



Complaints Policy - Help to Buy

Version 1

Date of last update: March 2021

Version Control

Note: minor updates increase version number by 0.1, major updates increase version number by 1.0.

Version Number	Sections Amended	Date of update	Approved by
1.0	Full policy reviewed & updated in line with new Ombudsman Code	October 2020	CS&P Committee
1.1	Include Help to Buy reference	March 2021	Head of Help to Buy

Document owner: Director of Optimisation and Business Improvement

Review date: October 2023

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. This policy applies to	4
3. Policy.....	4
4. Legal & Regulatory Framework.....	6
5. Related Policies	6
6. Related Procedures	6
7. Appendices.....	6

1. Introduction

- 1.1 By providing good quality homes and services, Abri is committed to delivering a great experience. Sometimes things go wrong and when that happens, we want to put things right as quickly as possible.
- 1.2 We want our customers to have confidence that we listen, learn and take prompt action to put matters right. We strive to provide a fair and effective resolution to any complaint and use the learnings to drive service improvements across our business.
- 1.3 We promote a positive complaints handling culture among colleagues and customers, viewing them as an opportunity to put things right quickly, promote positive customer relationships and provide a learning opportunity.

2. This policy applies to

- 2.1 This policy applies to all our customers¹. By customers we mean people who have a lease, tenancy, licence or service occupancy or other arrangement to occupy premises owned or managed by us, including ex-occupiers if they were in occupation at the time the matter complained of arose. We also accept complaints from applicants for properties owned or managed by us and we accept complaints from representatives acting on behalf of a customer.
- 2.2 Abri refers to Abri Group Limited, the parent company and all subsidiary companies.

3. Policy

- 3.1 Abri defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.
- 3.2 Complaints will be accepted via any of our contact methods, these can be found here <https://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/about-us/> ensuring it is easy for a customer to make a complaint. Should we receive a complaint via a representative or advocate, permission will need to be provided by the customer, where possible.
- 3.3 Everyone within Abri is empowered to accept and handle complaints. The Complaints Centre of Excellence is responsible for ensuring complaints are dealt with in line with this policy and the complaints procedure. Timescales for responses and the specific process followed when dealing with a complaint are outlined in our complaints procedure and Making a Complaint Guide. These align with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.
- 3.4 There are circumstances where Abri may not accept a complaint or where we may decide to deal with it in a different way to the normal process. Examples include:
 - 3.4.1 The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago.
However, where the problem is a recurring issue, Abri may consider any

¹ Service complaints from customers relating to our community cafes and Help to Buy, are dealt with under separate procedures.

- older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue;
- 3.4.2 Where matters have already been the subject of legal proceedings, or where legal proceedings have started or are threatened²;
 - 3.4.3 Matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy. In this case we can refer the complainant directly to the Housing Ombudsman;
 - 3.4.4 Complaints relating to consumer credit regulated activity which may be able to be referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service; or
 - 3.4.5 If a complaint is being made unreasonably or the customer is demonstrating unacceptable behaviour when pursuing their complaint. We have a separate procedure giving guidance on dealing with vexatious contact.
- 3.5 If Abri decides not to accept a complaint, or to deal with it differently, we will explain the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process or outline how we are dealing with it and why.
 - 3.6 We will handle the complaint sensitively, telling only those who need to know and complying with relevant data protection requirements. Where there is a safeguarding of vulnerable adults or child protection issue, we have a duty of care to fully investigate and follow the appropriate procedures.
 - 3.7 We operate a two stage complaints process. Details of the process, what will happen at each stage, and timeframes for responding are set out in our Complaints Procedure.
 - 3.8 If a customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint having been through our internal complaints procedure, they have the right to take their complaint to a 'Designated Person' (e.g. a MP or local councillor) and/or the Housing Ombudsman. We will provide contact information for the Housing Ombudsman as part of the complaints process. We are bound by the terms of the Housing Ombudsman's scheme and will fully co-operate with all requests for information made by the Ombudsman, work with them in resolving complaints effectively, and adhere to recommendations made to put things right.
 - 3.9 We will encourage all customers at the end of the complaints process to feed back on the process and we will report outcomes, learning points and statistical performance to relevant customer groups, our board and Committees. Any themes or trends will be assessed to identify any systemic issues, serious risks or areas for improvements from complaints will also be included in our Annual Report.
 - 3.10 Not everyone is able to exercise their right to raise concerns or complain about the service they have received due to their individual needs. We have a Reasonable Adjustments Policy in place to address this.

² By "threatened" we mean that a formal letter of claim or equivalent has been sent to us. However, if there is a delay after a letter of claim and no proceedings are issued we will contact the customer and activate their complaint if they no longer intend issuing proceedings.

3.11 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to support planning and the delivery of this policy. It is available upon request.

4. Legal & Regulatory Framework

- Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code July 2020
- Regulator of Social Housing’s Regulatory Framework
- Equality Act 2010
- General Data Protection Regulations 2016 (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018

5. Related Policies

- Equality Policy
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy

6. Related Procedures

- Complaints Procedure
- Vexatious Contact Procedure

7. Appendices

1. Housing Ombudsman contact information
2. Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code