Interactive Casework Portal
Landlord user guide

May 2023 - External Version 1.2

Contents

Introduction and support

Our interactive Portal (the Portal) provides users with access to case records which show the status of complaints we're considering, as well as details of what we need from you to support our assessment which will appear as tasks for you to complete.

We ask landlords to use the Portal **only** to communicate with us about cases. We recognize that this is a shift from how you've got used to working with us and because of that, there is support available for landlords during the transition.

Please refer to this guide at first but after that,

- If you need technical help, for example, you're unable to access the system or receive an error message, please email portal@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- If you have a query that is case related, please use the Portal to send a message on that case record or task (see pages 15 and 20) .
- You can also visit our website – www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk to view our demonstration video.

Acceptable use of the Portal

Our service is independent, impartial, and free. We believe that customers of our Service have a right to be heard, understood, and respected. We work hard to be open and accessible to everyone.

Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of individuals using our Service makes it very difficult for us to deal with their complaint. In a small number of cases the actions of individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff or our process.

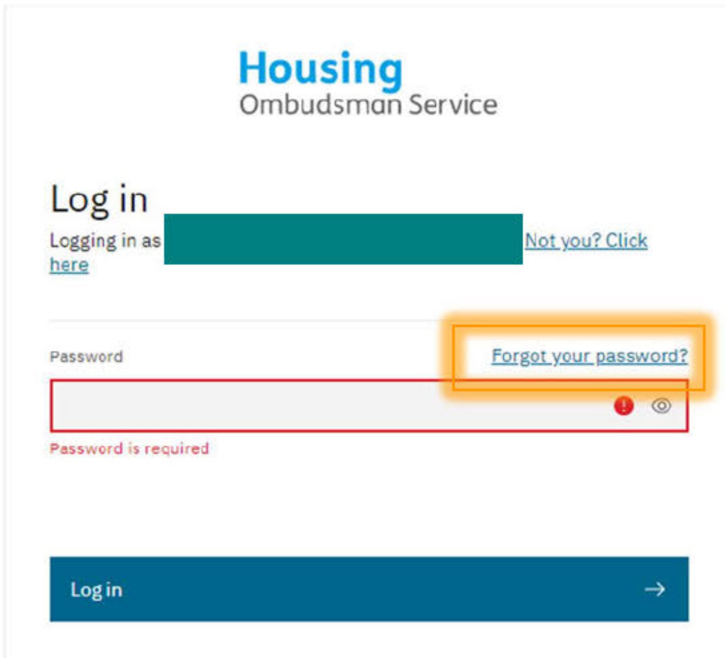
When this happens, we have to take action to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff who have a right to do their jobs without fear of being abused or harassed. We also consider the impact of the behaviour on our ability to do our work and provided a service to others.

We reserve the right to restrict access to the Portal if a user's behaviour becomes aggressive, abusive or otherwise unreasonable as set out in our Unacceptable User Action Policy, which you can find on our website at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Accessing the Portal and setting up your account

- Please access the Portal using this link - https://portal.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/

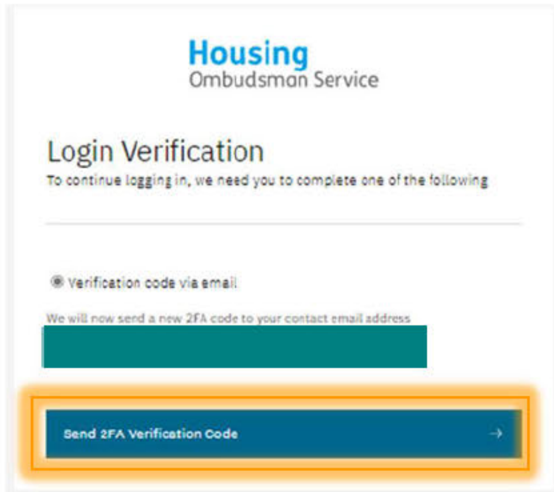
- Your *Username* for the Portal is the email address that you provided when we asked for your Portal set up information. This email address will be your Administrator account on the Portal and will be used for case related communication between our Service and your organisation.



