



arhag  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

# Complaints Handling and Resolution Policy

# Complaints Handling and Resolution Policy

## Policy summary

This policy sets out Arhag Housing Association's (Arhag) policy for receiving and handling complaints, ensuring we deal with them in a consistent and transparent way.

We understand that sometimes things go wrong and that we need to take action to put this right. If this happens, we'll record this, apologise, understand why it happened, and try to quickly resolve your enquiry. We'll check that you're happy with our explanation and proposed resolution. If we need to make further enquiries to resolve your issue, or if you remain unhappy, we'll escalate your enquiry through our formal complaints process as a Stage One complaint. You can also ask to open a complaint at any time. We welcome your feedback to help us to improve the services we provide.

The Complaint Handler will log and manage your complaint. They'll make sure we investigate it fully and that any outcome is fair, clear and reasonable. If you're not happy with our response to your complaint or feel that we haven't answered your questions, you can escalate your complaint to a Stage Two Management Review Panel. You may contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage.

We're committed to resolving complaints to your satisfaction wherever possible, and to using your feedback to learn lessons so we improve the services we provide.

If you have any queries about this policy or would like to make a complaint, you can call us on 020 7424 7370, email [contact@arhag.co.uk](mailto:contact@arhag.co.uk) or visit our office. You can also contact us through our website (<https://www.arhag.co.uk/make-a-complaint-or-compliment>) or social media.

This document is available in other languages, large print, braille and audio format on request.

Sipas kërkesës, ky dokument gjithashtu gjendet edhe në gjuhë të tjera, me shkrim të madh dhe në formë dëgjimore.

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هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين وبصيغة سمعية عند الطلب

এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে, ব্রেল এবং অডিও টেপ আকারেও অনুরোধ পাওয়া যায়

Ce document est également disponible dans d'autres langues, en gros caractères, en Braille et en cassette audio sur simple demande.

Dokumentigaan waxaa xitaa lagu heli karaa luqado kale, daabacad far waa-wayn, farta indhoolaha (Braille) iyo hab dhegaysi ah markii la soo codsado.

நீங்கள் கேட்டுக்கொண்டால், இந்த ஆவணம் வேறு மொழிகளிலும், பெரிய எழுத்து அச்சிலும் அல்லது ஒலிநாடா வடிவிலும் அளிக்கப்படும்.

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Be belge istenirse, başka dillerde, iri harflerle, Braille ile (görme engelliler için) ve ses kasetinde de temin edilebilir.

Tài liệu này cũng có sẵn bằng các ngôn ngữ khác, bản in chữ to, và băng ghi âm khi được yêu cầu.

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## 1. Policy purpose

- 1.1. We welcome resident feedback to help us to improve the services we provide. This policy sets out how we'll handle complaints, ensuring they're dealt with quickly in a fair, consistent, transparent and impartial way. It also explains how we'll learn from complaints to improve the way we work for our residents.

## 2. Policy scope

- 2.1. A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, however it's made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action that affects an individual resident or group of residents. This could be about Arhag and our employees, or any individual or organisation acting on our behalf.
- 2.2. This policy does not cover service requests as these are different from complaints. A service request is when a resident needs action to put something right. We record, monitor and review service requests regularly. We explain how these link to complaints in section 3 of this policy.
- 2.3. This policy applies to all areas of our business, including contractors and partners delivering our services. If your complaint is about one of our contractors or other representatives that we use to deliver services to you, please contact a member of Arhag staff to raise a complaint.
- 2.4. An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint. However, the resident completing the survey may raise this as a complaint if they wish to. Where we ask for wider feedback about our services, we also provide details of how residents can complain.
- 2.5. Within this policy, we define resident as a person who is or has been in a landlord/tenant relationship with us. This includes people who have a lease, tenancy, licence or other arrangement to occupy premises owned or managed by us. This also includes applicants for an Arhag home.
- 2.6. If we receive a complaint from someone who isn't an Arhag resident who feels they've been affected by our service or actions, we'll also manage their complaint through this policy. However, non Arhag Residents complainants can't appeal to the Housing Ombudsman.

### 3. Policy details

#### 3.1. Our approach to service requests and complaints:

3.1.1 **Service Requests** A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Most interactions you and Arhag are considered "Service Requests" rather than "Complaints". Service requests are managed in line with respective policies and procedures of the organisation and will not be considered as "complaints" in line with this policy however are recorded and regularly monitored and reviewed. Please see below for examples of service requests and some clarifications:

- Initial reports of a repair or damage to a property,
- Initial requests for a copy of a tenancy agreement,
- An initial request seeking clarification on information included in a service charge budget or accounts.
- A first report of Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) (as defined by our ASB Policy) or ongoing nuisance as part of an existing ASB case. Only complaints regarding the handling of an existing ASB case will be logged as a complaint.

