

SERVICE FAMILY ACCOMMODATION (SFA) - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE - THE INDEPENDENT HOUSING REVIEW PANEL

The National Audit Office Report published a number of recommendations to improve the quality of the housing services provided to Service families overseas. One of the recommendations was for a formal complaints procedure to be set up for occupants of SFA. In order to achieve this, the MOD has put in place a formal complaints procedure using an Independent Housing Review Panel (IHRP). The IHRP will review complaints where the complainant (SFA occupant) has not received what is considered to be a satisfactory response from the chain of command.

The procedures that will be adopted within BFG is as follows; the complainant may address the complaint to three levels of command before the IHRP will consider their case, the Housing & Community Support Office (HCSO)/Defence Estate (Europe) Garrison Works Alliance (DE(E) GWA), Garrison Headquarters and Headquarters United Kingdom Support Command (Germany) (UKSC(G)).

The complaint will be reviewed at each level and a response given to the complainant. If the complainant is not happy with the decision reached at the appropriate command level, then he/she will be offered the opportunity to take their complainant to the next level. It is only after the complaint has been reviewed and response given at all three levels that the complainant may address their housing complaint to the IHRP within the MOD.

At all three levels, complaints will be reviewed promptly and a response forwarded (by the recipient) to the complainant within 10 working days. There may be occasions when the complaint may require more time for investigation, in such circumstances the complainant will be informed of the delay.

Complaints that will be dealt with by this procedure may involve: impolite or unhelpful staff or contractors, failure to achieve repairs or works services in a target time, unfair or inconsistent interpretation of housing policies, failure to meet legal responsibilities/contractual obligations, a decision made that affects the occupant in an adverse way and could reasonably have been foreseen or a failure to complete an agreed task. Complaints must involve an action or lack of action on the part of the Housing Provider for example disputed casework or unresolved housing issues between SFA occupants.

In the near future, the MOD will be issuing a 'Guide to Living in Service Family Accommodation' to each property. This will contain simple and easy to follow steps on the procedures which an occupant needs to take if he or she wishes to make a formal housing complaint.

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