

COMPLAINTS AND BREACHES OF THE SCOTTISH CORE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITED LANDLORDS

1. Introduction

From time to time complaints about an accredited landlord may arise. Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS) consider a complaint to be a criticism of a landlord's management standards, which expects a reply and the outcome to bring about change.

Complaints may come from a variety of sources including the tenant, a neighbour, another landlord, the or a council department.

Non-compliance with the Scottish Core Standards for Accredited Landlords and Letting Agents ([the Standards](#)) may also be found during the compliance check process or during period of accreditation with LAS.

The aim of the following procedures is to provide a clear framework for investigating complaints and breaches of the Standards and to ensure that each case will be dealt with appropriately and in a consistent manner.

2. Landlord Procedures

A landlord must have a written procedure for dealing with complaints from, or about, tenants. The Standards require a landlord, as a minimum, to keep a record of all complaints and their outcome.

- The nature of the complaint or dispute
- Details of [Repairing Standard](#) matters raised with First-tier Tribunal
- The steps taken to bring this complaint or dispute to the landlord's attention
- An indication of the timescale involved concerning a problem
- How the complainant would like the issue to be resolved
- A contact name, address and telephone number for the person raising the complaint or dispute. LAS will not accept anonymous complaints as LAS will be unable to investigate the complaint effectively
- LAS will not accept third party complaints

If a serious complaint is received by telephone, LAS will record the conversation as accurately as possible, however, the complainant should follow up the telephone call in writing to ensure that the facts have been recorded correctly. LAS staff will contact the complainant should the two accounts differ.

3. Complaints

Any complaints about an accredited landlord must be made in writing or other agreed media – this includes: letter, email, or the online form available from the LAS website and should be sent to the LAS office. The complainant is required to demonstrate that they have complied with the landlord's own complaints procedure prior to contacting LAS. A complaint cannot be investigated if the landlord has not been notified that contact is to be made with LAS. Complaints can be raised up to three months after the end of a tenancy. A complaint should include the following information:

- Name of landlord
- Address of the rental property concerned
- The nature of the complaint or dispute
- The steps taken to bring this complaint or dispute to the landlord's notice
- An indication of the timescale involved concerning a particular problem
- How the complainant would like the issue to be resolved
- A contact name, address and telephone number for the person raising the complaint or dispute. LAS will not accept anonymous complaints as LAS will be unable to investigate the complaint effectively

If a serious complaint is received by telephone LAS will record the conversation as accurately as possible however the complainant should follow up the telephone call in writing to ensure that the facts have been recorded correctly. LAS staff will contact the complainant should the two accounts differ.

4. Non-Compliance with the Standards

Landlords accredited with LAS are expected to comply with the Standards. If during the period of accreditation with LAS a landlord is found to not comply with any of the Standards, then the landlord will be contacted to discuss their non-compliance with a view to rectifying the matter. If it is confirmed that the landlord has failed to comply with the Standards the landlord will be given 10-28 working days to correct the problem.

Thereafter, failure to comply will constitute a breach of the conditions of accreditation with LAS. Breaches of the requirements of LAS will be formally investigated. The landlord will be contacted with details of the investigation and will be given 10 working days in which to respond.

Where a breach of a Standards is the subject of a [First-tier Tribunal action](#) raised by the tenant, the landlord's accreditation status will be suspended until such time as the case has been heard and the outcome verified.

LAS may also decide to pass a complaint over to other authorities. It is not the intention of LAS to name and shame accredited landlords who are subject to sanctions or removal from LAS. However, sanctions taken against a landlord may be reported in an objective way to demonstrate that the LAS is being robustly administered.

5. Notification Process

Upon receiving a complaint, or where an alleged breach of the Standards has been found or reported, LAS will check that the complaint/alleged breach fulfils the criteria as listed in this document, **Section 3 Complaints**.

The complainant will be notified within 10 working days if their case is/is not being investigated. When a decision is made by LAS that the reported complaint/alleged breach of the Standards is not to be investigated, the complainant will receive full reasons in writing as to why this decision has been made.