3.1.2 We understand that sometimes things go wrong and that we need to take action to put this right. If this happens, we'll always ask if you would like us to raise this as a formal complaint. You can also ask to open a complaint at any time and don't have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such.

3.1.3 If you confirm that you would like to escalate your service request as a complaint or if you remain unhappy throughout the process of handling your service request, we'll escalate your service request through our formal complaints process as a Stage One complaint. If a request for service is escalated to a complaint, the complaint will not stall, prevent or impact on actions needed to resolve the reported issue.

3.1.4 At any point during the complaints process you may raise additional complaints that relate to the original complaint, and we will include this in our investigation. If we have already responded to your complaint, and/or you provide any unrelated points, or anything that may unreasonably delay responding to the original points, these will be treated as separate complaints.

3.1.5 At any point during our complaints process you can contact the Housing Ombudsman for impartial advice, using the details shown in section 3.4.

3.1.6 We'll respect your confidentiality wherever possible and will advise you if we need to share information with others.

3.1.7 We'll treat anonymous complaints seriously and investigate them fully but aren't able to respond without contact details.

3.1.8 Arhag will always use plain language when communicating with residents. We will offer the services of Language Line and make available, our staff and contractors who use a range of languages, to remove language and cultural barriers when residents want to complain.

3.1.9 At each stage of the complaints process, Arhag will; deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; give you a fair chance to set out your position; take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

3.1.10 We will ensure to respond fully to complaints as soon as possible, not waiting until any identified actions have been carried out to resolve the issue. However, we will monitor any outstanding actions, keep you updated, and ensure these have been completed.

3.1.11 A complaint can be remedied at any stage of this process without the need for escalation. This may be by:

- Apologising and acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
- Acting if there has been delay;
- Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
- Providing a financial remedy;
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

## 3.2. Managing formal complaints – Stage One

**(Timescales – acknowledgment 5 working days; stage 1 response within 10 working days; extension if required within an additional 10 working days)**

3.2.1 We'll always make it easy for you to complain and will provide multiple ways for you to do this, for example:

- **Online:** <https://www.arhag.co.uk/make-a-complaint-or-compliment>
- **Telephone:** 02074247370
- **Email:** Contact@arhag.co.uk
- **In person or by letter:** The People's Place, 80-92 High Street, London, E15 2NE
- **Social media:** We'll respond via private message to maintain your privacy. If information isn't suitable for the public domain, we may remove your

complaint from social media (for example, the names of employees, other residents, or address details).

- Or by any other means that's suitable for you as an Arhag resident.

3.2.2 The Complaint Handler will log and manage your complaint. They'll make sure we investigate your complaint fully and that any outcome is fair, clear, and reasonable.

3.2.3 Anyone can raise and manage a complaint on your behalf, including representing and accompanying you at meetings with us. We must have your written permission to share information and discuss your complaint with a person other than you. When we respond to a formal complaint raised by someone else, we'll send our outcome letter to you and provide a copy to the other person. This includes if we receive a complaint made on your behalf by your MP or local councillor.

3.2.4 We'll log your complaint and contact you to acknowledge it within five working days of receiving it. The Complaint Handler may ask you for more information or clarification, if needed and will also explain our understanding of your complaint, and the outcomes you're seeking.

3.2.5 We'll always accept a complaint unless there's a valid reason not to. All complaints are considered on a case-by-case basis on their own merits as to whether they will be refused; however, we've listed some examples of when we may not accept a complaint below.

- In most circumstances, we'd expect the complaint to be made within twelve months of the incident or matter taking place or of the resident becoming aware of the issue or matter taking place. However, we will accept complaints that concern safeguarding or health and safety issues outside this timeframe.
- We won't open a complaint if legal proceedings have started. This applies if details, such as a Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, have been filed at court. A disrepair claim is a civil claim through the court system arising from the condition of residential premises and may include a related personal-injury claim. We will try and resolve all issues outside of the legal process via our complaints procedure whilst early action protocol is ongoing. However once legal proceedings have been issued, our complaints team will pass the matter to our Property Management Team who will continue to support in resolving the service request.
- Insurance claims including damage to personal belongings, property over £5,000 or personal injury claims. These will be dealt with in line with our insurance procedures.
- If the matter you're complaining about has previously been considered as a complaint, we'll escalate your original complaint rather than opening a new complaint. However, if this matter has been considered as part of a Housing

Ombudsman decision, then this will be excluded from being raised as a new complaint or escalated to the next stage in the complaints process.

- Anything that is not our responsibility or is outside our control. This will include issues such as the collection of bins or increases in Council Tax.
- Service charge disputes are dealt with as service requests in line with section 3.1.1 of the complaints policy. If the complaint is specifically around the level of service charge, then this will not be dealt with as a formal complaint and should be handled through the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber).

