

# Complaints



Your guide to considering  
what is a complaint  
and how to go about reporting it

# About this booklet

The aim of this booklet is to tell you:

- How to report an issue or complaint
- What we will do when investigating an issue reported to us
- How to appeal a decision
- What we can do to put things right
- How we will deal with residents whose behaviour may be deemed to be unreasonable

Sandbourne Housing Association aims to provide applicants, residents and stakeholders with high-quality services and we always try to get things right the first time. However, we appreciate that sometimes this doesn't happen and mistakes are made.

We may not always know when there is a problem, so it helps to know where you think we can improve services. We have changed the way we work as a result of learning from complaints and other feedback and we appreciate the time you take to contact us if we do get it wrong.

This booklet gives you more information about what you can do if you think that Sandbourne, or our contractors, need to put things right.

At the end of this booklet you will find a form that can be returned to us, or you can contact us by telephone, email, or by post if you want to discuss how to report an issue to us.

## **What is, and what will happen when I want to make a complaint?**

When you report something to us with an expectation that we will deal with it, this is not considered to be a complaint. It only becomes a valid complaint if we fail to respond, fail to deal reasonably with the issue reported to us, or we do not meet our service standards.

As an example, complaints about neighbour nuisance or reports of anti-social behaviour are taken very seriously but are dealt with by the housing team in the first instance. However, you may make a complaint if you feel that Sandbourne has failed to deal with the nuisance or anti-social behaviour reasonably. Plus, if you report a repair it is not a complaint, although can become a complaint if not dealt with in accordance with our policy or procedures and published timescales or the repair is to a poor standard etc.

We will not investigate complaints about issues that date back more than twelve months.

## **If I make a complaint, how will it be handled?**

There are three stages to Sandbourne's internal complaints process. This is to make sure that you are satisfied with the way in which we deal with your complaint and that you have a fair opportunity to appeal against any outcomes you may disagree with. However, we may close a complaint before it has been through the internal process unless there is clear evidence to show

that we have not fully investigated the matter or the issue reported to us remains unresolved.

Each stage of the process is detailed on the following pages.

## Stage 1

We ask you try to resolve any problems with us informally. If you are not able to do this, you can ask to make a formal complaint. You can do this by completing the form at the end of this booklet or by writing, ringing or emailing us at our registered office.

When we receive a formal complaint, we will check to make sure that it is not an on-going issue, or that measures are already in place to deal with it. Depending on the nature of the issue, or any needs that you may have, the relevant officer may contact you for clarification and to discuss with you how you would like the issue resolved.

If we accept your complaint, we will acknowledge it within five working days and provide details of who will carry out the investigation and when you can expect a response.

Following that investigation, we will write to you with the outcome and explain what we intend to do to resolve the matter. We will try to make sure you receive a response within 10 working days of it being acknowledged.

If the issue is complex, it could take more than 10 working days to fully investigate it. If this happens, we will contact you to explain why we need more time and provide an updated response date. We may still ask that

you give staff time to resolve the issue informally. We will make sure we give you reasons why we think this and we will still aim to resolve the matter to your satisfaction.

## Stage 2

If you believe that the problem or issue reported has not been resolved, or that we have not investigated your complaint fully, you can contact us and request that it be investigated at Stage 2. You will, however, need to provide evidence to show why you think that we have not resolved the issue or investigated the matter fully. You will need to do this within 56 days of receiving your Stage 1 response.

If we accept a Stage 2 investigation, we will acknowledge your wish to proceed to the next stage within five working days. If we believe that the issue reported has been fully investigated and we have provided a satisfactory response, we may close the case. If we do this, we will contact you with the reason for our decision.

At Stage 2, your complaint will be investigated by a manager who has not been involved in your case, and they will aim to write to you with the results of their investigations within 10 working days.

At Stages 1 and 2, staff investigating the complaint may arrange to meet with you in your home to get a better understanding of the problem being reported and to discuss with you how best to resolve the issue.

## Stage 3

If your complaint has still not been resolved to your satisfaction following the Stage 2 investigation, you can request that the complaint be referred to the Chair of Sandbourne's Board who may then convene a Complaints Panel.

Please contact Sandbourne's Chief Executive within 56 days of receiving your Stage 2 response to explain why you remain unhappy.

Similar to Stage 2, you will need to provide evidence that your complaint has not been investigated fully or that the problem reported remains unresolved. If we believe the issue reported has been fully investigated and we have provided a satisfactory response, we may close the case. If we do this, we will contact you with the reason for our decision.

