

Housing Ombudsman Service

Information for residents about the Housing Ombudsman Service

How we can help

The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about housing organisations that are registered with us, including housing associations and local authorities.

When to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service

You can contact us at any point during the complaint process. The assistance we can offer depends on whether the landlord's complaints procedure has been completed and when.

Making a complaint to your landlord

If you have not yet complained to your landlord, we can offer assistance on how to make your complaint and discuss what outcomes and actions would put things right for you. We can help you obtain details of your landlord's complaints procedure so you know what to expect.

Getting a response

If you have already been in contact with your landlord about the problem we can help you find out whether a formal complaint has been logged. We can make sure the landlord understands that you wish to make a complaint and make sure the correct process is followed. We will also find out when you can expect to receive a response.

What are the next steps?

If you have received a response from your landlord but remain dissatisfied with the outcome, we can discuss your options and help you identify the most appropriate action.

What if we can't help?

There are some complaints that we will not be able to consider, for example if your complaint has been considered by a court. We will tell you as soon as possible if we are unable to consider any element of your complaint. Wherever possible we will provide you with details of any organisation that may be able to assist you to resolve the dispute.

Can the Housing Ombudsman Service complain on my behalf?

We are an independent organisation and we are impartial. This means we cannot represent you or make the complaint on your behalf. We do not act on behalf of your landlord either.

We believe that the best way to resolve a dispute is quickly and locally, by a resident and their landlord. Before the landlord's complaints procedure has finished, our role is to help you and your landlord resolve the complaint between yourselves.

Once the landlord's complaints procedure is complete, what happens then?

The landlord's final response to your complaint must be set out in writing and must state that it is the final response. It must include a paragraph advising that you may now refer your complaint to a "designated person" (an MP, councillor or tenant panel), or wait eight weeks and then refer the complaint to us for investigation. (These arrangements are set out in law and we have no power to investigate your complaint until they are complied with).

If your landlord's letter does not include a paragraph stating that it is a final response, there may be more that your landlord can do. We can make checks with your landlord to help you know whether the complaints process has finished.

Why contact a designated person?

Your MP, local councillor or tenant panel may be able to help resolve the complaint. They may have knowledge and experience of local issues that can offer a solution. If they are unable to resolve the dispute they can refer the complaint to us for investigation.

Not all areas have a tenant panel. Your landlord will be able to tell you if one operates in your location.

If you do not wish to contact a designated person you can refer your complaint to us. Although we will be able to consider and advise on the complaint at any time, we will not be able to investigate until eight weeks after your landlord has given you its final response.

For more information about the designated person please see the factsheet on our website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/useful-tools/fact-sheets/3123-2/

What does the Housing Ombudsman Service do with the complaint?

All complaints are different. Once we have had time to consider the individual circumstances of your complaint, we will decide the best way to resolve it. For example, we may:

- Advise you to contact a different organisation if it is an issue that they are better placed to resolve. In some cases, we may be able to refer the complaint straight to the other organisation if you want us to do so.
- Help you get a response from your landlord and to progress the matter through its internal complaints procedure.
- Work with you and your landlord to resolve the dispute through agreement.
- Carry out an investigation into the way your landlord dealt with the initial problem and how it dealt with your complaint. We will assess whether this was fair in all the circumstances by looking at all of the evidence.

How to contact us

To find out if we can help:

- See our website at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Call us on 0300 111 3000
- Email us: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Write to us at Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