Stage 3 of the appeals procedure.

The following sections set out what can be expected from each stage in the process. It is also shown in a flowchart format on page 7 below.

There is an “easy-read” version to assist people who may have difficulty in reading or understanding the full Appeals Procedure. It is available on our website or staff can give it to you.

Stage 1: Informal Stage – Discussion and explanation

This stage aims to sort out any minor disagreements as quickly as possible. A member of staff will go through the reasoning behind any decision and explain anything you are not sure about. If we have made a mistake with any of the details we used to make this decision, we will correct it.

Staff will record on your file¹, or on electronic systems we use, any misunderstanding or disagreement and how they have tried to resolve it with you. Recording this will assist other staff in understanding what has already happened in your case, and whether you are still unhappy with the decision and wish your request to proceed to the formal appeal stage.

We hope to resolve most instances where disagreement occurs through explanation and discussion, but if you still disagree, you can formally appeal against the outcome. The appeal should be made within one month of the original decision being made, see Stage 2 below.

Stage 2: Formal Stage - If you are still not happy with our decision

If you are not happy with the informal decision, you can register a formal appeal by writing to us, telephoning or speaking directly with a member of staff.

- The attached Appeals Form (Appendix 1) will be completed; you can complete this yourself, a member of staff can assist you with this or they can complete it on your behalf.
- The form asks you to tell us what the decision is that you are unhappy about, why you think the decision is wrong, and what you would like to happen.
- All formal appeals will be logged and you will receive written acknowledgment within 3 working days.

¹ Your ‘file’ can be different depending on what stage of the service you are in. If you are at the referral stage, this will be recorded on your paper or electronic Referral Form, or in a letter we have already sent to you. If you are in a service, this will be recorded in your Support Record or Contact Notes. All records are confidential and securely stored. These are available for you to view at any time.

- The manager of the service or a different manager will look at the decision again, to check whether they think the decision is correct. The manager may contact you by telephone or wish to meet with you to discuss your appeal.
- The manager will then write to you within 10 working days to let you know:
 - if our decision is wrong and whether we will correct it; or
 - if we think our decision is correct, in which case we will confirm this, but also tell you the reasons why.

Stage 3: Review Stage - If you would like to have the appeal decision reviewed

If you are not satisfied with the response to Stage 2, you can ask for the appeal decision to be reviewed again; you should do this within 10 working days of receiving that decision. If your disagreement is received outside of this timescale, you must tell us why you were unable to contact us earlier. You can contact us in writing, by telephoning the service or speaking directly with a member of staff or manager.

- This appeal decision will be passed to a senior manager who has not previously been involved and they will undertake the review.
- The senior manager may contact you or ask if they can meet with you to discuss the appeal. This will help them make their decision.
- Both prior stages of the appeal will be fully reviewed, and an outcome letter will be sent to you in writing, within 10 working days. The letter will explain the reasons for the decision and action to be taken, if any.
- If the facts or the circumstances of the decision are more complex, your appeal may take longer. If this is the case, we will write to you to let you know and keep you informed of progress.

A verbal explanation will also be available at all stages, should you request this.

If you need some help or advice

You can speak to your worker at any stage during this process and they will advise you as things progress. If your appeal is against the service or a member of staff, you can contact an agency not directly involved, for example, Citizens Advice Bureau, housing advice agencies, welfare rights organisations or some other person who can assist, such as a relative or friend.

Horton Housing Association has compiled a list of advice and advocacy agencies that may be willing to assist a person wishing to appeal against a decision we have made. If you would like a copy of this list, please ask any member of staff, or contact the service or Head Office directly:

Tel: 01274 370689

Email: head.office@hortonhousing.co.uk

Website: <http://www.hortonhousing.co.uk>

Write: Horton Housing Association, Chartford House, 54 Little Horton Lane, Bradford BD5 0BS

