

## Complaints Policy and Procedure

The HTA is committed to providing a quality service for its members and works in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all our stakeholders.

One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our members, customers and stakeholders, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

We take all complaints seriously; if there are times when you feel the HTA has fallen short of our usual high standards of service we will follow the defined procedure set out below whenever we receive any expression of dissatisfaction about our work or member of staff.

### **We aim to ensure that:**

making a complaint is as easy as possible;

- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- we respond in the right way – e.g. with an explanation and information on any action taken or an apology where we have got things wrong,
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and it is our aim to deal with these informal concerns quickly. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure detailed below should be followed. The procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

### **HTA's responsibility will be to:**

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing by letter or email;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take action where appropriate.

### **A complainant's responsibility is to:**

- bring their complaint, in writing by letter or email, to HTA's attention within 8 weeks of the issue arising;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- accept the time period stated by the HTA in dealing with the matters;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond HTA's control.



## **Confidentiality**

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and HTA maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

## **Monitoring and reporting**

The HTA Board will receive annually a report of complaints made and their resolution.

## **The scope of our complaints process**

Although we are happy to receive your feedback we may choose not to respond to complaints that are:

- About something to which we have no connection
- Pursued unreasonably. If we have already responded we will provide information on the next stage of the escalation process but may choose not to reply again.
- Obviously abusive, prejudiced or offensive in their manner
- Incoherent or illegible
- Clearly sent to us and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email
- Made anonymously. However, we will investigate the complaint and use the information to improve in any way that we can.

We also appreciate that in certain circumstances a complaint should be stopped if it has become unhelpful to you as the complainant and to us.

## **Formal Complaints Procedure**

### *Stage 1*

In the first instance, if you are unable to resolve the issue informally, you should write to the member of staff who dealt with you, or their department manager, so that he or she has a chance to put things right; alternatively use [complaints@hta.org.uk](mailto:complaints@hta.org.uk) email address.

In your communication you should set out the details of your complaint, the consequences for you as a result, and the remedy you are seeking. If it is a complaint about a National Garden Gift Voucher expiry date, we require the vouchers to be sent along with your complaint.

You can expect your complaint to be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. You should get a response and an explanation within 15 working days, excluding Bank Holidays.

Our contact details can be found on the **Contact Us** part of the HTA Website.



The HTA's aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated. Consequently, timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

### *Stage 2*

If you are not satisfied with the initial response to the complaint, then you can write to an HTA Director and ask for your complaint and the response to be reviewed. You can expect an acknowledgement of your request within 5 working days of receipt and a response from a Director within 15 working days, excluding Bank Holidays.

### *Final Stage*

If you are not satisfied with the subsequent reply from an HTA Director, then you have the option of requesting an escalation of your complaint to the HTA Chairman, stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You must do this within 10 days of receiving the written response from the HTA Director.

The HTA Chairman will respond normally within 10 days, excluding Bank Holidays. The HTA Chairman's decision is final.