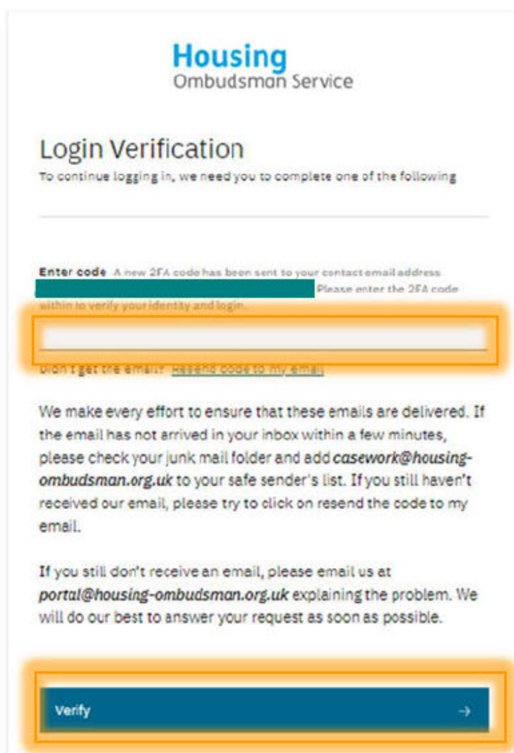
- When you log in for the first time, after entering your *Username,* please select *Forgot your password?* You will then receive a link by email, which you can use to create your own unique password.

- For security, Two Factor Authentication (2FA) is in place and every time you log into the system, a unique code will be sent to your registered Administrator account email address for you to input.

- Select *Send 2FA Verification Code*



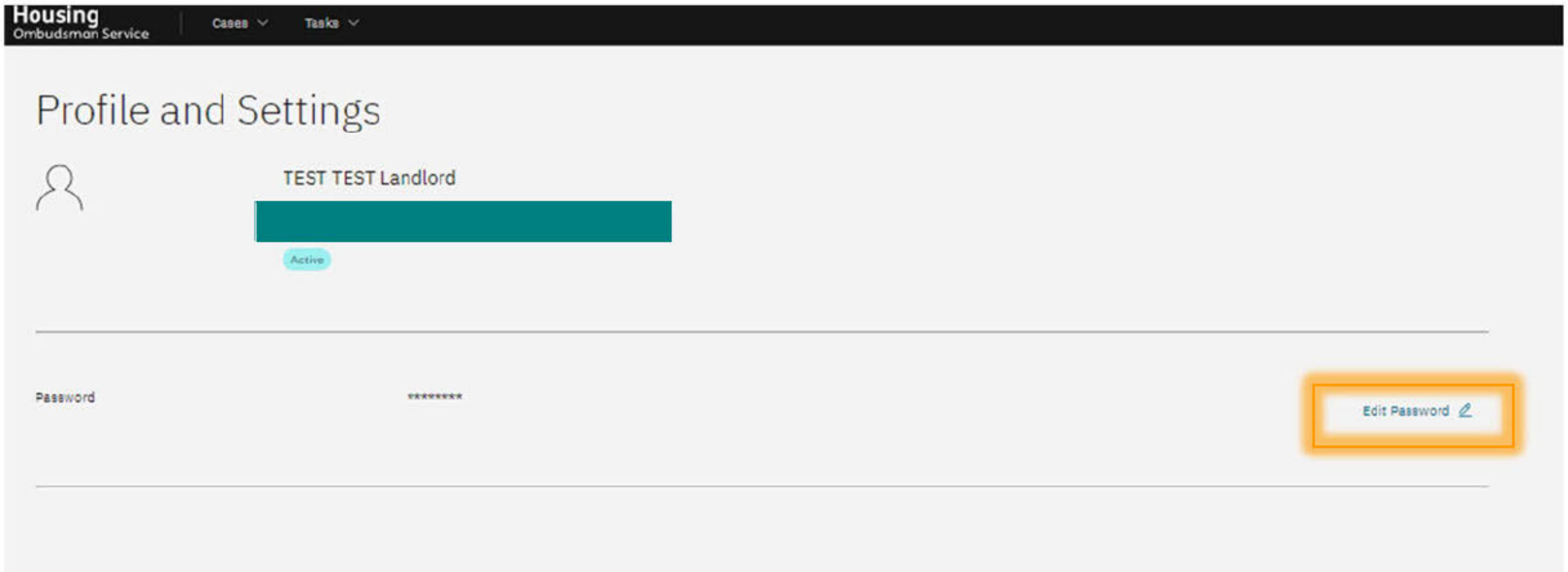
- Enter the code you receive (by email) into the highlighted section and select *Verify*. You can then access the system.



