

Policy	Voluntary membership
Date approved	February 2023
Date for next review	February 2026 (3-year cycle)
Owner:	Director of Finance & Corporate Performance and Deputy Ombudsman
Applicable to	Colleagues dealing with membership applications
Overview	This policy sets out our approach to accepting voluntary members into our Scheme and how to process these requests
Annex	A- Extracts from the Scheme B- Voluntary membership application form

Version Control

Number	Date	Summary of changes	Authored by
V1	Feb 2023	New policy	OMT

Voluntary membership

Policy

Overview

1. Our vision states Housing matters: Fairness matters. We believe housing is important to people's lives and that we should help improve landlord and resident relationships when things go wrong. We do not limit this vision to social housing.
2. Our starting point is, therefore, that we welcome all landlords who wish to be voluntary members of our Scheme.

Voluntary membership applications

3. The Scheme imposes certain conditions on membership (see Annex 1) and these need to be confirmed as met or as agreed to be met within an agreed timescale for a voluntary membership application to be accepted. Where conditions are agreed to be met, we will follow up to ensure compliance by the date agreed or consider withdrawing membership.
4. As the Scheme is largely funded by statutory members, we also need to confirm there is no risk of a disproportionate impact on our resources from accepting a voluntary member through completion of due diligence checks.
5. To align with our vision, we would ordinarily expect voluntary membership to cover all housing units. Partial membership requests will be subject to approval by the Housing Ombudsman.
N.B. Some partial requests may be as the remaining units are covered by mandatory membership provisions.
6. HOS may impose additional undertakings as a condition of membership on a case-by-case basis.
7. All applications will be approved by the Housing Ombudsman, or the Director of Finance & Corporate Performance and a Director of Dispute Resolution.
8. Membership fees due in the first year will be calculated pro-rata.

Voluntary membership withdrawal

9. A voluntary member may withdraw at any time. Where this is the case, we should seek an explanation.
10. Membership fees will be refunded pro-rata.

Voluntary membership termination

11. Voluntary membership may be ended by the Ombudsman in any of the following circumstances:
 - failure to comply with the Scheme
 - failure to comply with any additional undertakings given as a condition of membership
 - failure to pay membership fees by the due date

Annex 1 – Extracts from the Scheme

Members

4. A person who applies to become a member of the Scheme must do so to the Ombudsman in such form and with such supporting information as he may require.

5. As a condition of membership of the Scheme, a member must:

a. agree to be bound by the Scheme;

b. establish and maintain a complaints procedure;

c. as part of that procedure, inform complainants of their right to bring complaints to the Ombudsman under the Scheme; and

d. publish its complaints procedure and its membership of the Scheme, and make information about them available to those entitled to complain to the Ombudsman.

Voluntary members

8. In addition to social landlords the Ombudsman may admit to the Scheme other members who meet the conditions of paragraph 5.

Removal or withdrawal of a member

10. A voluntary member may withdraw from the Scheme if it complies with the conditions that the Ombudsman may require according to the circumstances of each case.

11. The Ombudsman may end the membership of a voluntary member if it has not complied with the Scheme or with undertakings given to the Ombudsman as a term of admission.

Organisational details

Organisation name			
Address			
Telephone			
E-mail			
Website address			
Companies House company number (if applicable)			
Social Media: e.g. Facebook page, Twitter handle			

Other contact details we need

CEO Details			
Accounts Payable Telephone			
Accounts Payable E-mail			
Ombudsman's liaison e.g. Customer Service/Complaints Manager (if applicable)			

Information about housing stock

Number of units held	
Number of social housing units held	
Units to be covered by membership (please provide addresses)	
Explanation for partial membership request	

Existing registrations

Are you registered with the HCA?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	In process <input type="checkbox"/>
Another Ombudsman?			
Any other organisation or group?			

Agreements

Agreement to being bound by The Housing Ombudsman [Scheme](#)?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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Information related to complaints and processes

Have you established and maintained a complaints procedure?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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(If yes, please provide a copy of your complaints procedure and an example redacted complaint response)

Where is your complaints procedure made available to tenants? (Please provide supporting evidence)

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Annex 2 – Voluntary membership application form

Voluntary Membership Application Form

If your application is successful, how will you inform complainants of their right to bring complaints to the Ombudsman under the Scheme?

Date by which you will have completed this action?

How will you inform stakeholders of your membership of the Scheme, and make information about your membership available to those entitled to complain to the Ombudsman?

Date by which you will have completed this action?

Anything else you want to tell us about that you feel may be relevant to your application?

Title:	Name:	Signature:	Date:
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