

Pet Policy

Summary

Pets can improve wellbeing and quality of life, but they must be cared for properly and kept in suitable homes.

This policy explains when pets can be kept in Portsmouth Homes properties, when permission is needed, and the responsibilities of pet owners. It also outlines how Portsmouth Homes will respond to concerns about nuisance, safety or animal welfare.

The policy applies to all Portsmouth Homes residents and aims to support responsible pet ownership while protecting neighbours, shared areas, homes and pets.

Effective date

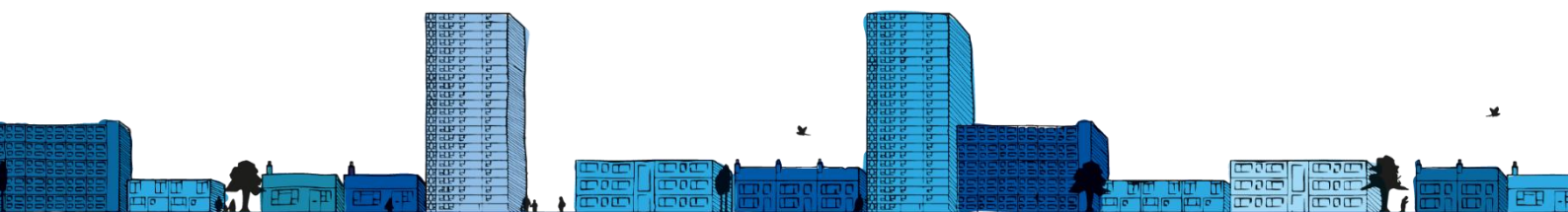
TBC

Review

We will review this Policy every 3 years or when there has been an update to legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational changes.

Version

Version V1.0



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Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to all Portsmouth Homes residents including tenants, leaseholders and shared owners. It sets out how pets are managed in your homes and covers:

- Domesticated pets kept inside the home or within a private garden
- Small caged animals, reptiles, birds, cats, dogs and fish
- Visiting pets
- How permission is given, refused or withdrawn
- How we manage nuisance, complaints and welfare concerns
- Pets using communal and shared areas (for example gardens, corridors, landings, lifts, balconies and outdoor spaces)

If there is any conflict between this policy and a tenancy agreement, lease or statutory requirement, the tenancy agreement, lease or law will take priority. Portsmouth Homes will explain what this means when a resident requests permission.

Assistance dogs are not treated as pets and are covered in a dedicated section because of their specific legal status.

Any reference in this policy to 'we', 'our' or 'us' refers to Portsmouth Homes.

Any reference in this policy to 'tenant', 'customer' or 'resident' refers to a Portsmouth Homes resident, leaseholder or shared owner.



Why we have a pet policy

The purpose of this policy is to support responsible pet ownership while ensuring pets do not cause nuisance, safety risks or adverse impacts on neighbours, communal areas or homes.

This policy aims to:

- Promote responsible pet ownership
- Balance the benefits of pet ownership with the need to protect others' enjoyment of their homes
- Prevent and manage issues such as noise, fouling, damage, nuisance, safety risks, and animal welfare concerns
- Provide a fair, consistent process for requesting permission and recording pets
- Explain how we respond to concerns, including working with appropriate partners such as local authority services, the police and animal welfare organisations where appropriate

To support these aims, we will:

- Make decisions fairly, consistently and based on evidence
- Intervene early to prevent issues escalating
- Offer advice, information and signposting to welfare and support organisations
- Take a supportive and non-judgemental approach to encouraging responsible pet ownership

This policy operates alongside tenancy and lease conditions.