Using the Portal – account management

- To manage your password or account, click on the icon at the top right of the screen to access the *Profile and Settings* menu.

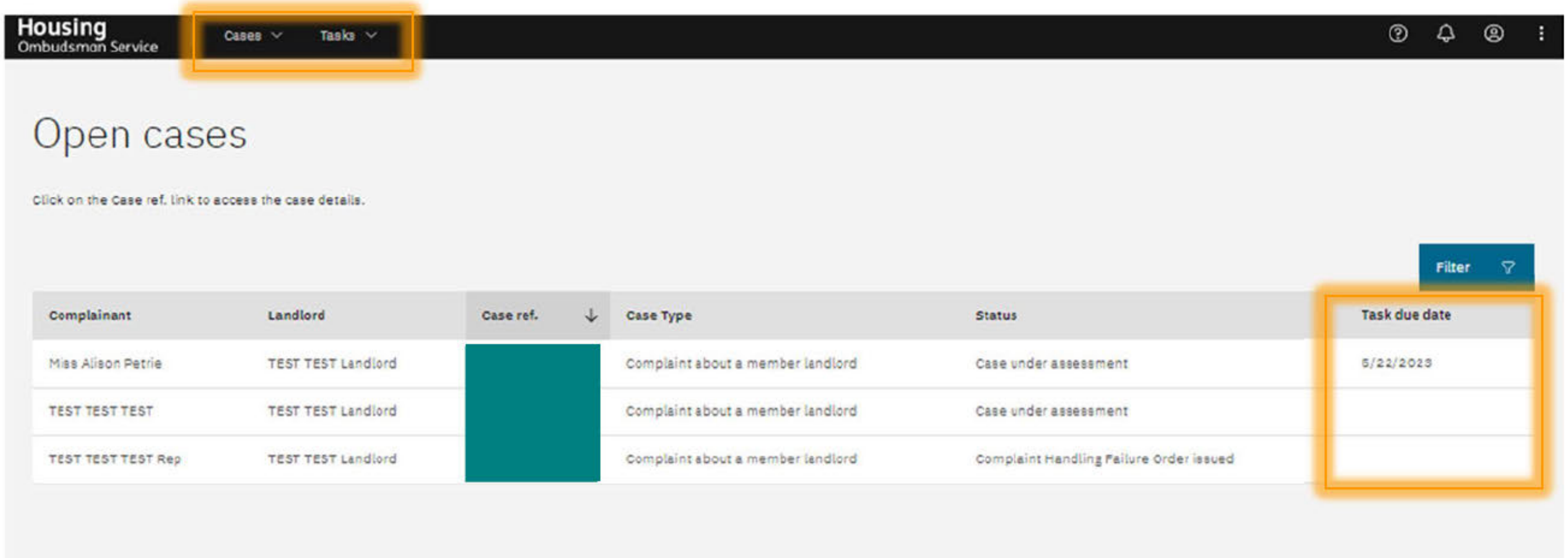
- If you want to change your password, select *Edit Password*



- To change the registered Administrator email address on your account, please email Portal@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Using the Portal - main screen

- When you log in, you will see the Homepage shown below, which contains all open cases and deadlines associated with any open *Tasks*.
- You can use the options within the *Cases and Tasks* Menus to filter your cases to view only open or closed cases or to look at the outstanding Tasks assigned to your account.