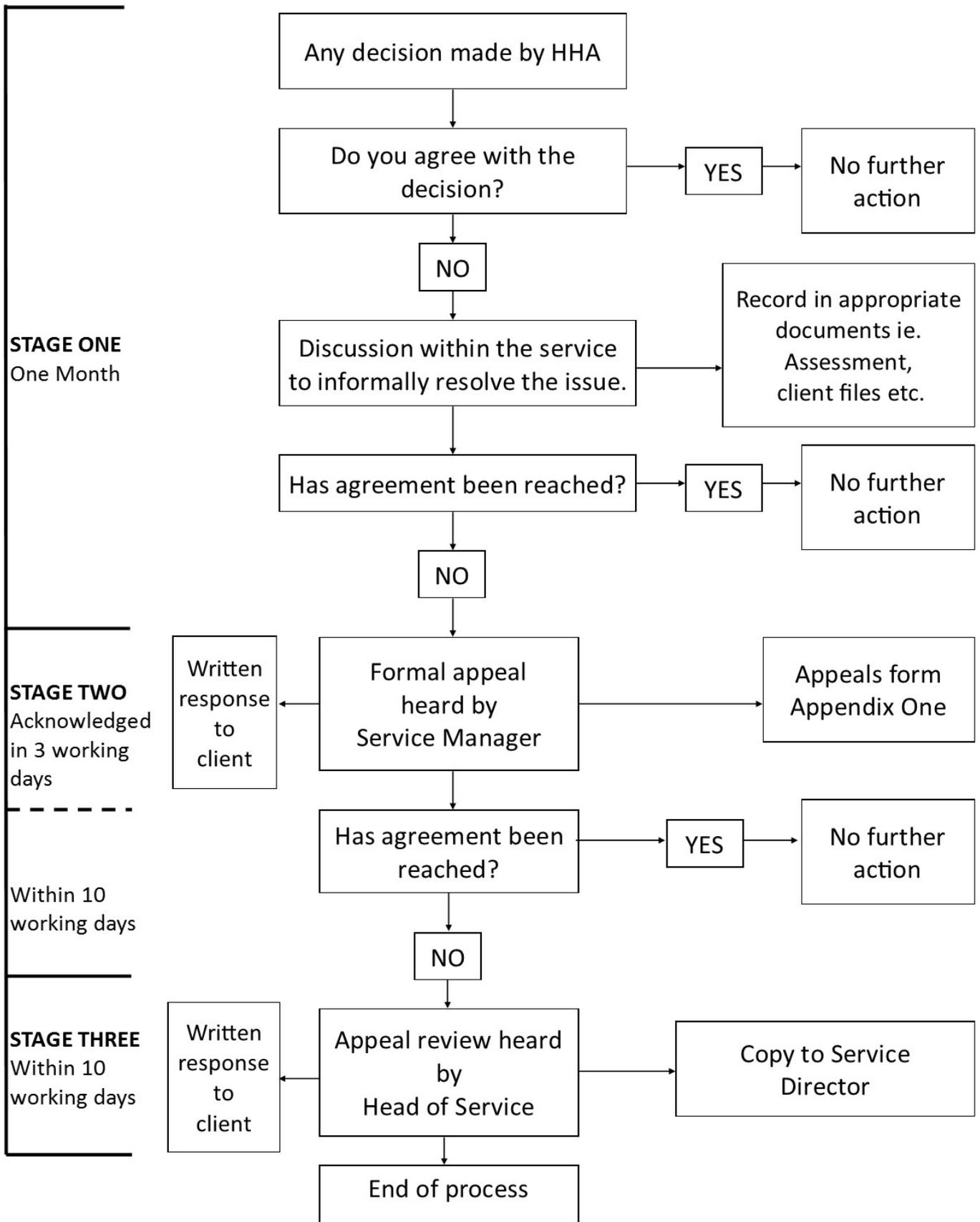
Whoever you choose, they are permitted to accompany you in any meetings that we hold to investigate your appeal. All meetings with you will be held at a time and place that we both agree on.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Each scheme will maintain a record of all formal appeals and will send copies of outcomes to their Service Directors who will produce reports on appeals received for the Board of Management. This is to ensure that appeals are dealt with correctly and fairly, and to assist with improving the service we provide.

This procedure will be evaluated periodically, which will include asking whether there is sufficient awareness of the policy and if there are any barriers to appeals being submitted and/or received.

Appeals Procedure



Appendix 1

Horton Housing Association

Appeal Form

Your Name			
Service your Appeal Relates to			
Location of the Service <i>(e.g. Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees or North Yorkshire)</i>			
Your Address			
Date of Birth		Contact Phone Number	
Which decision would you like to appeal against?			
Why do think this decision is wrong?			
What would you like to see happen as a result? <i>Please provide full reasons why you wish us to take the action. Continue on separate sheet if necessary.</i>			

Please return to: Services Director, Horton Housing Association,
Chartford House, 54 Little Horton Lane, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD5 0BS. or
Email: headoffice@hortonhousing.co.uk
Or pass directly to a member of staff.