Definitions

Pet	An animal kept in your home (e.g., cat, dog, rabbit, small caged animals, birds, reptiles, fish).
Pet Agreement	A written agreement that confirms permission to keep a specific pet and sets out clear and reasonable conditions the resident must follow. If concerns arise, we will review the agreement fairly and explain any decision in writing.
Communal areas	Any shared garden, entrance, corridor, landing, lift, or outdoor space shared with other residents.
Nuisance	Nuisance means behaviour or conditions that cause significant or unreasonable disturbance, such as persistent noise, odours, fouling, roaming or aggressive behaviour, and which may in some cases amount to statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
Welfare Concern indicators	Any situation where an animal's needs under Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 may not be met, including lack of



	food/water, unsafe environment, untreated illness, overcrowding, or abandonment.
Assistance Dog (Equality Act 2010)	An assistance dog is not classed as a pet and has been trained to carry out specific tasks that help a disabled person live more independently. They are legally considered an auxiliary aid, meaning we must make reasonable adjustments to allow them.
Support Dog / Emotional Support Animal (ESA)	A support dog or emotional support animal (ESA) provides comfort or emotional support but is not trained to carry out specific tasks like an assistance dog. Support animals are not automatically treated as assistance dogs. However, we will look at each request on a case-by-case basis, including whether allowing a support animal would be a reasonable adjustment for a disabled resident.
Good reason	For the purposes of this policy, a good reason includes, but is not limited to: • legal restrictions or requirements • the suitability of the property or building layout • risk to people, animals or property • serious or persistent nuisance or antisocial behaviour • failure to comply with tenancy, lease or Pet Agreement conditions • animal welfare concerns supported by evidence

Keeping a pet: when permission is needed

Pets that do not normally need permission

You can normally keep the following without asking permission first, provided they are kept appropriately and the home is suitable:

- caged animals such as hamsters, mice, rats, guinea pigs and rabbits
- birds normally kept in cages or aviaries suitable for the species
- fish kept in a domestic aquarium of a reasonable size for the home

Where permission is not required, this policy still applies. All pets must be:

- kept safely and under control
- well cared for, with their welfare needs met
- prevented from causing nuisance, damage or concern to neighbours



Aquariums must be suitable for the type and number of fish kept, reasonable for the size of the home, and capable of being safely supported by standard flooring and furniture, without requiring structural or electrical alterations.

If a pet does not meet the requirements of this policy, we will review the situation in line with the Decision making and enforcement section.

Pets visiting your home

Pets can visit for occasional, short daytime visits without permission.

This does **not** include regular, overnight or weekly stays.

You are responsible for ensuring visiting pets are kept under control and do not cause problems (including noise, damage, nuisance, safety risks or welfare concerns) inside the home or in communal / shared areas.

If visits become frequent, regular, overnight or ongoing, this will normally be treated as keeping a pet and will require permission under this policy.

Pets that need permission

Permission is required before keeping:

- a cat
- a dog
- any pet that is not listed in the "Pets that do not normally need permission" section
- exotic or specialist pets (for example reptiles, amphibians, arachnids, invertebrates and other small exotic animals)
- a large or specialist fish tank / aquarium

We will normally allow:

- **up to 2 pets in houses**
- **up to 1 pet in all other properties**, such as flats or properties with shared entrances

These limits are a **starting point for assessment and are not an automatic entitlement**. Each request is considered on a case by case basis.

When assessing numbers, we will also take account of animal welfare needs. Some species require companionship to meet their welfare needs, and this will be considered as part of our decision-making.

Permission is given for each individual pet. If a resident wishes to keep an additional pet, a new request must be made.

Residents do not need to tell us when a pet dies or is re-homed, unless the pet was recorded in a Pet Agreement and the resident later wishes to keep another pet.



Changes to the home for pets (permission required)

You must request permission before making changes to the home for a pet. This includes (for example):

- installing a pet flap
- any alterations needed to support large aquariums (such as structural strengthening flooring, specialist stands, pipework or electrical supply)

We will need to check proposed changes are safe, do not affect fire / building safety requirements and do not damage doors, walls or other parts of the building (especially in buildings with shared/communal areas).

Any approved changes must be carried out safely and to an acceptable standard. You may be required to reinstate the property to its original condition when you move out, in line with your tenancy or lease.

Leaseholders and shared owners – important information

Leaseholders /shared owners may have lease conditions or restrictions about pets and alterations. Where these apply, they take priority over this policy.

Where lease restrictions apply, we may not be able to grant permission for a pet or related alterations.

Where the lease allows us to exercise discretion, requests will be considered in line with this policy and the resident's circumstances.

If permission is required and a pet is kept (or alterations are made) without consent, we will take action in accordance with the lease.