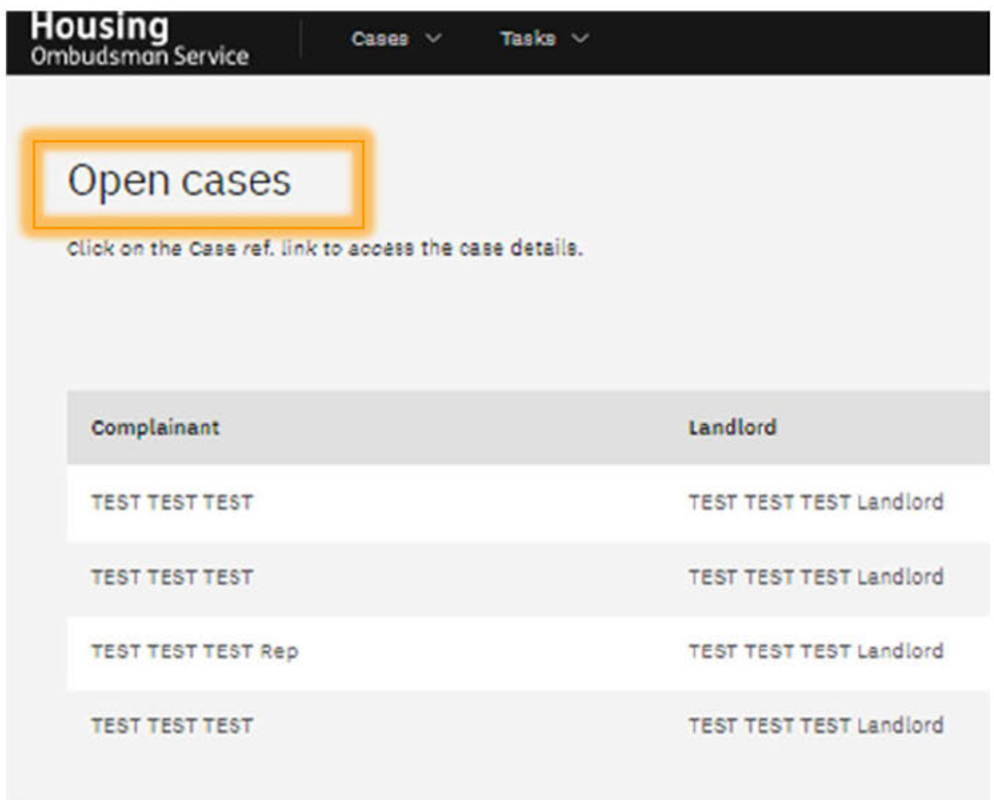


- Using the options at the top right of the screen you can

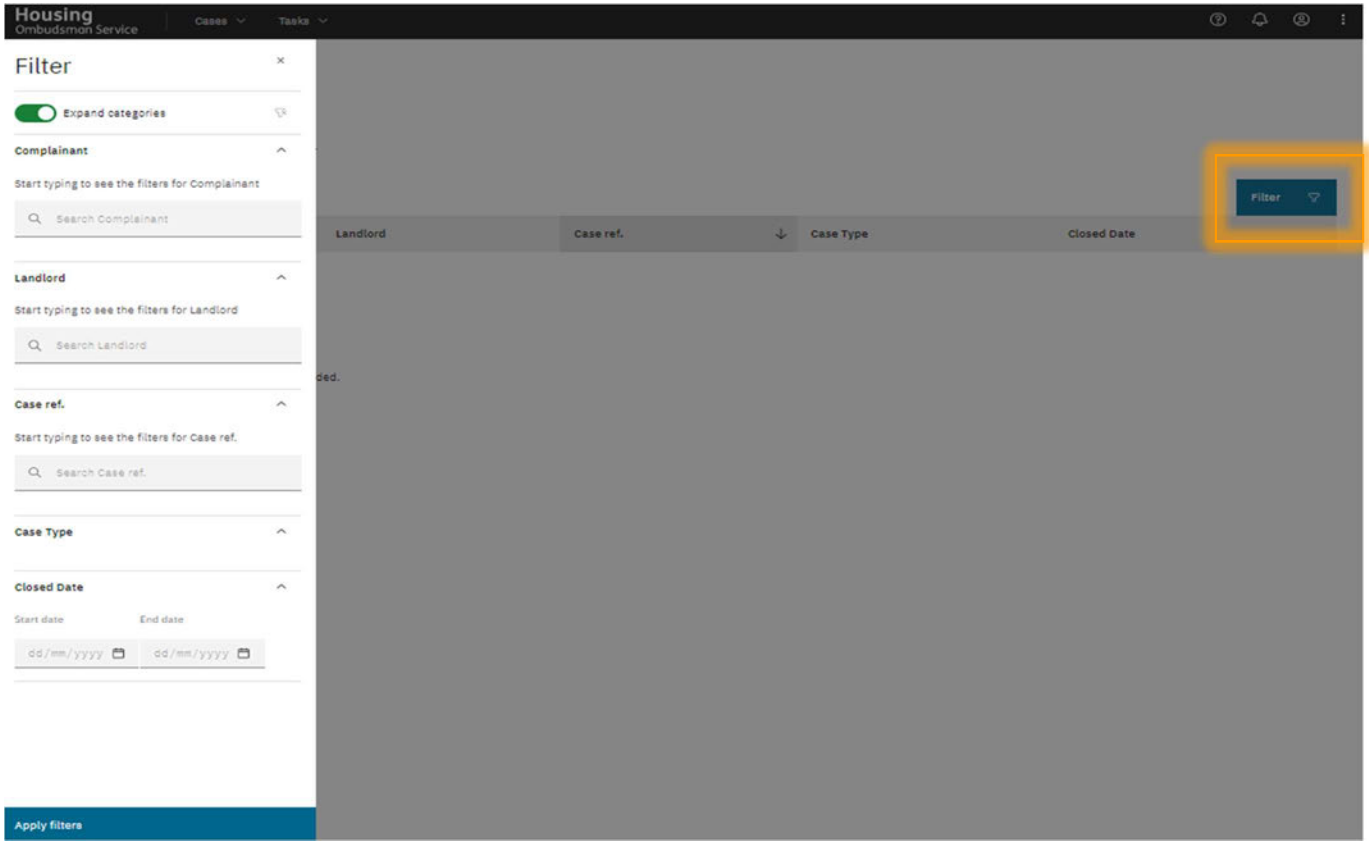
1. Access this user guide
2. See your notifications

