

Complaints Procedure





COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

For the purposes of definition, a complaint may be a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction in regard to our performance. For example, you have a right to make a complaint if:

- ★ you are unhappy with the standard of service provided by Ark Housing; or
- ★ you have been unfairly or rudely treated by a member of staff; or
- ★ Ark Housing has failed in its duty as a landlord, partner or public body.

If the complaint relates to the actions, inactions, perceived failures or behaviours of others, then this complaints process is not appropriate.

For example, if the complaint relates to a new case of anti-social behaviour or a failure attributable to other bodies such as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) or the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Ark Housing staff will be happy to guide you to the appropriate agency, body or policy to which your concern relates to.

Who Can Complain?

- ★ Tenants, residents, members of the public or their personal representatives;
- ★ Members of the legislative Assembly or other locally elected representatives who are complaining on behalf of a member of the public;
- ★ Officers or representatives of partnering organisations;
- ★ Any other person who has a complaint to make about the standard of service provided by Ark Housing.

Complaint Time Limits

There is no time limit for making a complaint. However, we advise that any complaint should be submitted as soon as is reasonably practical to ensure that it can be properly and fairly investigated.

Procedure

There are two stages to Ark Housing's Complaints Procedure:

- ★ Stage 1: The Informal Procedure
- ★ Stage 2: The Formal Procedure



Stage 1: The Informal Procedure

The informal complaints procedure is intended to provide an opportunity for Ark Housing to address your concern at as early a stage as possible.

You or your representative should first raise your complaint informally with the relevant contact, i.e. a member of the Housing & Customer Services Team, a Homeless Services Officer or Scheme Manager. Our primary aim will be to consider if we can resolve your concern immediately.

You can complain in person, in writing, by phone or by email, through our website or through a third party.

The informal complaints process is designed to deal with matters of concern that can be addressed quickly by frontline officers and which do not necessarily require a formal investigation to take place.

In the event that the informal complaints process has failed to address your concern or if you feel that the informal process is not the appropriate channel to deal with your matter, then a formal complaint may be raised using the formal complaints procedure.

Stage 2: The Formal Procedure

All formal complaints should preferably be made on an official Ark Housing Complaints Form and forwarded to:

The Chief Executive, Ark Housing Association
Hawthorn Office Park, Unit 1, 43 Stockmans Way,
Belfast BT9 7ET.

Complaint forms may be requested by emailing info@arkhousing.co.uk, by telephoning Head Office and speaking to our Housing & Customer Services Team on 028 90 752310 or online through the Ark Housing website: www.arkhousing.co.uk

Upon receipt of your formal complaint, it will be recorded on our Complaints Register and an acknowledgement letter sent to you within 3 working days. Your complaint will be forwarded to the Chief Executive's nominee who will undertake an investigation.

A decision on your complaint will be taken within 20 working days and you will be informed in writing, normally within 3 working days of the decision being reached.

You will also be advised of your right to appeal if you remain dissatisfied with the decision.

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APPEAL PROCEDURE

On receipt of your appeal, it will be recorded, and an acknowledgement letter issued to you within 3 working days. The circumstances of your case and the grounds for appeal will be reviewed by the person appointed to consider your appeal (usually the Chief Executive or Director) and, if necessary, a further investigation may be undertaken.

A decision on your appeal will be made within 20 working days of receipt and you will receive written notification of the appeal decision within 3 working days of the decision being reached by the appointed person.

You will also be advised of your right to make a further appeal to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Once our internal complaints procedure has been completed, you have the right to take your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman can be contacted by:

- ★ Writing to The Public Services Ombudsman, Freepost NIPSO, Belfast, BT1 6HN
- ★ Freephone: 0800 343424
- ★ Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

It should be noted that the Ombudsman normally expects that a complainant will have exhausted the Association's internal complaints procedure before contacting the Ombudsman's office.

Further information on the role of the Public Services Ombudsman is available on www.nipso.org.uk