We may charge a reasonable administration fee to consider requests where permitted under the lease. Any fee will be explained in advance. We will not charge this fee if permission is requested before buying the home.

Keeping pet records up to date

We keep records of pets to support safety, building management and fair decision making.

During routine visits (for example Tenancy Update Visits), staff may ask what pets are kept in the home so records can be kept accurate.

This is for record keeping and will not lead to enforcement action unless there are serious concerns about welfare, safety or nuisance.

If a resident already had a pet when this policy takes effect and permission was not previously required or recorded, we may ask the resident to complete a request so records can be updated.



We will not take enforcement action simply because a pet existed before this policy, unless there are welfare, safety or serious nuisance concerns.

How to request permission

Before bringing the pet home

You must contact us before bringing a pet into the home where permission is required.

You must have written permission before keeping the pet. This applies even if the resident already owns the pet before moving in.

To request permission, residents must complete the **Application to keep a pet form**.

Requests that exceed the usual pet limits will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, for example where there is clear evidence the home is suitable, strong welfare arrangements are in place and there is no foreseeable impact on neighbours.

Timescales (calendar days)

Timescales are measured in calendar days (including weekends and bank holidays):

- We aim to provide a written decision within 28 calendar days of receiving a completed request
- If more information is needed, we will contact you within 14 calendar days
- Once additional information is received and the request is complete, we aim to confirm the final decision within 7-14 calendar days

If the request is approved:

- We will confirm approval in writing and ask you to sign a Pet Agreement
- permission applies only to the named pet(s) and the current address
- if the resident moves or wants an additional pet, new permission must be requested

Decision making principles are set out in **Decision making and enforcement**.

The pet agreement

If we approve a request, you will be asked to sign a Pet Ownership Agreement.

The Agreement:

- confirms which pet(s) are permitted and at which address
- sets clear conditions to help prevent nuisance, damage or safety issues and to support responsible pet ownership
- explains how we will work with you if concerns arise and what action may be taken if concerns cannot be resolved



- only applies to the pet(s) named and does not automatically transfer if the resident moves, wants an additional pet or the named pet dies
- does not replace the tenancy or lease. It sits alongside tenancy/lease conditions to make expectations clear for both you and us

How we decide whether a pet is suitable

When you request permission, we will consider whether the pet can be kept safely and responsibly in that home.

When assessing a request, we may consider:

- who shares the building or garden (including children, older residents or others who may be affected)
- the suitability of the home (layout, access arrangements and any shared or private outdoor space)
- the type, size, behaviour and number of pets, including whether this is within usual limits for the property / building
- access to suitable outdoor space for exercising dogs
- the condition of your home and any building considerations (for example shared fire doors or door entry systems)
- actual or potential impact on neighbours, including any history of pet-related nuisance or antisocial behaviour
- relevant legal requirements (including the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 including currently: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro and American XL Bully and Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976)
- whether the pet's welfare needs are likely to be met, taking account of recognised guidance

We are not an animal welfare enforcement body. However, where concerns relate to tenancy / lease conditions, safety or nuisance, we will consider those concerns and may refer matters to the appropriate authority or organisation with the power to investigate and act.

All requests are assessed case by case. Where appropriate, we may seek specialist advice or ask for relevant information, such as confirmation from a vet, licensed seller or other recognised authority.

These factors help us decide whether keeping a pet is appropriate for the property and whether permission can be granted with or without conditions.

When considering whether a pet's welfare needs are likely to be met, we will take account of recognised guidance and good practice. This includes whether the home, environment and care arrangements are suitable for the species, size and number of animals kept.



Conditions we may set

If permission is approved, we may apply additional conditions where needed, depending on the property type, building layout or individual circumstances. Conditions are intended to manage safety, nuisance and hygiene risks and to protect residents, staff and visitors.

Examples of conditions that may be applied (but are not limited to):

- requirements around supervision, care, or control of the pet;
- a condition that the pet may **not be replaced** once it dies or is re-homed

In communal / shared areas, dogs must be kept on a lead and under close control. Additional safety conditions may be set in buildings with shared entrances or facilities.

For dogs subject to legal restrictions, additional conditions may be applied (for example requiring muzzling in communal areas).

