

# ***Problems with your landlord?***

***We may be able to help you***



Housing  
Ombudsman  
Service

## ***Other formats and languages***

We can help if you need information in a non-printed format or in a different language. We can also make and receive telephone calls using TypeTalk and Minicom. If you have other needs or disabilities where we could help, just let us know.

## *How can the Ombudsman help me?*

You can use the attached form to make a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Ombudsman provides a free and fair way of dealing with complaints against housing organisations registered with the Service. In this leaflet we call these organisations ‘landlords’, but they include managers, agents, and other providers of housing services. The Ombudsman has been appointed under the law to deal with this kind of complaint. He is independent of landlords, local and central government, and complainants. By law, he must be impartial – in other words, fair and neutral. His job is to form his own views, not to support or represent anyone’s interests.

You can complain to the Service about the way your home is managed. If we find that your landlord did something wrong, we can make orders or recommendations to put things right. If we find faults in the services you have received, we can intervene to ensure they improve.

We do not offer a ‘quick fix’ or an emergency service. You must normally go all the way through the landlord’s complaints procedure before you come to us. We will make balanced decisions on complaints, based on what the Ombudsman regards as fair.

Not all landlords are registered with the Service. We can tell you which ones are – please phone **08457 125 973**, visit our website at **[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)** or e-mail **[info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)**.

## ***Which organisations are members?***

You have the right to complain to us if your home is owned or managed by a landlord who is a member of the Service or if you have applied to be housed through them. The law requires all registered social landlords in England to be members of the Service. Some private housing providers have also joined voluntarily. Local councils are not members; if you wish to complain about council housing you should contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

## ***What can I complain about?***

You can complain if you think your landlord has done something wrong which affects you in your home. This includes failing to do repairs, making it difficult to use services or facilities to which you are entitled, making administrative errors, and so on. We cannot consider some problems. These include cases that are about to go to a court or tribunal (or have already done so) and complaints that are better dealt with by other agencies. Some of the rules on what we can and cannot consider are complicated. So if you need more information before deciding whether to make a complaint to the Service, please contact us.

We cannot give housing advice or consider problems outside the scope of the Service.

## ***What must I do before complaining to you?***

You must first go through your landlord's full complaints procedure. You can get a copy of it from their offices. If you can't get a copy, please tell us. It is up to you to go through their internal complaints procedure. We may be able to advise you how to make a complaint, but we cannot take the complaint further for you or take an active part at this stage.

Your complaint to the landlord will give them the chance to sort out problems directly and put right anything they may have done wrong. Most complaints are resolved this way.

In a few cases, we will accept a complaint before it has completed the final stage of the landlord's complaints procedure. This can happen if we think they are taking too long to deal with it. A delay may occur for a good reason. But if you think the delay is too long, please let us know.

Some landlords set time limits for raising and pursuing complaints. If you miss them, we may not be able to help you. So it is important to complain as soon as you become aware of the problem.

The law also sets time limits for when we can intervene, so if you are still unhappy after completing the landlord's complaints procedure you should contact us promptly.

## ***How do I complain?***

If you are still unhappy after completing the landlord's complaints procedure, you can complain to us. We prefer you to use the complaint form attached to this leaflet and enclose any supporting documents with it, including the landlord's final decision. This will help us deal with your case more quickly.

Let us know if you want us to treat any information as confidential. We will keep it confidential if you ask us to, but this may mean we can't use it as evidence.

## ***How is my complaint dealt with?***

When we receive your complaint we will decide if we can deal with it. If we cannot, we will tell you why.

We will look carefully at what has already been done about your complaint. This is to see if we are justified in asking the landlord to do something different. For example, we will not normally intervene if:

- they have admitted being at fault; and
- we think they have taken reasonable steps to put things right.

If we agree you still have a problem, we may investigate, offer mediation, or consider whether there is any other way to solve it.

If we decide to recommend that you and the landlord use mediation or another way to resolve the complaint, we will send you more information at that time.

