



14

Section 14 —

If you are unhappy: complaints

The main points

- ✓ If you are unhappy with something we have done, please tell us. We want to know.
- ✓ You can tell us in any way you like. You do not have to write it down.
- ✓ Someone else can complain for you if you would rather.
- ✓ You can complain about your support provider as well as about us.
- ✓ **Nothing bad will happen to you for complaining.** It will not affect your home or your support.
- ✓ If you are still unhappy at the end, you can go to the Housing Ombudsman. You do not have to wait.

What a complaint is

A complaint is when you are unhappy about something we have done, or something we have not done.

You do not have to use the word "complaint". If you tell us you are unhappy, we will ask if you would like us to treat it as a complaint.

Telling us something is broken is not a complaint

If something in your home needs fixing, that is a **repair**. Tell your support worker, or tell us on Fixflo, and we will fix it. See Section 5.

If we then do not fix it, or we do it badly, or we do not come when we said, **that** can be a complaint.

Both matter. We just deal with them in different ways.

What you can complain about

You can complain about anything we do, or anything we should have done. For example:

- a repair that was not done, or not done properly
- damp or mould that was not dealt with
- the way a member of staff spoke to you
- not being told something you needed to know
- something that took too long

Some jobs are done for us by your support worker. For example, testing your smoke alarm, checking your hot water is not too hot, keeping fire doors clear, and telling us about repairs.

If one of those jobs has not been done properly, **complain to us**. Those jobs are Harbour Light's responsibility, even though someone else does them.

Complaints about your care or support are different. For example, how a support worker treated you, or help you did not receive. Your support provider deals with those. They have their own complaints procedure and they must tell you how it works. You can also contact the Care Quality Commission, or the council.

If you are not sure which it is, tell us anyway. We will help you get it to the right place, and we will check it has been passed on. You do not have to work it out yourself.

How to complain

You can complain in **any way you like**. You do not have to fill in a form.

- **Telephone us** on 0151 909 5919.
- **Email us** at complaints@harbourlight.org.uk.
- **Write to us** at Harbour Light Assisted Living, 71 Linacre Road, Litherland, Merseyside, L21 8NP.
- **Tell any member of Harbour Light staff**, in person or on the telephone.

You do not have to go through your support worker. You can come straight to us.

Someone can complain for you

If you would rather someone else did it, they can. You can ask:

- your support worker
- a relative or a friend

- an advocate
- your social worker
- your appointee or deputy
- a solicitor, a councillor or your MP

Just tell us who is acting for you.

If you would like help to make a complaint but do not know who to ask, telephone us and we will help you.

Nothing bad will happen because you complained

Some people worry that complaining will cause trouble. It will not.

Complaining will not affect your home. It will not affect your tenancy. It will not affect your support.

We would much rather know when something is wrong. It helps us put it right and do better next time.

What happens when you complain

Stage 1

Within 5 working days, we will contact you to say we have received your complaint. This is called acknowledging it.

We will also check we have understood you properly. We will ask what you would like us to do to put it right.

Within 10 working days after that, we will write to you with our answer. We will tell you:

- what we found out
- whether we think something went wrong
- what we are going to do about it

If we need more time, we will tell you why, and we will give you a new date. We will not normally take more than **10 extra working days**. If we ever need longer than that, we will explain why. Whenever we need more time, we will also give you the Housing Ombudsman's details.

Stage 2

If you are not happy with our Stage 1 answer, you can ask us to look again. This is called Stage 2. A different, more senior person will look at it.

Just tell us you want to go to Stage 2. You do not have to give a reason.

Within 5 working days, we will contact you to say we have received it.

Within 20 working days after that, we will write to you with our final answer.

If we need more time, we will tell you why and give you a new date. We will not normally take more than **20 extra working days**. If we ever need longer than that, we will explain why. We will also give you the Housing Ombudsman's details.

Putting things right

If we got something wrong, we will say so.