Dogs subject to legal restrictions

If you legally own a dog that is exempt under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, you must continue to meet all legal requirements for the lifetime of the dog. This includes:

- Keeping the dog on a lead and wearing a muzzle in public places, which includes communal areas such as stairwells, lifts, hallways and communal entrances.
- Holding appropriate third party public liability insurance
- Complying with any other exemption conditions

Applications for exemption have now closed. New exemptions can only be granted by a court order.

These legal requirements apply in addition to expectations for responsible pet ownership, including ensuring the dog does not cause problems such as noise, fouling, damage, roaming or hygiene concerns.

Withdrawing permission

If you breach the terms of the Pet Agreement, or where there is good reason as defined in this policy, we will normally work with you to try to resolve concerns.

Where problems cannot be resolved, we may withdraw permission and / or take fair and reasonable action under the tenancy or lease. In serious cases, this may mean the resident needs to make alternative arrangements for the pet.

Where we have reasonable concerns about an animal's welfare, a referral may be made to the appropriate authority or agency. Tenancy based action may also be taken where there is an associated breach.

Permission will only be withdrawn where there is good reason, the issues are serious or persistent (or pose a risk), and reasonable steps to resolve concerns have not been successful.



Your Responsibilities as a Pet Owner

Residents who keep pets (whether or not permission is required) are responsible for ensuring pets are properly cared for and do not cause problems for others.

Residents must take reasonable steps to prevent:

- noise nuisance
- fouling
- damage to the home or communal / shared areas
- roaming
- hygiene concerns
- behaviour that creates safety or welfare concerns

Pets must not be buried in communal / shared gardens or open spaces, as these are shared areas and burying animals can create hygiene, environmental and safety concerns. If a pet dies, the resident is responsible for making appropriate and lawful arrangements.

Microchipping

By law:

- all dogs in England must be microchipped and registered by 8 weeks
- all cats must be microchipped and registered by 20 weeks

Microchips must be fitted by a trained professional. Owners must keep contact details up to date on the relevant database so pets can be identified if lost.

Local authorities may issue fines of up to £500 where pets are not microchipped or details are not kept accurate.

We may request confirmation of microchipping where relevant, but responsibility for compliance remains with the pet owner.

Animals and activities that are not allowed in your homes

Animals that are not allowed

We cannot give permission for certain animals because they are restricted under national law or pose an unacceptable safety risk in a residential setting.

Permission will **not** be granted for:



- Any animal requiring a licence under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 or the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018
- Animals listed in the [Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976](#), including (but not limited to) large or venomous snakes and certain species of spiders
- Dogs listed under the [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991](#), including currently: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro and American XL Bully
- Constrictor snakes or other exotic reptiles that could pose a safety risk to residents or staff
- Animals protected under wildlife or [Protected Species Acts](#) legislation

These restrictions are set out in national law and apply across England. If the law changes, this policy will be interpreted in line with the updated legal position and formally updated as soon as practicable.

Where an animal appears to fall within a licensing or restriction regime, we may ask you to provide confirmation of the species or breed and evidence of any required licence. Where a licence is required, or the animal is legally restricted, permission will not be granted.

Decision making and enforcement (How we will act)

We support responsible pet ownership wherever possible. Decisions under this policy will be:

- Fair and reasonable
- based on evidence
- made with regard to the household, neighbours and the property

We will not refuse or withdraw permission without good reason.

Decisions will be explained clearly and in writing where required.

Where concerns are low level, our first response will normally be to offer advice, information and reasonable time to improve pet care or management. Enforcement action will be considered only where issues are serious, persistent, or pose a risk, and where reasonable steps to resolve concerns have not been successful.

If a pet causes ongoing problems or welfare concerns, we will normally work with you first to resolve the issue. Where this is not successful, we may take action under the tenancy or lease. As a last resort, this may include asking the resident to make alternative arrangements for the pet, with reasonable time allowed wherever possible.