3.2.6 If we don't accept your complaint, we'll always explain the reasons why it's not suitable and your right to take that decision to the Housing Ombudsman.

3.2.7 We'll investigate your complaint, keeping you updated of progress. We'll try to resolve and respond fully to your complaint as soon as possible, however but we will always provide a full response within 10 working days of acknowledging your complaint. We'll track any outstanding actions and keep you informed on how they're progressing.

3.2.8 If your complaint is more complex and the investigation may take longer, we'll explain why and provide you with a clear timeframe of when you can expect our response. This extension will never exceed a further ten working days without good reason. If we need an extension longer than 10 working days, we'll agree this with you. If we can't agree this timeframe, we'll provide you with the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so you can challenge our plan and proposed timescales for responding.

3.2.9 If your complaint involves the conduct of an employee, we may run our complaints investigation alongside a formal Human Resources disciplinary investigation. We'll explain this to you and update you on progress, as much as we can. However, in order to comply with employment and data protection laws, we aren't able to share the outcome of a disciplinary investigation with you.

### 3.3. – Stage Two Complaints – Management Review (Final stage)

**(Timescales – acknowledgment 5 working days; management review within 15 working days; extension if required within an additional 20 working days unless agreed otherwise)**

3.3.1 If you're not satisfied with our response to your Stage One complaint, you can escalate your complaint to a Stage Two for resolution.

3.3.2 We should receive your request for escalation within 20 working days from the date of our Stage One response. We'll reconsider this timeframe in exceptional circumstances.

- 3.3.3 We'll never unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of our complaint's procedure. The reasons for declining to escalate a complaint are the same as set out in 3.2.5. If we won't escalate your complaint, we'll always explain our reasons.
- 3.3.4 We'll log your request to escalate your complaint and contact you to acknowledge it within five working days of receiving it.
- 3.3.5 We'll provide you with a summary of your complaint in the acknowledgement. The purpose of this summary is to provide those on the Management Review Panel with information relating to your complaint, including our understanding of outstanding issues and the outcomes that you're seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, we'll ask you for more information or clarification. This will be used at the Management review so please notify us before the meeting should you not agree with our summary or if you feel that we've missed anything out. However, you are not required to provide any additional information for the complaint to progress.
- 3.3.6 The purpose of the Management Review is to provide a fair, independent and proportionate review of how the complaint was handled and decided at Stage 1.
- Review and adequacy and fairness of the Stage 1 investigation and decision.
  - Consider any new information or evidence provided by resident.
  - Ensure the response is reasonable, evidence-based and in line with policy and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
  - Identify and correct any errors, omission, or service failings that were fully address at Stage 1.
  - Provide a final written outcome that clearly explain the findings, learning points and any further action ARHAG will take.
- 3.3.7 There will be a Management Review meeting that will take place within 15 working days of your escalation request. The Panel will comprise of a member of the Executive Management team, an officer independent of the complaint and the Service Improvement Manager.
- 3.3.9 The Panel will decide the outcome. We'll send you details of the outcome as soon as possible when the outcome is known; this will not exceed five working days of the date of the Management Review and the full response will not exceed 20 working days from the acknowledgement of the complaint. We'll track any outstanding actions and keep you informed on how they're progressing.

3.3.10 If the Stage Two appeal to your complaint is more complex and the investigation may take longer, we'll let you know and keep you informed of progress. This will never exceed a further 20 working days without good reason. You will be informed and kept updated of the progress.

### 3.4. External appeals

3.4.1 If you're an Arhag resident, you can contact the housing ombudsman at any point during the complaints process, if you contact them before we have issued a stage 2 complaint response (concluded the complaint), then we will continue to process your complaint in line with this policy. We will, of course, engage fully with any enquiries from the Ombudsman.

3.4.2 For more information about the Ombudsman's service, to ask for advice or to contact them to escalate a complaint please use the following details.

**Address:** Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET

**Telephone:** 0300 111 3000

**Email:** [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

**Web:** <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/>

**Online form:** <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/online-complaint-form/>

### 3.5. Record keeping

3.5.1 We'll keep a full record of all complaints, the outcomes at each stage, and the lessons that we learn in line with our Data Retention Policy. This will include the original complaint, and the date received, all correspondence, and any other relevant documents.

### 3.6. Support

3.6.1 We'll support you throughout the complaints process, making sure that you understand the next steps and who to contact if you have any queries. We'll regularly update you about the process of our investigation.

3.6.2 We'll provide information in the format you need. We'll be flexible based on your needs and will consider any reasonable adjustments you request.