Where a complaint/alleged breach of the standards has been found to meet the criteria in this document, **Section 3 Complaints**, the landlord will be written to, informing them of the case and giving them 10 working days in which to respond. It is expected that the landlord will take any necessary remedial action immediately.

From the date of receipt of the landlord's response to the complaint, LAS will endeavour to complete the investigation within 28 working days. Should LAS be unable to conclude the investigation within this timescale the complainant will be contacted with details as to why this is not possible.

Following the investigation, where reasonable recommendations to rectify the complaint or breach have been made, the landlord will comply with these recommendations or their accreditation status will be removed.

If accreditation status is removed, LAS will formally write to the landlord giving the reasons for the decision. The landlord will have the right of appeal.

6. Procedure for Appeals for Landlords

If the landlord does not agree with LAS's decision, they have the right to appeal the outcome of an investigation if they believe the findings are flawed or LAS's procedures have not been followed. The landlord is invited to attend an appeals hearing and to put their case forward. All parties concerned have the right to ask questions.

The landlord must lodge any appeal within 20 working days of being notified that their accredited status has been removed and fully explain their reasons for the appeal. In addition, if the Board of Directors feels that it cannot make a judgement on whether a landlord accreditation status should be revoked, the Board of Directors may also choose to pass the case to the Appeals Panel for their final decision.

The Appeals Panel will consist of:

- An independent chairperson
- 1 accredited landlord
- 1 tenants' organisation representative

Landlords who have been awarded accreditation status will be asked if they would be prepared to make themselves available to sit on the Appeals Panel, as part of the membership to the Scheme, should a complaint arise that requires the Appeals Panel to convene. Selection of members to sit on this panel will be done on a rota basis but will be voluntary. Payment of travelling costs will be reimbursed.

The Appeals Panel has the power to rescind membership of Landlord Accreditation Scotland. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final. A formal record of the proceedings will be kept.

7. Sanctions Available

The following sanctions will be available to LAS in dealing with complaints:

- To recommend that the landlord apologise, in writing, to the appropriate person(s) for the relevant conduct, action or omission
- To caution the landlord repeating the conduct, action or omission
- To recommend to the landlord that they refund any costs charged to the tenant that are not applicable
- To discuss with the landlord changes to their procedures or documentation arising from the facts disclosed by a complaint, breach or infringement, which has been upheld
- To discuss with the parties other, more appropriate, ways of resolving the complaint or dispute including mediation
- To suspend the accredited status with LAS of the landlord
- To remove accredited status from the landlord
- To refer the matter to other regulating or enforcing bodies (including the Police)
- Any combination of the above or any other reasonable action, which LAS feels appropriate in order to support high standards within the industry and amongst its membership.

Depending on the nature of the case, a landlord who has had their membership revoked may be able to reapply for accreditation after a certain period. Timescales can be set by either the Board of Directors or the Appeals Panel.

8. Removal from the Scheme

Landlords may be removed from LAS if they fail to meet the requirements of the Scottish Core Standards for Accredited Landlords.

Failure to respond to complaints or to comply with the recommendations in a reasonable and satisfactory manner may constitute grounds for disqualifying a landlord from membership of LAS.

Any unlawful action by a landlord may constitute grounds for disqualification from LAS.

The landlord will be notified of the decision to remove them from LAS, and the reasons for their removal from LAS, within 10 working days of the decision being made. The complainant will also be notified of the decision within 10 working days.

A landlord who loses their accredited status will no longer be participants of, or eligible for, any of the benefits of LAS and may not use the Landlord Accreditation Scotland logo on any publicity/promotional material, which must be removed within 10 working days.

Failure to comply with these conditions constitutes breach of contract and may be enforced by legal action.

9. Monitoring Complaints and Reviewing the Complaints Procedure

This document was first published by Landlord Accreditation Scotland in July 2008 and reviewed annually since.

Address to which complaints should be made:

LAS Director
Landlord Accreditation Scotland
8B McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4LZ

Email: info@landlordaccreditationscotland.com

Web: www.landlordaccreditationscotland.com