3. Manage your account
4. Read our Accessibility Statement

- If you have applied a *Cases* filter, Open or Closed cases will be displayed at the top of the screen.

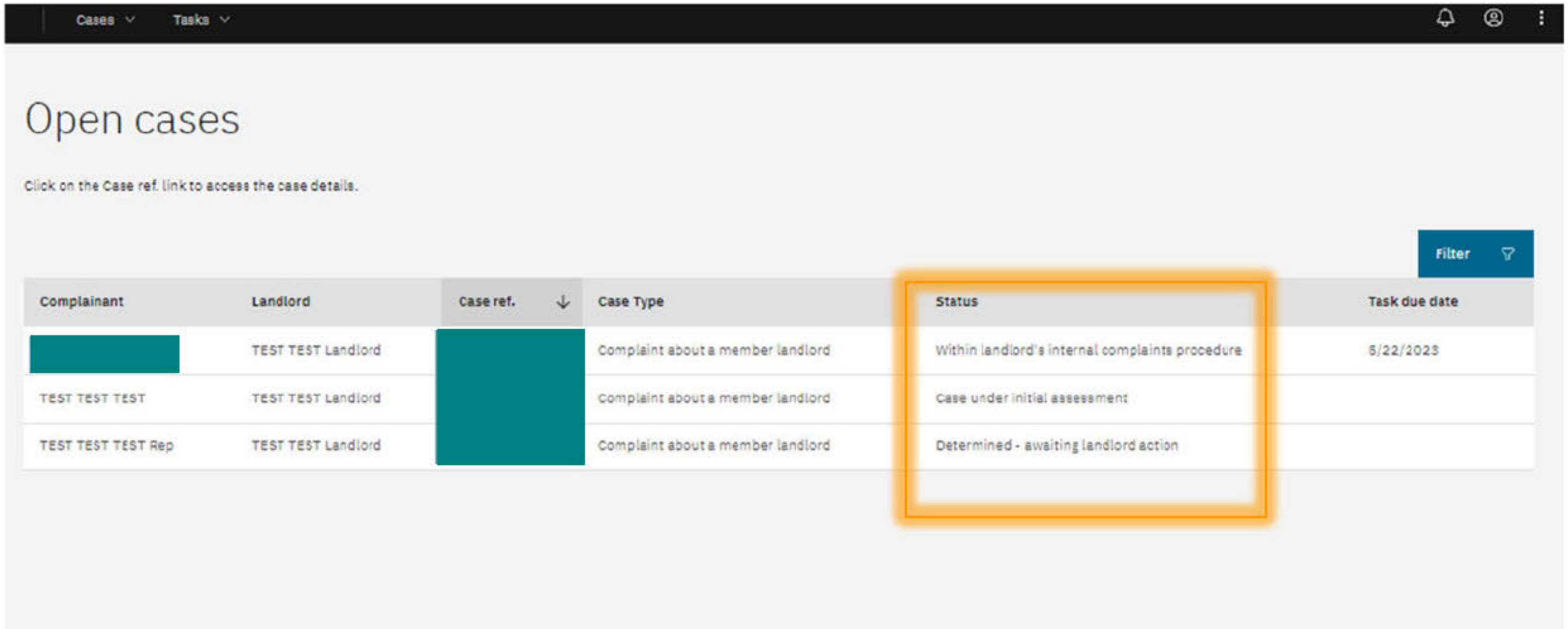


➢ You can use the *Filter* option to access the search menu where you can search for particular cases using the options.