## Designated person(s)

This was introduced as part of the Localism Act 2012 and is designed to help residents and landlords resolve issues and problems locally. If you remain unhappy or dissatisfied following Sandbourne's investigation into your complaint, you can ask a designated person to investigate on your behalf. There are two categories of people who can be a 'designated person':

### **A local councillor**

You can approach your own ward councillor, or any other in the area, and ask them to investigate the complaint on your behalf.

## **An elected Member of Parliament**

You have the right to approach any MP from anywhere in the UK and ask them to investigate the complaint.

The designated person will be required to contact Sandbourne Housing Association to notify us that they have been asked to investigate the complaint, at which time we will provide all relevant documents and information needed to assist with their investigation. Sandbourne is unable to influence the investigation in any way, so we will refer the designated person to relevant guidance and sources of support if they require assistance.

To make sure that the complaint is considered in a timely manner, we will ask the designated person to complete the investigation and provide both you and Sandbourne with their findings/recommendations within 20 working days.

Sandbourne will always consider the findings of the designated person's investigation and will welcome any further opportunity to resolve the complaint locally. However, if there remains disagreement between Sandbourne and you (as the complainant) as to the preferred outcome, you can refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

If you do not wish to have your complaint investigated by a designated person, you can approach any of the above and ask that they refer it immediately to the Housing Ombudsman Service on your behalf or you can wait eight weeks from when you receive Sandbourne's response to the Stage 3 investigation and refer directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service yourself.

## Housing Ombudsman Service

Housing association applicants, tenants and leaseholders can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to investigate a complaint if they remain unhappy or dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation.

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

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

Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/) (for online complaints)

## How will Sandbourne put things right?

There are a number of actions we can take to put things right if we have made a mistake. We can:

- Make an apology
- Carry out work, such as repairs, or make right any damage to your home
- Make the decision which should have been made in the first place
- Re-consider and over-turn an earlier decision
- Improve our procedures and train staff

If we find that you have been disadvantaged in some way, either by the cause of your complaint or in pursuing it, we may consider paying compensation. Generally, compensation will be a payment to recognise distress or



inconvenience caused to you. This will be determined by the person who investigates your complaint.

**Please note that if the complaint is subject to an insurance claim, we cannot accept liability until the outcome of the claim is known.**

## **How does Sandbourne monitor complaints?**

All formal complaints and outcomes received by us are reported to our Board every quarter. Once your complaint has been resolved, you may be invited to take part in a short satisfaction survey about the way your complaint was handled.

## **Unreasonable behaviour**

Generally, when Sandbourne receives a complaint, it is dealt with in a straightforward manner and the complainant agrees to follow the process, allowing staff time to complete the investigation.

In a minority of cases, however, some people can behave in a way that impedes the investigation of their complaint and this can cause a significant resource issue for Sandbourne. This can include unreasonable behaviour, being overly persistent by frequently requesting information, repeatedly contacting staff, or being abusive towards those investigating the complaint. Others may refuse to accept the outcome of an investigation, even when the reasons why and evidence are presented to show how a decision was reached. In a very few number of cases, the grounds for the

complaint can be unfounded or the allegations can be considered vexatious.

Details of how Sandbourne will manage such actions and behaviour, if we believe it is appropriate to do so, are contained within the 'Acting reasonably' booklet and our Policy on Management of Unreasonable Behaviour.

## Need more information?

See our Policy on Complaints, Compliments and Comments which is available on our website or upon request from our office.

You can write to us at our registered office:

Beech House, 28-30 Wimborne Road, Poole, BH15 2BU

Email us on: [info@sandbourne.org.uk](mailto:info@sandbourne.org.uk)

Website: [www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk](http://www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk)

Telephone us on: 01202 671222

Please note that telephone calls to the registered office number above may be recorded for information and training purposes.

In addition, we do have a range of other leaflets on specific topics, available on our website or upon request from our office.



# Customer Complaint form

Before you complete this form, have you contacted Sandbourne Housing Association first to see if we can help?

Name:			
Address:			
Tel No:		Mobile:	
Email:			

Have you complained about this before?	Yes		No	
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Details of complaint (please provide as much information as possible and continue overleaf if necessary)

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Signed:		Date:	
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Please detach this form from the booklet and return it in an envelope addressed to: Sandbourne Housing Association, Beech House, 28-30 Wimborne Road, Poole, BH15 2BU.