



CONSUMER GUIDE TO **ARMA-Q**

Find out how your
managing agent
is regulated



ARMA-Q: QUALITY STANDARDS FOR LEASEHOLD PROPERTY MANAGEMENT



ARMA: the leading trade association for managing agents in the uk

ARMA is the leading trade association for managing agents in the residential leasehold sector. We have been providing advice, training and guidance to our members and leaseholders since 1991.

ARMA-Q: the new self-regulation for ARMA members

ARMA-Q is the new self-regulatory regime we have developed specifically for ARMA members. Our aim is to raise standards and the quality of practice across the sector — so you will know exactly what to expect from our members.

How will ARMA-Q do this? By offering three unique features:

- **An independent Regulatory Panel**
- **A Consumer Charter**
- **Specific Standards for managing agents.**

What difference will it make to you?

We've boosted the standards that apply to ARMA members. Our members now have to comply with a Consumer Charter and bespoke Standards overseen by an independent Regulatory Panel. So by choosing an ARMA member you get higher standards, greater confidence and more openness.

CONSUMER CHARTER

At the heart of ARMA-Q is the Consumer Charter. Whether you are a leaseholder, residents' management company director, freeholder, developer or landlord, this sets out how ARMA members must deal with their clients and the standard of customer service that you can expect. Any member who falls short of the Charter may be subject to disciplinary action.

The Charter means that ARMA members must:

Be honest, fair, open and transparent and provide a timely and professional service with access to the information needed.

Act with skill, care, diligence and without discrimination.

Make sure that all their staff are appropriately trained and knowledgeable.

Have written terms of business.

Provide their complaints handling procedure specifying the ombudsman scheme to which they subscribe.

Comply with all relevant legal requirements and relevant codes of practice.

Avoid conflicts of interest.

Maintain clear, accurate and up-to-date financial records.

Ensure that any client money is held separately from the managing agent's other monies.

Hold appropriate professional indemnity insurance.

STANDARDS YOU CAN DEPEND UPON

There are over 160 ARMA-Q Standards specifically for managing agents designed to promote honesty, fairness, openness and timeliness in all areas of residential leasehold management. They tackle the issues that are important to consumers from service charges, to insurance premiums and customer service.

The Standards cover six key areas:

INSTRUCTING A MANAGING AGENT

These Standards cover how ARMA members conduct themselves when they tender for new business and enter into management contracts. They address management fees and the declaration of all income sources received such as insurance fees, interest, associated companies and in-house service providers. The management of new developments is also covered here.

CLIENT MATTERS

These Standards cover working relationships with residents' associations. They address: assignments; alterations and improvements; and how members deal with breaches of lease covenants and forfeiture proceedings. Lease extensions, variations and enfranchisement work are also covered.

FINANCE

These Standards deal with the operation of client bank accounts. They address service charge budgeting, accounting and collection as well as how reserve funds are managed. Finance Standards also cover: disclosure of administration charges; arranging and dealing with insurance; and handling debt recovery.

MANAGEMENT

These Standards relate to how ARMA members go about appointing contractors. They deal with: maintenance, repairs and improvements to property;

how consultations are carried out; and what information should be provided on pre-sales enquiries.

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

These Standards detail all relevant legislation with which ARMA members must comply.

DISPUTES & TERMINATIONS

These Standards deal with: complaints handling; management handovers; and the way that ARMA members go about ending management contract terms.

For a full copy of the ARMA-Q Standards go to www.arma.org.uk

Or get in touch with ARMA directly on 020 7978 2607.

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE: INDEPENDENT REGULATION

The regulation of ARMA members is completely independent. This will give consumers confidence that if an accredited ARMA member does not meet the required standards, there is an independent disciplinary process.

Independent Regulatory Panel

ARMA members are regulated by an independent panel of lay members, which includes leaseholders and is chaired by the RT Hon Keith Hill, a former Minister for Housing and Planning. Each Panel member is appointed because they bring relevant professional expertise. No one on the Panel is connected with ARMA or its members.

When does the Regulator step in?

The Regulator takes on cases against an ARMA member when all other avenues for redress have been exhausted. This means that the Regulator will not step in until a complaint has first been through the member's own complaints procedure, followed by either the Ombudsman or the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber).

However, the Regulator may take on a complaint immediately if it cannot be resolved because of a breakdown in the complaints procedures or if there are allegations of corporate interference and complaints against member firms.

How complaints are handled

Cases brought before the Regulator are investigated independently and thoroughly. The Regulator's decision is final and not subject to ratification by ARMA. Any disciplinary action will be published on our website.

WHAT THE PANEL DOES

The role of the Panel is to:

- Determine the outcome of complaints against ARMA members that are unresolved elsewhere
- Oversee the accreditation of new and existing members
- Regulate all members under ARMA-Q's Consumer Charter and Standards
- Follow up adverse audits of ARMA members
- Review the implications of any adverse tribunal and ombudsman decisions against ARMA members to see whether disciplinary action is needed
- Review the operation of ARMA-Q and report on its effectiveness to the ARMA Council.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

ARMA-Q is an assurance of consumer protection in the residential leasehold sector. It's been designed to protect consumers in all areas of leasehold management. You will be able to measure the performance of your managing agent against prescribed Standards.

ARMA membership is voluntary, so if your managing agent is signed up to ARMA-Q they are showing a clear commitment to offering the best customer service when managing your property. If you appoint an ARMA member, you can be confident they will be following best practice.

So, for example, if you're not happy with the way that your service charge money is being handled or with the level of service you are receiving, you will be able to call your managing agent to account against the appropriate ARMA-Q Standard.



SIX THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ARMA

1. We set up self-regulation for managing agents in the residential leasehold sector to protect consumers and to raise standards.
2. All ARMA members have to comply with the ARMA-Q Consumer Charter and Standards.
3. We lobby government on issues that affect the leasehold sector and campaign for action to improve standards for leaseholders.
4. We have over 40 free advice guides for consumers on our website, and run a wide range of training courses for consumers on residential leasehold management.
5. Our members range from small family-run firms to large national companies.
6. We thoroughly vet all our members before they join and won't accept them unless they: have been trading for at least two years; sign up to an independent ombudsman scheme; and demonstrate they hold service charge money in trust.

Want to know more about ARMA and what we do?

Talk to us
020 7978 2607

Meet us
www.arma.org.uk

Email us
info@arma.org.uk

Follow us 
[@ARMAleasehold](https://twitter.com/ARMAleasehold)