If we decide to investigate, we may ask for more information from you, the landlord, and any other bodies who know about the complaint. We will consider the evidence and make a decision. We will write to you and the landlord to explain our decision and say what, if anything, should be done to put things right. This may include compensation, but our main concern is to put right any problems in the management of your home.

We do not punish landlords. We ask them only to do what is necessary to return people to the position they were in before something went wrong, and to ensure that the problems do not happen again. If this is impossible, we can ask for other things to achieve a fair solution.

Dealing with complaints takes careful consideration. We always try to work as quickly as possible, but please be patient. We have many complex cases to handle and it can sometimes take a long time for us to reach a final decision.

## ***What are the Ombudsman's powers?***

At the end of an investigation we may **order** the landlord to do something, which they must then do. Sometimes we may **recommend** they do something, in which case we expect them to consider the recommendation seriously and, if they decide not to follow it, they must explain why. We may refer registered social landlords to their regulators if we believe they are acting unreasonably.

## ***What if I disagree with the Ombudsman?***

By law we must make decisions based on what is, in the Ombudsman's opinion, fair in the circumstances of each case. There is no appeal against our decisions.

We have a leaflet that explains our service standards and our commitment to handling your case professionally. You can ask our office for a copy or find it on our website. We also have several policy statements and procedures to guide our work. You can send us your comments about the Service. If you believe we have not met our standards, you can complain about us.

We expect you to deal with us and the landlord in a reasonable manner, and we may refuse to deal with a complaint if we think you are acting or have acted unreasonably. We have a policy statement about how we deal with unreasonable actions and behaviour by our users, which you can also get from our office or website.

## **Complaint form**

If your complaint is ready for the Housing Ombudsman Service, you can use this form. Please make sure you tick the box agreeing that we can use the information you provide or we may not be able to take the complaint further. If you don't feel able to complain yourself, you can ask a friend or adviser to help you. You must tell us if you agree to another person complaining on your behalf – there is space on the form for that.

Please enclose with the form any supporting documents or evidence you wish us to consider, including the landlord's final decision letter.

***Please remember to sign the form at the end – if it isn't signed, we will return it to you.***

***When you have filled in all of the form, please remove pages from the leaflet and send to:***

Housing Ombudsman Service

81 Aldwych

London WC2B 4HN

# Complaint form

Title (*Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms etc*)

Forename

---

Surname

---

Address

---

---

---

Daytime telephone

Mobile telephone

---

Email address

---

The name of the organisation I am complaining about is

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**By signing this form I agree to the Housing Ombudsman Service sending a copy of my complaint and related documents to the landlord I am complaining about. I also agree to the Service asking the landlord and other relevant bodies for information about me to help it deal with my complaint. I understand that the Service will not use the information for any purposes that fall outside its terms of reference.**

**Signature**

**Date**

**If you want the Service to deal directly with someone acting on your behalf, please enter their details below.**

Name of representative

---

Representative's address

---

---

Daytime telephone

Email address

---

**Signature of representative**

**Date**

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## ***Monitoring information***

The Housing Ombudsman Service is opposed to discrimination on any grounds. We are committed to ensuring that the Service benefits everyone who is entitled to use it.

You do not have to fill in this section of the form, but doing so will help us to see if we are achieving this aim and to find ways of improving our Service. Your answers will be kept separate from your complaint and will be completely confidential. They will be used for statistical purposes only.

*The questions are set out on the following page. Please tick the appropriate boxes.*

**Please tick only one box for each question.**

*I would describe myself as*

- African
- Asian
- British
- Caribbean
- Irish
- Other European
- South East Asian
- Other

*My colour is*

- Black
- White
- Other

*I am*

- Female
- Male

*My sexuality is*

- Gay man
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Other

*My household consists of a*

- Couple
- Couple with child/ren
- Single person
- Single person with child/ren
- Other