Using the Portal - case status

- The status of a case is shown on the *Open / Closed Cases* screen and corresponds to how we manage casework, as explained below.



- **Case Under Initial Assessment** – a case is being assessed by our Dispute Support team to identify the appropriate next steps

- **Within Landlord's Internal Complaint Procedure** – Dispute Support are working with a resident and landlord while the landlord's complaint process is ongoing.

- **Referral assessment** – Our Triage and Mediation team are assessing a case that has completed a landlord's complaint process, to check if it's within our jurisdiction and to see what action we need to take.

- **Evidence gathering** – we'll use this stage when our Triage and Mediation team ask you to provide information to help us review a case or to communicate about mediation.

- **Awaiting investigation** – we have the information we need to review the case and it is awaiting allocation to an Investigator or Adjudicator (Dispute Resolution team)

- **Under investigation** – our Dispute Resolution team is assessing the case.

- **Determined** – we've provided a determination on a case without orders or recommendations.

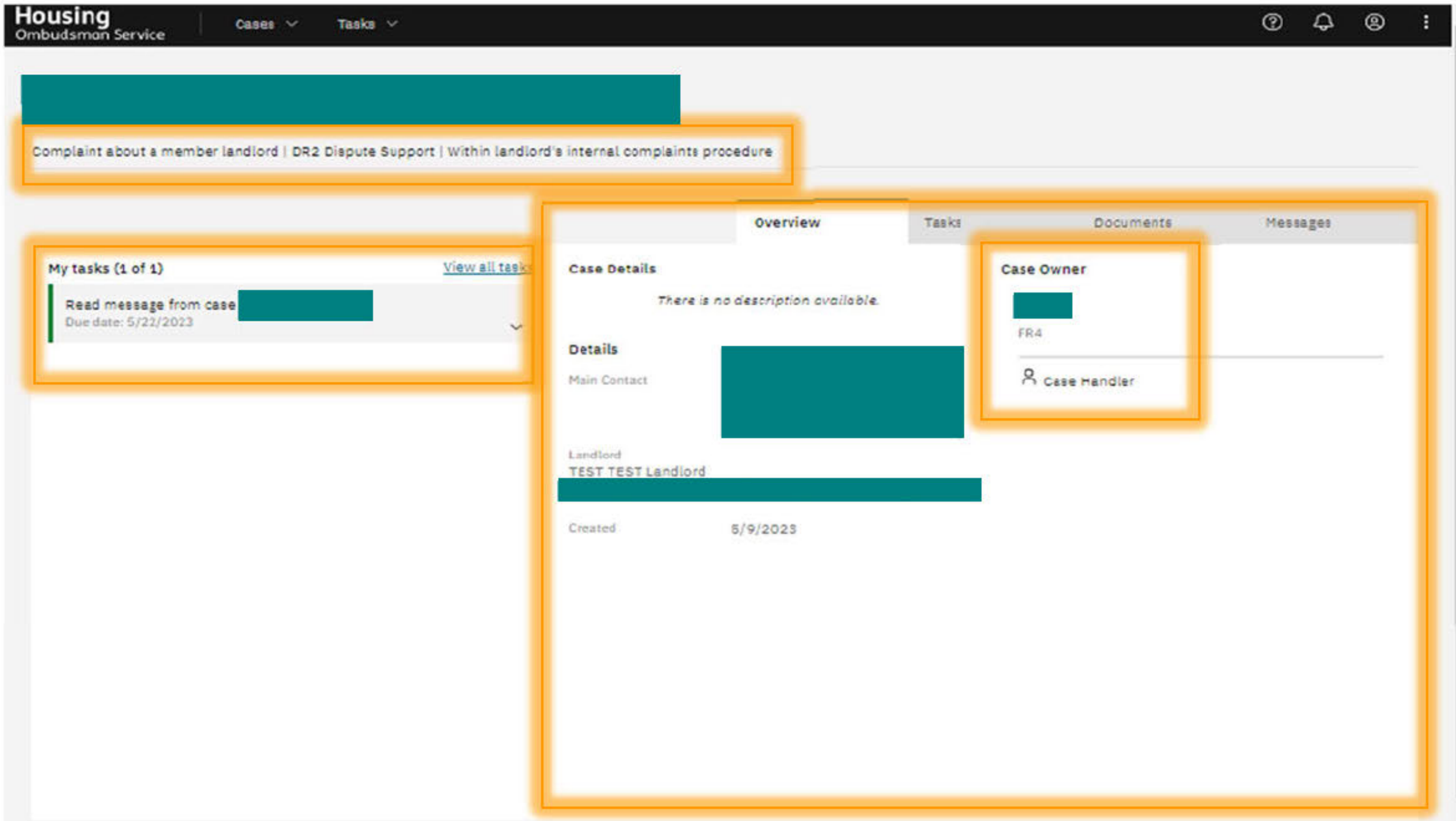
- **Determined – awaiting LL action** – we've provided a determination on a case and we're waiting for a landlord to confirm compliance with any orders or to give feedback on recommendations.

