

complaints about Innisfree. We have other procedures for addressing these. If you want to register your dissatisfaction about an Innisfree policy you should do so through a tenant representative on the Board or Committees or by writing to the Chair of the Association.

Use the complaints procedure if you feel that a policy has been unfairly or incorrectly implemented, if the service has been poor or was not provided to an appropriate standard, for example:-

- your Housing Officer did not follow Innisfree's procedure regarding your rent arrears;
- you have received no response to a letter or phone call;
- your repair was not dealt with properly or was unduly delayed;
- you consider a member of staff was rude to you;
- You believe you have been treated unfairly.

What you should do

It is important that you follow this procedure *step by step*.

1. Contact your Housing Officer to arrange a meeting to discuss the problem. A copy of the full complaints procedure will be given and explained to you. You will receive a written report outlining the result of the meeting within 5 working days.
2. If you have not received a satisfactory reply within that time, you should ask your housing officer for a Complaints Form which you should complete. All formal complaints will be dealt with at Senior Management level and will be responded to within 10 working days.
3. If you are not happy with the reply, then you have the right to have your complaint considered by an Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel will consist of The Chief Executive and two Board Members or three board members if considered more appropriate.
4. If you are unhappy with the outcome of this meeting, then you can complain to the Housing Association Ombudsman who will have the final say in the matter.

You can contact the Ombudsman at:

Independent Housing Ombudsman
Norman House
105-109 Strand, London WC2R 0AA
Tel. 020 7836 3630
Fax 020 7836 3900
Lo-call 0345 125 973

Leaflets about the Housing Association Ombudsman Service are available from the office.

You may at any time seek advice and information from a Citizens' Advice Bureau, a Housing Advice Centre or from a solicitor, however please remember that in the majority of cases, the most effective way of dealing with complaints is to complain directly to Innisfree.

We keep a register of all complaints so that we can spot any areas of weakness in our service and take action to put them right. They are reported regularly to the Board of Management.



Innisfree
Housing Association

A charitable Housing Association



In business for neighbourhoods

WHAT DO YOU THINK? MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

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This leaflet tells you how we consult tenants, about how you can take part in decision-making, about your right to information and how to make a complaint.

HOW WE CONSULT TENANTS

All Innisfree tenants have the right to be consulted about proposals which affect their home and the way it is managed. We want to provide you with the best possible service, most appropriate to your needs and wishes. To do this we need to know what you think. We need to know your priorities and the kind of service you expect.

We will consult you about:

- our policies and procedures,
- the standard or types of service we provide,
- changes in the way we collect rent or carry out repairs,
- improvement, maintenance and repair works to your home or estate,
- proposed changes to your terms of tenancy,
- the home you live in,
- how we consult you and the information we provide.

We will ask for your views in one or more of the following ways:

- writing to or telephoning you,
- inviting individual feedback on a particular matter,
- sending you a questionnaire or survey,
- calling round to see you,

- inviting you to an open meeting,
- inviting you to join a tenants’ panel, focus group or ‘sounding board’ to consider particular matters,
- consulting tenant members on our committees
- ensuring tenant members can represent the views of other tenants.

WAYS OF INVOLVING YOU

Innisfree welcomes contributions of tenants to help us provide the services that suit our tenants best. The methods we use to involve tenants and enable them to make, or strongly influence, decision making are constantly changing as a result of tenants’ suggestions and learning from other landlords. Some of the methods we use include:-

Shared houses have regular *‘house meetings’* at which all tenants can put forward views and suggestions

Meetings are held regularly in *blocks or estates* for the same purpose, or perhaps to discuss proposed major works or improvements.

Focus groups are formed to discuss particular issues such as a policy or the review of a specific service.

IHA’s Sounding Board considers proposals about a variety of issues to test them out and gather opinions.

Estate or block monitors are tenants who volunteer to ‘keep an eye on’ things and report back. For example they may observe and note the performance of the landscape contractor, the effectiveness of new car parking arrangements etc. They will also undertake *estate ‘walkabouts’* and inspections with staff, and may invite others on the estate to join them, so that problems can be identified and dealt with by staff.

Participation in events organised by other Housing Associations. Innisfree tries to offer opportunities to our tenants to develop individual and community skills and experience. Larger associations may provide training, confidence building and other useful sessions for tenants that Innisfree can also use.

Membership of Innisfree Board of Management and Committees. Innisfree welcomes tenants to join these bodies. This gives a real opportunity to participate and make decisions that affect all our tenants. In addition to the Board, both the Housing Services Committee and the Finance Committee are open for tenant membership. We already have

a few tenant members, but are always seeking more.

Contribute to Innisfree’s decision making process. Tenants may put forward their own names, or those of other willing tenants, for Board, Committees, focus groups and the sounding board. Alternatively Innisfree staff or managers may invite a tenant to join if the tenant appears to have plenty of useful ideas to offer. All tenants wishing to join will be interviewed and provided with general information and training to help them to contribute effectively.

If you are interested in becoming a tenant representative or have suggestions about further ways of involving tenants - contact your Housing Officer today!

YOUR RIGHT TO INFORMATION

About Innisfree, our policies and your rights

There are a number of methods used by Innisfree to provide you with information. These include:

- individual letters,
- quarterly newsletters,
- the Annual Report and accounts,
- house meetings and advice surgeries (for tenants in supported housing),
- individual meetings with Your Housing Officer,
- local or block meetings.

This handbook is also provided to help you understand your rights and our policies. You can also ask for a copy of any of our full policies at any time. If you need, we can provide them in alternative languages, or media formats e.g. audio tape.

We also provide you with a copy of the ‘Tenants’ Charter’ a publication provided by the Housing Corporation (the government body that regulates Housing Associations). This tells you about what associations are expected to provide to tenants.

About how Innisfree has performed each year

We provide information in our newsletters about performance on various matters including:

- the categories of people we have housed,

- vacant property and time taken to re-let,
- how well we are keeping to our targets for repairs,
- properties that have been improved or had major repairs completed,
- our rent levels and increases compared with those of other local social landlords,
- how well we have dealt with arrears,
- management and maintenance costs,
- tenant satisfaction and complaints.

About you

Innisfree will respect the privacy of your personal information, and will insist on the same standards from our members, contractors and agents. We must ask tenants to provide certain personal information, to help us to do our work.

We will:

- use this information only for the purposes that it is collected.
- not disclose any part of it to any other person, without first seeking your agreement, unless legally required to do so, in special circumstances where referrals are made to specialist agencies such as Social Services or, anonymously, for genuine research purposes.
- allow you to inspect the information we keep about you on file or computer for a nominal fee.
- give you a list of anything we have removed because it was provided by a third party - for example a letter from a doctor or social worker. You can then contact that person for their consent to see the item.
- note your disagreement on the file if you feel that any part of the information is wrong.
- Correct anything you can prove is wrong.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

Innisfree tries to provide the best possible service, fairly and equally, to all its tenants. However if you should find any aspect of our service unsatisfactory, please tell us about it. We positively welcome complaints and have a formal Complaints Procedure to help resolve them. This also ensures that your complaint helps us to improve our service.

We do not treat an initial request for a service, or a report about neighbour nuisance, as