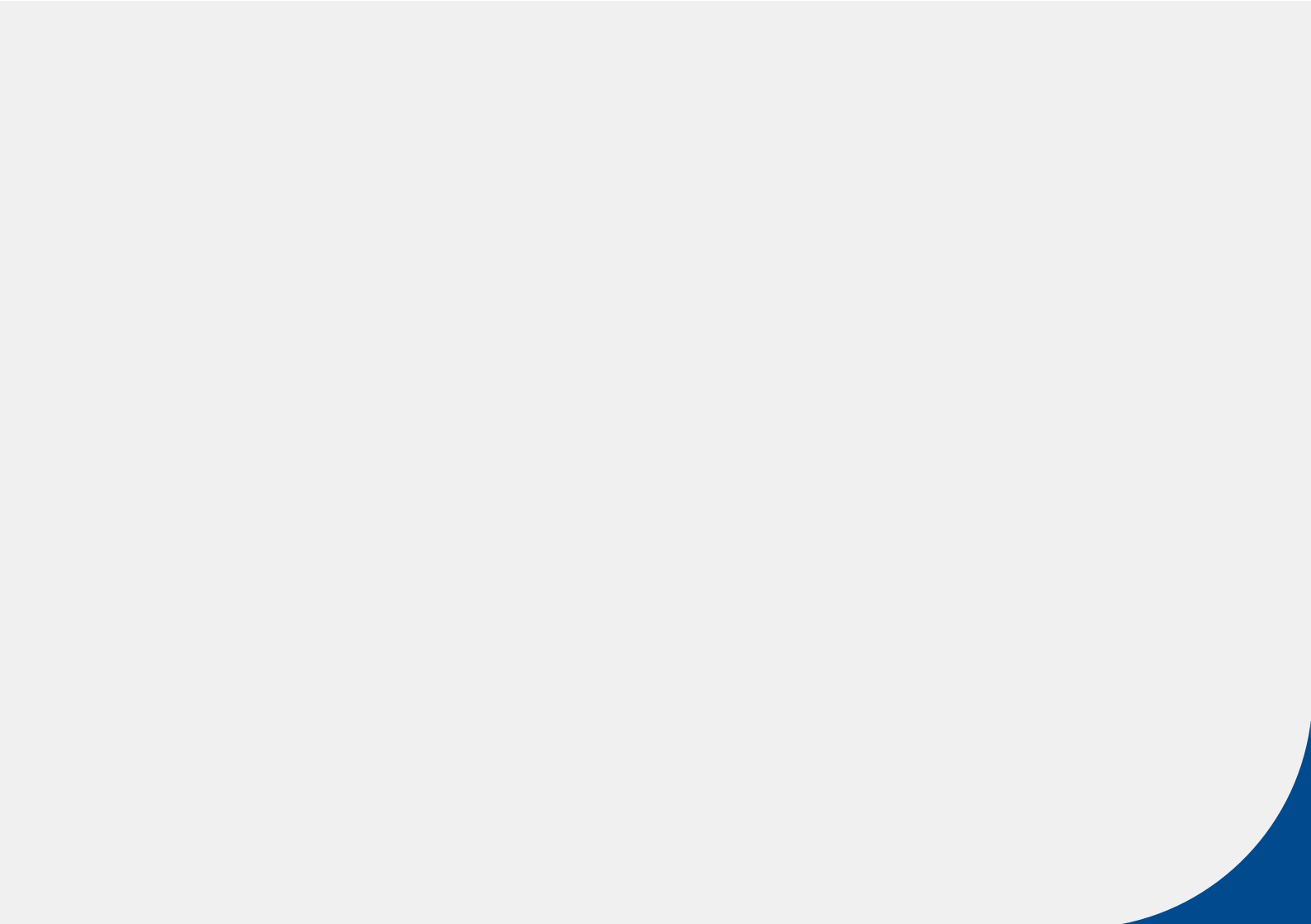
*My age is*

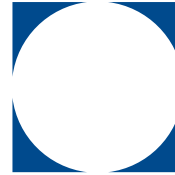
- 16-25
- 26-40
- 41-60
- 61-75
- Over 75

*I consider myself to be disabled*

- Yes
- No

**Thank you for your help**





# Housing Ombudsman Service

81 Aldwych  
London WC2B 4HN

*Telephone:* 020 7421 3800

*Fax:* 020 7831 1942

*Lo-call:* 0845 7125 973

*Minicom:* 020 7404 7092

[info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)  
[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

