

This Factsheet is about complaints about housing/ transfer applications. It should be read together with our general leaflet about our service. You may also wish to read our homelessness leaflet which may also be relevant.

Councils and housing associations must have a written policy explaining how they will offer their properties taking into account the person's needs.

There are stricter legal requirements on the Council e.g. there are certain people that it has to give a reasonable preference to (a head-start) including: homeless people; those living in overcrowded or unsuitable housing; people who have certain medical needs or disabilities; this also applies to transfers.

Housing associations can be more flexible in who they offer accommodation to e.g. they might refuse to offer you housing if you already owe rent arrears to another landlord.

The Council's or housing association's policy will set out how it will decide who gets offered housing first e.g. a points scheme; band scheme/quotas; or a bidding system for certain properties.

What the Ombudsman can do

He can look at:

- whether your housing application has been dealt with properly.
- whether the Council or housing association has properly applied its policy to your housing application e.g. are you in the correct band?
- whether the organisation has told you how it has dealt with your housing application e.g. has it sent you a letter detailing any points awarded?
- whether the organisation has delayed dealing with changes in your situation which you have told it about e.g. you have been asked to leave your home.
- why your application may have been suspended e.g. has the Council followed the correct procedure if the reason(s) for suspension is your behaviour?

What the Ombudsman cannot do

He cannot:

- force the Council/Housing Association to give you a house, or any particular house that you may want.
- change a properly made decision about your housing application.

Issues to bear in mind

There are not enough houses for everyone who wants one.

The policy may limit the number of offers you can be given or restrict the areas you can choose on your housing application.

Further information

You may want to consider contacting the following organisations for advice:

Shelter Cymru which provides independent and free housing advice and support. You can contact them by phone on **0845 075 5005** or via the internet at www.sheltercymru.org.uk.

Citizens Advice Cymru which provides independent and free advice and support on a range of problems (including housing). You can contact them via the internet at www.citizensadvice.org.uk (selecting the 'Wales' site page option) and entering your postcode for details on how to reach your nearest CAC advice office.

Cardiff Law Centre which provides independent and free advice and support on a range of problems (including housing) for those living and working in the City and County of Cardiff only. You can contact them by phone on **029 2049 8117** or via the internet at www.lawcentres.org.uk. The Law Centres Federation also operates a Community Legal Advice helpline (which covers England and Wales) on **0845 345 4345** or via the internet at www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk.

The Ombudsman is independent and impartial; he cannot order public bodies to do what he recommends – but, in practice, they almost always do.

Examples of cases that the Ombudsman has looked at can be found on our website. Please see www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

If you are unsure whether the Ombudsman would be able to look into your complaint, please contact us:

- **phone** 0845 601 0987;
- **e-mail** ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk;
- **visit the website at** www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk;
- **write to:** The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