

Complaining to the Ombudsman

This factsheet looks at when you can complain to the Ombudsman if you have a housing problem.

You can complain to an Ombudsman if you have received a bad service from your local council or your housing association. The Ombudsman is independent and does not take sides. The service is free to use.

In most cases you must have made a formal complaint to the organisation first, and have been personally affected by the matter you are complaining about.

Complain to the Ombudsman if either you are unhappy with the final response to your complaint, or you haven't had a response within the complaints procedure deadline.

You must complain to the Ombudsman within 12 months of the end of the internal complaints procedure.

What kind of complaint?

Examples of bad service include:

- the organisation you are complaining about hasn't followed its own policies
- rudeness from the organisation's staff
- giving you wrong information.

But if your complaint is going to court or a tribunal the ombudsman won't consider it.

Which Ombudsman to complain to

There are two Ombudsman services that help with problems connected with housing:

- [Housing Ombudsman](#)
- [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) (LGSCO)

The Ombudsman you complain to depends on your problem:

Housing Ombudsman

You can complain to the Housing Ombudsman if you are (or were) a licensee, tenant or leaseholder of a council or housing association. The Housing Ombudsman investigates complaints about, for example:

- repairs not being done
- antisocial behaviour
- safety in your home, including fire safety
- service charges for leaseholders
- ending your tenancy.

If you are complaining to the Housing Ombudsman you can complain:

- first to a 'designated person' (your MP, local councillor or tenant panel), or
- direct, but only after 8 weeks from the end the complaints process.

Local Government Ombudsman

The LGSCO investigates complaints about council services generally, including how the council has handled your application for:

- housing via the housing register
- help if you become homeless
- housing benefit.

You can also complain to the LGSCO about organisations that provide care for adults.

How to complain

You can complain by ringing the Ombudsman service, or via their website.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Ombudsman will write to you with its decision when the investigation is complete. If the Ombudsman upholds your complaint, they can, for example, ask the council or housing association to:

- apologise
- pay you compensation
- do what they should have done.

The organisation you have complained about does not have to do what the Ombudsman says, but usually does.

How long will it take?

If your case is complicated it can take a long time to get an Ombudsman decision. This is because the investigation is very thorough. Expect anything up to around one year.

Further advice

You can get further advice from england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice, local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice. If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, are at risk of harm or losing your home within the next 2 months, call Shelter Helpline on **0808 800 4444** for advice and information on your options.*

*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



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Note

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