- **Review – case outcome** – we are looking at a formal review request from a landlord or resident associated with our determination or decision.

- **Case Closed** – this status will show when we close the case.

Using the Portal - case details screen

- When you select a case, you will see a screen like the one below with tabs showing *Overview, Tasks, Documents* and *Messages*. You can also see the name of the *Case Owner* which is the individual managing the case.



- Use the tabs on the right to navigate a case and on the left-hand side, you will see a list of up to five upcoming tasks

- At the top of the screen, you can see which team are managing the case within the Housing Ombudsman Service. The teams and their roles are outlined below;

  - **DR2 Dispute Support –** Our Dispute Support service manages all initial enquiries to our service from all customers. They work with landlords and customers while the landlord's complaint process is ongoing, which can include obtaining copies of complaint related correspondence and discussing cases with those involved.

  - **DR2 Triage -** Our Triage and Mediation team are responsible for assessing cases that have exhausted a landlord's internal complaint process. They carry out a detailed assessment to check whether a case is within our jurisdiction and if it is, decide whether the case is suitable for mediation (where we work with the parties involved to reach a resolution) or if it needs to progress to a formal investigation.

    The Triage and Mediation team also request evidence for cases that need to be assessed formally and communicate outside jurisdiction decisions to customers.

  - **DR2 Dispute Resolution –** Our Dispute Resolution team consists of Investigators and Adjudicators who investigate cases progressed by Triage and Mediation. They will issue determinations on all cases they review which are sent to the complainant and landlord.

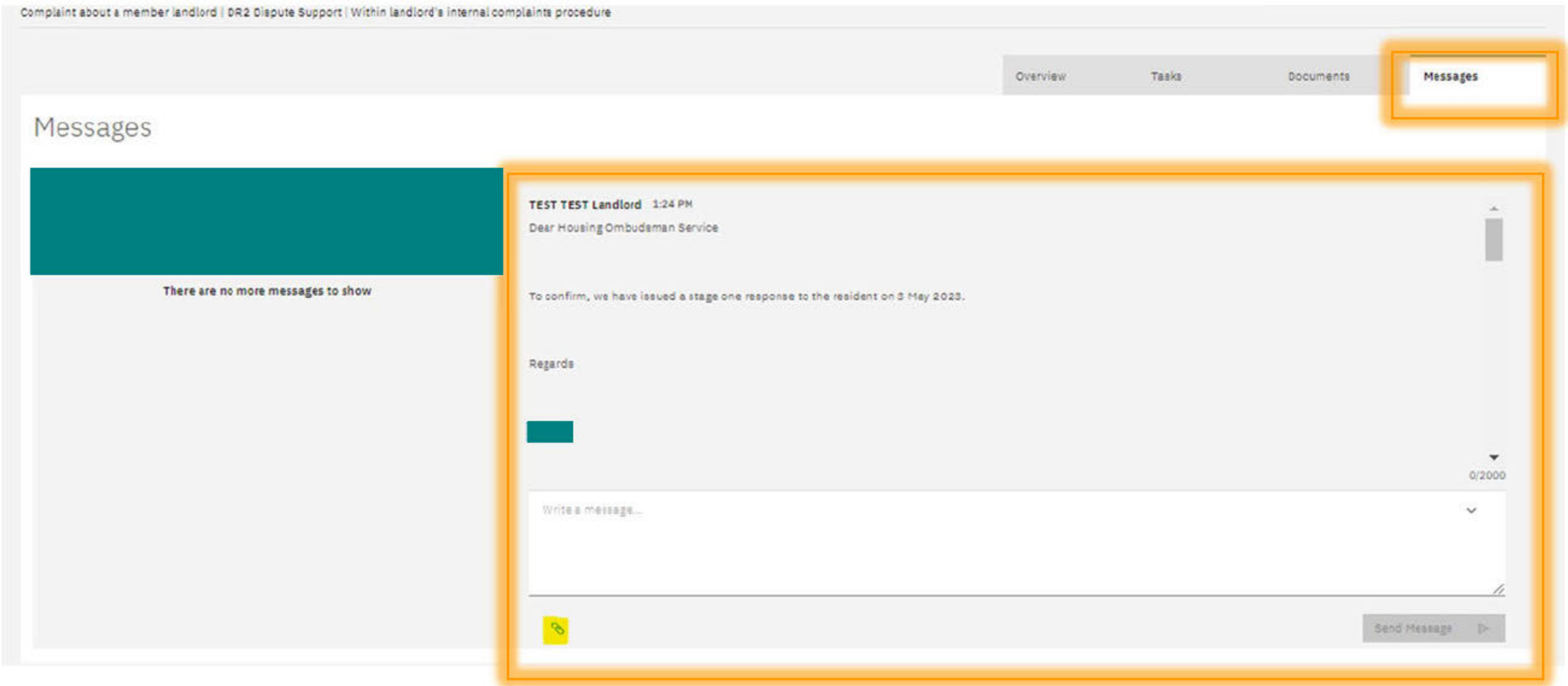
    The Investigator or Adjudicator will monitor for compliance with any orders issued as part of their determination and will let you know if they need more information during their assessment of a case.

