

## Putting things right

What to do if you have a complaint about a registered social landlord



**TSA**

**TENANT**  
SERVICES  
AUTHORITY

**The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the regulator of registered social landlords in England. 'Registered social landlord' is a technical name for organisations that are registered with us and includes housing associations, co-operatives, housing trusts and companies. (A full list is available on our website or from our Enquiries Team.)**

# Putting things right

In this leaflet we use the term 'associations' to cover all of the organisations registered with us.

At the moment, local councils and arm's-length management organisations (ALMOs) aren't regulated by us, but they are likely to be in the future. If you have a complaint about them you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman (contact details at the end of this leaflet).

The TSA is a new organisation and during 2009, with the help of tenants and others, we'll develop how we're going to regulate in future. This will include how we deal with complaints about associations – so this leaflet will be updated to reflect any changes.

## This leaflet is for:

- people who receive a housing service from an association who want to complain about that association
- other people who want to complain about an association, for example a company or member of the public who has dealt with an association
- employees of an association who want to make an allegation about their employer or 'whistleblow'

Please note that the TSA does not normally investigate complaints or get involved in disputes between individuals or groups and associations and we explain below where you should go to resolve the issues that concern you.

## What should I do if I'm not happy with the way I've been treated by an association or with the service it provides?

- Many problems can be resolved by talking with the association's staff. You may feel there's no point in raising an issue you're concerned about, but usually it is worthwhile. Associations should be pleased to put things right and prevent the same problem happening again. They might not even know there's a problem unless you tell them
- Ask the association for advice if you aren't sure who to talk to about the problem
- Always raise the issue or complaint as soon as possible after it's happened

## How can I make a formal complaint about an association?

If you haven't been able to resolve things informally, you can tell the association that you want to use its formal complaints procedure. All associations registered with us must have an effective complaints and compensation policy for their tenants, leaseholders, shared owners and housing applicants and should give you information about how to complain, who to complain to and what's involved. This may be in your handbook or guidebook, in a leaflet you can get from your association or on its website. All associations should make copies of their complaints policy available on request. The policy and procedure should be clear and easy to follow and should allow you to take your complaint to the people who manage the organisation at a senior level.

If you aren't a tenant, leaseholder, shared owner or housing applicant, you can still ask the association if you can use its formal complaints procedure. If the association says that it doesn't apply to you, ask how you can get your complaint considered. You can also get independent advice about dealing with your complaint from a local advice agency, such as a Citizens Advice Bureau (contact details are given at the end of this leaflet) or a housing or legal advice centre.

## What can I do if I'm not satisfied with the outcome of the association's complaints procedure?

All associations registered with us must be members of the Housing Ombudsman Service – an independent organisation that has been appointed under the law to deal with complaints against housing organisations registered with the Service.

The Ombudsman is independent of landlords, local and central government, and complainants. By law, the Ombudsman must be fair and impartial and must not support or represent anyone's interests.

The Housing Ombudsman can consider different ways to deal with complaints and disputes and make orders or recommendations when he finds that associations are not doing things right. He can also step in if it thinks an association is taking too long to deal with a complaint.

The Housing Ombudsman Service will only consider complaints from people who:

- receive services from an association
- have been all the way through the association's internal complaints procedure but still aren't satisfied or
- have been told by the association that they can't use its procedure.

## When does the TSA get involved in dealing with complaints about an association?

As explained above, we do not normally investigate tenant or leaseholder complaints or get involved in disputes between an association and an individual or group of complainants. However, we might investigate a matter directly with an association if we're concerned about a specific issue or if we see any patterns or trends appearing in the complaints received. In these circumstances we will look at overall performance matters and will not resolve or report back on individual or group complaints.

We will deal with a complaint about an association where this involves an allegation that the organisation or its staff are deliberately acting in a way that's leading to serious mismanagement or fraud. An example would be if you believe someone is awarding contracts through fraud or favouritism. You can send specific details and evidence about the allegation to our Enquiries Team – contact details are given at the end of this leaflet.

If you're an employee of an association and you think your organisation is acting illegally or improperly, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives legal protection to employees who disclose

If you aren't a tenant, leaseholder, shared owner or housing applicant, you can still ask the association if you can use its formal complaints procedure.

information or whistleblow to the TSA on wrongdoing or failures by their employers. You can do this only when you believe people at the organisation are acting illegally or improperly, for example involving regulatory breaches or awarding contracts through fraud or favouritism. You should provide as much evidence as possible to support your concerns so that we can fully investigate. You can send the allegations to the Head of Supervision at the TSA – the address is given at the end of this leaflet. While board members are not covered by this legislation, the TSA will treat whistleblowing by a board member in a similar manner.

## Useful contact details

Enquiries Team  
Tenant Services Authority  
1 Park Lane  
Leeds LS3 1EP

Tel: 0845 230 7000  
Fax: 0113 233 7101  
Email: [enquiries@tsa.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tsa.gsx.gov.uk)

[www.tenantservicesauthority.org](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org)

Housing Ombudsman Service  
81 Aldwych  
London WC2B 4HN

Tel: 020 7421 3800  
Fax: 020 7831 1942  
Lo-Call: 0845 7125 973  
Minicom: 020 7404 7092  
Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

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

Local Government  
Ombudsman Service  
PO Box 4771

Coventry CV4 0EH  
Tel: 0845 602 1983  
Fax: 024 7682 0001

[www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

For details of your nearest  
Citizens Advice Bureau contact:

National Association of  
Citizens Advice Bureau  
Myddelton House  
115-123 Pentonville Road  
London N1 9LZ

Tel: 020 7833 2181 (admin only  
– no advice given on this number)

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Advice Guide  
[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

LEASE (Leasehold  
Advisory Service)  
31 Worship Street  
London, EC2A 2DX

Tel: 020 7374 5380  
Fax: 020 7374 5373  
Email: [info@lease-advice.org](mailto:info@lease-advice.org)

If your complaint is about discrimination you can also contact:

**Equality and Human Rights  
Commission Helpline  
Freepost RRLG-GHUX-CTR  
Arndale House  
Arndale Centre  
Manchester M4 3EQ**

**Tel: 0845 604 6610**

**Fax: 0845 604 6630**

**Text: 0845 604 6620**

For whistleblowing allegations:

**Head of Supervision  
Tenant Services Authority  
Maple House  
149 Tottenham Court Rd  
London W1T 7BN**

**Tel: 0845 230 7000**

You should provide as much evidence as possible to support your concerns so that we can fully investigate. You can send the allegations to the Head of Supervision at the TSA.

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What to do if you have a complaint about a registered social landlord?

This leaflet explains how to make a complaint about a housing association. It gives advice for people who live in a housing association home or who receive services from an association, are companies or members of the public, or who work for an association and want to make an allegation about their employer.