Depending on what happened, we might:

- say sorry
- explain what went wrong
- put the problem right
- change how we do things, so it does not happen again
- in some cases, pay you money for a loss you have had

The Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman is independent. They are not part of Harbour Light. They look at complaints about landlords, and their service is free.

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time for advice about your complaint.

When we have given you our Stage 2 answer, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman to look at your complaint.

You do not have to wait. You do not need a councillor or an MP to do it for you.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Online complaint form: housing-ombudsman.org.uk/online-complaint-form

Website: housing-ombudsman.org.uk

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

Your support worker, a relative or an advocate can help you contact them.

If you need help to complain

If reading, writing or telephoning is difficult for you, tell us and we will find a way that works for you.

We can:

- take your complaint over the telephone and write it down for you
- meet you in person
- send our answers in a bigger size, or in a way that is easier to understand
- explain our answer to you, or to someone helping you

Just ask us, or ask your support worker to ask for you.

Getting help to understand this

If any of this is hard to understand, that is OK. Ask your support worker. You can also ask a relative, a friend or an advocate to help you.

You can ask us for this information on paper, in a bigger size, or in another format. Just ask us or ask your support worker.

More detail

This box is for tenants who want the legal detail, and for support staff, relatives, advocates and social workers. You do not need to read it to understand the section above.

Statutory basis. The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code has been statutory since 1 April 2024, given legal effect under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Compliance is mandatory for registered providers.

Definition of a complaint. The Code defines a complaint as "an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents".

Where the boundary falls. Harbour Light's complaints process covers the **delegated housing functions** carried out by support staff as Harbour Light's agent under SLA clause 2.7 — weekly testing of smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms, weekly water-temperature checks, periodic flushing of little-used outlets, keeping fire exits clear, and reporting disrepair. That delegation does not discharge Harbour Light of the underlying duty, so a failure in those functions is a failure of Harbour Light's housing service.

Regulated care is not within Harbour Light's process. Complaints about personal care, support delivery or support staff conduct are matters for the support provider's own complaints procedure under Regulation 16 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, and where relevant for the Care Quality

Commission or the local authority. Harbour Light has no standing in relation to another employer's staff and does not investigate such matters. Harbour Light will assist the resident to reach the correct route, confirm the referral has been made, and remains responsible for how it handled the referral itself.

Timescales.

Stage	Acknowledge	Full written response	Maximum extension
Stage 1	5 working days	10 working days from acknowledgement	A further 10 working days, or longer only with good reason, explained to the resident
Stage 2	5 working days	20 working days from acknowledgement	A further 20 working days, or longer only with good reason, explained to the resident

Where any extension is applied, the resident must be given the Housing Ombudsman's contact details.

Access to the Ombudsman. The "democratic filter" — the former requirement to refer a complaint through a designated person (councillor, MP or tenant panel) or to wait eight weeks — was removed on 1 October 2022. Residents may approach the Housing Ombudsman directly once the landlord's internal process has concluded, and may contact the Ombudsman for advice at any stage.

Accessibility. The Code requires landlords to provide an accessible complaints service and not to require complaints to be made in a specific form. Harbour Light will accept a complaint by any means and will make reasonable adjustments to the process on request (see Section 13).

Complaints made by representatives. Complaints may be made by a resident's representative. Harbour Light will work with representatives where a resident wishes.

Complaints about personal care. Complaints concerning regulated personal care are matters for the support provider and, where relevant, the Care Quality Commission or the local authority. Harbour Light will assist a resident to reach the appropriate route rather than simply redirecting them.

Self-assessment and reporting. The Code requires landlords to complete and publish an annual self-assessment against the Code, and to publish an annual complaints performance and service improvement report considered by the governing body.

Record keeping. Harbour Light records all complaints, the response at each stage, and any resulting service improvements, in line with the Housing Ombudsman's expectations on knowledge and information management.