Action under this policy may include:

- providing advice or support
- agreeing actions or timescales to address concerns
- applying or varying Pet Agreement conditions



- refusing permission or withdrawing permission where there is good reason
- taking tenancy or lease enforcement action where appropriate

Breeding animals or running a pet related business

We cannot give permission for breeding animals or running a pet related business from a Portsmouth Homes property. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Breeding animals of any kind
- Boarding, day care, dog sitting or similar activities
- Grooming, selling animals, training, or any activity carried out for business purposes
- Any activity that would require a licence under the [Animal Welfare \(Licensing of Activities Involving Animals\) \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)

These activities can create nuisance, hygiene and safety concerns and may require specialist licences. They are not suitable for residential accommodation.

Holding a licence does not override this policy, and permission will not be granted for these activities in our properties.

Assistance dogs and other special requests

Assistance dogs

Assistance dogs are not treated as pets. They are working animals trained to support disabled people to live independently. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Guide dogs (visual impairment)
- Hearing dogs (deaf or hard of hearing)
- Mobility assistance dogs
- Medical alert dogs
- Autism support dogs

In line with the Equality Act 2010, assistance dogs are permitted, and we will make any reasonable adjustments required.

Where necessary, we may ask for limited and reasonable information to help us understand how best to support the resident or manage reasonable adjustments, for example in communal areas.

This may include confirmation from a recognised assistance dog training organisation or, where appropriate, a professional involved in the person's support. We will not request



information to question a person's disability, and we do not require unregulated identification cards.

In most cases, the assistance dog will remain in the resident's current home. All dogs, including assistance dogs, must be kept under control and must not cause nuisance, damage or risk to others.

Any concerns will be managed based on behaviour or impact, in line with tenancy conditions and relevant policies, rather than the status of the dog.

Other special circumstances

Support animals and emotional support animals

Some residents may benefit from a support animal or emotional support animal. These animals provide comfort or support but are not trained to carry out specific tasks in the same way as assistance dogs.

Support animals are not automatically treated as assistance dogs under the Equality Act 2010. However, we will consider requests on a case by case basis and assess whether allowing a support animal would be a reasonable adjustment.

When considering a request, we may ask for reasonable information to help us understand the resident's circumstances and the support the animal provides. Any information requested will be limited to what is necessary to support a fair and lawful decision.

Fostering animals for a charity

Requests to foster an animal for a recognised rescue or rehoming charity will be assessed in the same way as other pet requests.

We will consider the type and number of animals and whether the home is suitable. We may also ask for written confirmation from the charity about the fostering arrangement.

If there is a problem (what you can expect)

When we will take action

We may take action where:

- You breach the Pet Agreement
- a pet causes nuisance, distress or risk
- there are safety or welfare concerns

You may be expected to take reasonable steps to resolve issues, such as training, changes to routines or other practical measures.



Where dog fouling or pet related damage occurs in communal / shared areas, we may arrange cleaning or repairs and may recharge costs where permitted under the tenancy or lease.

Where concerns are raised by neighbours, staff, contractors or partner agencies, we will assess concerns and work with the resident to resolve the matter. Where issues cannot be resolved, we may take tenancy or lease action, including withdrawing permission where there is good reason.

Keeping a pet without permission

If you keep a pet that requires permission, we will ask you to submit a pet permission request.

If the pet or the property is not suitable, next steps will be discussed and agreed where possible. Where no safe alternative is available, this may include rehoming the pet.

Antisocial behaviour linked to pets

Where pet related behaviour causes antisocial behaviour, we will take action in line with the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

Pet-related issues may also amount to statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Nuisance may include persistent noise, fouling, smells, damage, roaming or aggressive behaviour that unreasonably interferes with others' use and enjoyment of their home.

The focus is on addressing irresponsible behaviour and resolving issues, not penalising responsible pet owners.

Pets left behind or abandoned

You must make suitable arrangements for your pets if you are temporarily away from home, for example during holidays or hospital stays, to ensure the animal's welfare needs continue to be met. You must make suitable arrangements.

Pets must not be left behind without appropriate care. If a pet is left in a property due to a absence or change in circumstances and suitable arrangements have not been made, we will treat this as a risk of abandonment and take reasonable steps to safeguard the animal's welfare.

This may include contacting the resident / emergency contacts, arranging a welfare check and working with the local authority animal warden, the RSPCA or other appropriate agencies.