3.6.3 We'll support you at the panel and help signpost you to an advocacy service if you would like one to help your voice be heard. You can choose to have another resident on the Appeal Panel with life experience of being an Arhag resident.

### 3.7. Managing Unreasonable & Persistent complaints

- 3.7.1 Arhag aims to provide a fair, respectful and responsive service. We want to work positively with residents to resolve issues as quickly and effectively as possible. However, in small organisation, excessive frequency of contact or unreasonable behaviour from a resident can at times make it difficult to properly consider their issues and those of other residents.
- 3.7.2 If we believe that a resident's behaviour during the complaints process is unreasonable or disruptive we will explain our concerns clearly and give the resident an opportunity to modify their approach
- 3.7.3 Where unreasonable behaviour continues, we will agree a contact strategy tailored to the individual case. This may include:
- Agreeing regular updates on a topic at a defined frequency;
  - Limiting the resident to only contact the organisation via an agreed method;
  - Limiting the resident to only contact a named team member;
  - Limiting the frequency or timing of contact on certain topics;
  - Responding only to new issues or complaints.
- 3.7.4 We'll only consider a strategy such as this in exceptional circumstances and we'll always explore all other options of finding a resolution before discussing this. This will be agreed by a Director/Head of Service, and we'll confirm this in writing to the resident.
- 3.7.5 We'll explain to the resident that they need to escalate their complaint within 10 working days if they disagree with our approach. Complaint Management reviews will be reviewed by a different director/head of service to who agreed the strategy.
- 3.7.6 We recognise that in some cases involving persistent contact or unreasonable complaints, there may be an underlying reason for the complainant's behaviour which makes effective communication difficult. We'll always consider the Equality Act 2010 when agreeing a strategy and ensure that our strategy is reasonable and proportionate. We'll also consider the use of advocates, support agencies and mediation to help communication and resolution, where appropriate.

### 3.8. Goodwill gestures

- 3.8.1 We aim to provide an excellent service and to put things right quickly if something goes wrong. If we don't meet the standards we've set out we'll apologise and do our best to resolve the issue. In some cases, this might include offering compensation or a goodwill gesture, as a way of recognising the inconvenience caused. For more

information on how we assess this, please see our Compensation and Goodwill Gesture Policy for further details.

### 3.9. Learning from complaints

3.9.1 We use all feedback as a positive source of information to continuously improve the services we provide and our residents experience. We'll monitor service requests and formal complaints, analysing trends and learning from feedback.

3.9.2 It is important to us that we have a culture in Arhag that learns from complaints. We'll ask for your feedback about how we've handled your complaint and how we can improve this via a survey.

### 3.10. Reporting

3.10.1 We'll carry out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with their requirements.

3.10.2 We'll regularly report information about complaints, performance and lessons learnt to our Board, Operations Committee, Senior Management Team and Resident Scrutiny Panel. They'll use this to identify potential systemic issues, risks, policies and procedures that require revision. This information will inform employee and contractor training.

3.10.3 We'll regularly tell residents about our performance in handling complaints, what we've learnt and improvements we've made. This includes publishing information in our annual report, which you can access via our website.

3.10.4 One of the board members of Arhag is designated as a "Member Responsible for Complaints". They receive quarterly reporting on complaints and review information at regular intervals at the operations committee and board meetings. This involves:

- Receiving quarterly updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;
- Reviewing the issues and trends arising from complaint handling;
- Regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings
- Reviewing the annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

### 3.11. Awareness

3.11.1 We'll publicise this complaints policy and process, the Complaint Handling Code and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. We'll do this through leaflets, newsletters, our website, social media and as part of regular correspondence with residents.

## 4. Equalities considerations

- 4.1 We're committed to ensuring that everyone is supported and receives services fairly in line with the Equalities Act 2010. This policy has been reviewed to ensure it is fair, meets the needs of residents and considers all protected characteristics by completion of an equalities impact assessment.
- 4.2 We'll provide support and guidance to anyone wishing to make a complaint and will ensure that the process is accessible to all. We'll make reasonable adjustments as needed to accommodate a person's individual needs, as detailed in the reasonable adjustments policy which is available on our website & can be provided to you on request.

## 5. Policy consultation, approval and review

- 5.1 Arhag's Resident Scrutiny Panel were consulted on this version of the complaints policy.
- 5.2 This policy will be reviewed every year, as legislation changes, as directed by the ombudsman, or in line with best practice in complaints service delivery.

## 6. Policy supporting documents

- Equality Act 2010
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Compensation and Goodwill Gesture Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Zero Tolerance Policy
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (April 2025)
- Managing Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

## Document control

**Responsible Person/Policy Owner:** Executive Director of Customer Services

**Authored and reviewed by:** Service Improvement Manager

**Approved by:**

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**Next Review:** September 2026



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