

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 a complaint and what will happen if I want to make one?

When you report something to us with an expectation that we will deal with it, this is known as a 'service request'. It becomes a complaint if you are dissatisfied with the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Sandbourne, our staff or those acting on our behalf, that affects you or other residents.

Where a complaint is made, we will continue to do everything we can to complete the original service request.

What is not a complaint?

We will consider complaints individually, and generally accept them unless there is a valid reason not to do so which will be explained in our response. The reasons why we may not accept a complaint include:

- The issue that gives rise to the complaint occurred over 12 months ago.
- Legal proceedings have begun.
- The issue has already been considered under our Complaints Policy.
- Anonymous letters, although these may be investigated if they are a cause for concern.
- Reports of a nuisance or disputes between neighbours. These are dealt with through our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- A complaint about a service where we have no responsibility, such as local authority nomination procedures.

- A claim for damages that should be handle as an insurance claim.
- An expression of dissatisfaction made in response to a survey. However, we will ensure that those taking part in the survey are made aware that they can make a complaint if they wish to.

If we do not accept your complaint, you can refer our decision to the Housing Ombudsman who, if they think we have acted unfairly require us to accept it and investigate in accordance with our Complaints Policy.

How can I make a complaint?

You can raise a complaint with any member of our team. Complaints do not need to be in writing, and you can raise them in a range of ways:

- Call us on 01202 671222. Office hours are Monday - Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm but you can leave a message outside these times, and we will get back to you the next working day.
- Write to us at the address provided on the front of this leaflet.
- Drop us an email, either at info@sandbourne.org.uk or via our website at [Contact Sandbourne Housing Association](#).
- If you meet a member of our team, either by appointment or when they are on site and have a complaint, please let them know.
- Complete and return the tear-off section at the back of this leaflet.
- Complete and return the tear-off section included in our quarterly newsletter.

Remember if you would prefer to have information about how to make a complaint in larger print, braille, or in a language other than English, the please let us know.

Alternatively, if you would prefer to have a representative raise and deal with a complaint on your behalf, then provided you confirm this to us, we are happy to accept such a request.

If you would like independent advice about either making a complaint, or the way in which we are managing it, this is available from the Housing Ombudsman, whose contact details are provided at the back of this leaflet.

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

There are two stages to our internal complaints process. This is so that we can be sure that you are satisfied with the way in which we address your complaint, and that you have fair opportunity to appeal against any decisions that we make.

When we receive a complaint we will confirm our understanding of it, and the resolution we believe you are looking for in writing. This is the opportunity for you to let us know if we have misunderstood or misinterpreted any aspect of your complaint, so that we can correct this.

Team members investigating your complaints at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 may as part of their work ask to meet you in your home to get a better understanding of either your complaint, or the resolution that you are looking for.

The stages of the complaints process are:

Stage 1

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

If we accept your complaint (see 'What is not a complaint'), we will acknowledge it within five working days, setting out our understanding of it, together with the resolution that you are looking for and, let you know who will be carrying out the investigation. Once this has been completed, we will provide you with our full response within ten working days of the acknowledgement.

In a small number of cases, we may need longer to complete our investigations. Where this is necessary, we will explain the reasons for the delays (which will not usually be more than a further ten working days) and provide you with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman. The duration of any further extension will be agreed with you as necessary.

Stage 2

If you think that the problem or issue that you reported has not been resolved, or we have not investigated your complaint fully, you can contact us and request that it be investigated at Stage 2, which will be our final response.

We will acknowledge your escalation request within five working days, and let you know who will be conducting the investigation. Please be aware that the person undertaking this will not have previously been involved at Stage 1.

Once the investigation has been completed, we will provide you with our full response within twenty working days of the acknowledgement. This will be our final response to the complaint.

In a small number of cases, we may need longer to complete our investigations. Where this is necessary, we will explain the reasons for the delay (which will not usually be more than a further twenty working days) and provide you with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman. The duration of any further extension will be agreed with you a necessary.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Housing association applicants, tenants and leaseholders can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice whilst we are considering complaint at Stage 1 or Stage 2.

Alternatively, if you remain satisfied with our response at Stage 2 you can ask the Housing Ombudsman to investigate your complaint.

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

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

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

How will Sandbourne put things right?

If we make a mistake, we try to take some practical steps quickly to put this right, including asking you what you would like to see from us. We may for example:

- Apologise to you.
- Acknowledge where things have gone wrong.
- Provide an explanation, help or reasons why things went wrong.
- Take action if there has been a delay.
- Change a policy or procedure.
- Reconsider or change a decision.
- Amend a record or make a correction.
- Pay compensation.
- Offer independent mediation at either stage of the complaints process.

We will make sure that the remedy we offer is appropriate to the situation, reflects the impact of the mistake, and the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman. We will also ensure that the remedy is followed through to completion.

How does Sandbourne monitor and learn from complaints?

Each year we will publish a complaints performance and service improvement plan detailing the number and types of complaints received, including those that we have not accepted. This report will also include details of the outcome of any complaints that were referred to the

Housing Ombudsman and what we have changed or learnt as a result.

In addition, annually we will assess ourselves against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code, publish this on our website at [Information and Downloads](#), together with the response of our Board.

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 small 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' leaflet and our Policy on Management of Unreasonable Behaviour.

Need more information?

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

You can write to us at our registered office:

Craikleith First Floor Office, 9 Derby Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3PX

Email us on: info@sandbourne.org.uk

Website: 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.

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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, Craigleith First Floor Office, 9 Derby Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3PX.

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