Where necessary for the animal's safety, we may arrange emergency care or removal in line with legal powers and guidance.

Any access to a home will be carried out in accordance with the tenancy / lease, applicable law and access procedures. Where an animal or person is believed to be at immediate risk,

We will contact the relevant emergency service or agency. Any costs incurred may be recharged where permitted.



Pests linked to pets

If a pet causes pests to spread into communal / shared areas, the cost of treating those areas may be recharged where permitted under the tenancy or lease.

Regular preventative treatments help protect homes, neighbours and shared spaces.

Appeal

You can appeal decisions made under this policy, including decisions to:

- refuse permission
- apply conditions
- withdraw permission

Appeals must be made in writing within 28 calendar days of receiving the decision. The appeal should explain why the decision is considered incorrect or unreasonable and include any additional information to be considered.

Where possible, an impartial officer from another area of Portsmouth Homes (not involved in the original decision) will review the appeal and consider:

- The original decision
- The information available at the time
- Any additional information provided
- Whether the decision was made fairly, reasonably and in line with this policy

We will confirm the outcome of the appeal in writing. The decision or any conditions may be upheld, amended or removed. Where necessary to manage risk or prevent nuisance, existing conditions may remain in place while the appeal is being considered.

If you remain unhappy, the matter can be raised through the Landlord Complaints Policy. Appeals will be responded to within a reasonable timeframe and residents will be kept updated if additional information is required.

Your voice

We provide residents a wide range of meaningful opportunities to engage, influence and scrutinise the Landlord Strategies, policies and services, to include participation in regular resident meetings and give feedback on services and policies.

If you would like to be included in future resident engagement focus groups and would like to know how to get involved, please contact us for more information:

You can contact our team by:

- Email: housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- Phone: 02392 834835



- Website: visit the [Resident engagement and community resources on our website](#)

What have we done to make sure this Policy is fair?

We completed an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to consider the positive and negative impacts this Policy may have on people with protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#). This Policy should have direct and positive equality and diversity impacts.

We aim to make decisions fairly and consistently, considering the needs of all residents while supporting responsible pet ownership and maintaining safe, well-managed homes.

Regulation and legislation

We recognise the variety of legislation, and we will continue to monitor relevant legal guidance. The list below reflects some of the existing legal framework and relevant publications:

- Regulation of Social Housing
- Environmental Protection Act
- [Animal health and welfare - Portsmouth City Council](#)
- [Animal activities licensing: statutory guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
- [The Microchipping of Cats and Dogs \(England\) Regulations 2023](#)
- RSPCA guidance
- [Animal Welfare Act](#) 2006
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#)
- XI bully guidance
- Microchip requirements
- RSPCA appropriate reporting channels

Related documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:



- Portsmouth Homes Landlord Policies, Strategies and Reports - [Housing policies, strategies and privacy notices](#)
- Tenancy Agreement / Leasehold Agreement
- [eg12 indoor and outdoor cats.pdf](#)
- [The Largest Animal Welfare Charity in the UK | RSPCA - RSPCA - rspca.org.uk](#)
- [Dogs Rehoming & Dog Rescue Charity | Dogs Trust](#)
- [Cats Protection | UK's Largest Cat Welfare Charity](#)
- [Blue Cross | Pets change lives. We change theirs. The Cost of Living and Pets - PDSA](#)

How to feedback

If you have any questions around the policy or would like to know more about its application, please contact the relevant service in the first instance.

You can get this policy in large print, braille, audio or in another language by contacting your Housing Office. More information is available [translation, interpreting and audio information](#).

Compliments

To help us provide the best service we can. We would like to hear customer views on the services that they use. If the customer is pleased with a member of staff or service, please let us know.

- Telephone: 02392 606383
- Email address: HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Complaints

If a customer is unhappy, they can refer to our Landlord Complaints Policy.

- Online complaint form at [Make a housing complaint](#)
- Telephone: 02392 606383
- Email address: HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Housing Ombudsman Service

If a customer is unhappy, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice and guidance at any time.

- Online complaint form on [the Housing Ombudsman Service website](#)
- Telephone: 0300 111 3000



- For more information, visit [Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#)

CONSULTATION