  - **DR2 Review –** Our Reviews team assess all cases that meet the criteria for a formal review, once a decision or determination has been communicated.

Using the Portal - messages

- The *Messages* tab is used to show messages from our Service about a particular case. Once we've sent you a message, you can reply to it more than once and the history of the messages sent will be visible.

- You can use the paperclip icon (highlighted below) to attach a document to your message.



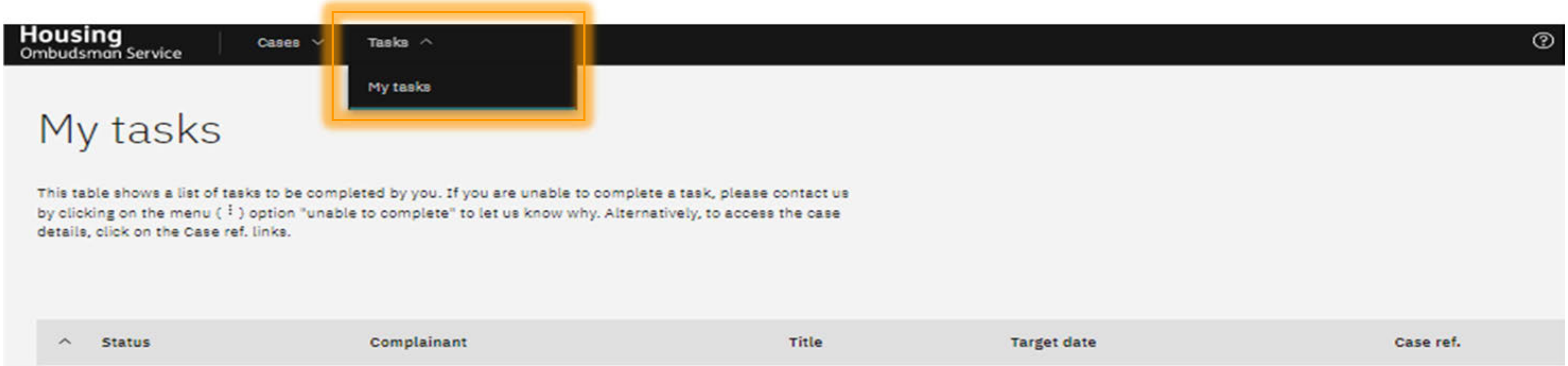
- When we ask you to provide information to help with the formal assessment of a case (Triage and Mediation team), please use the *Documents* tab (see page 22 - 25) to upload documents instead of the attachment function within a message.

- This is because the *Documents* tab lets you add and categorise multiple documents, at the same time. The categories you select are visible to our caseworkers and help us process evidence.

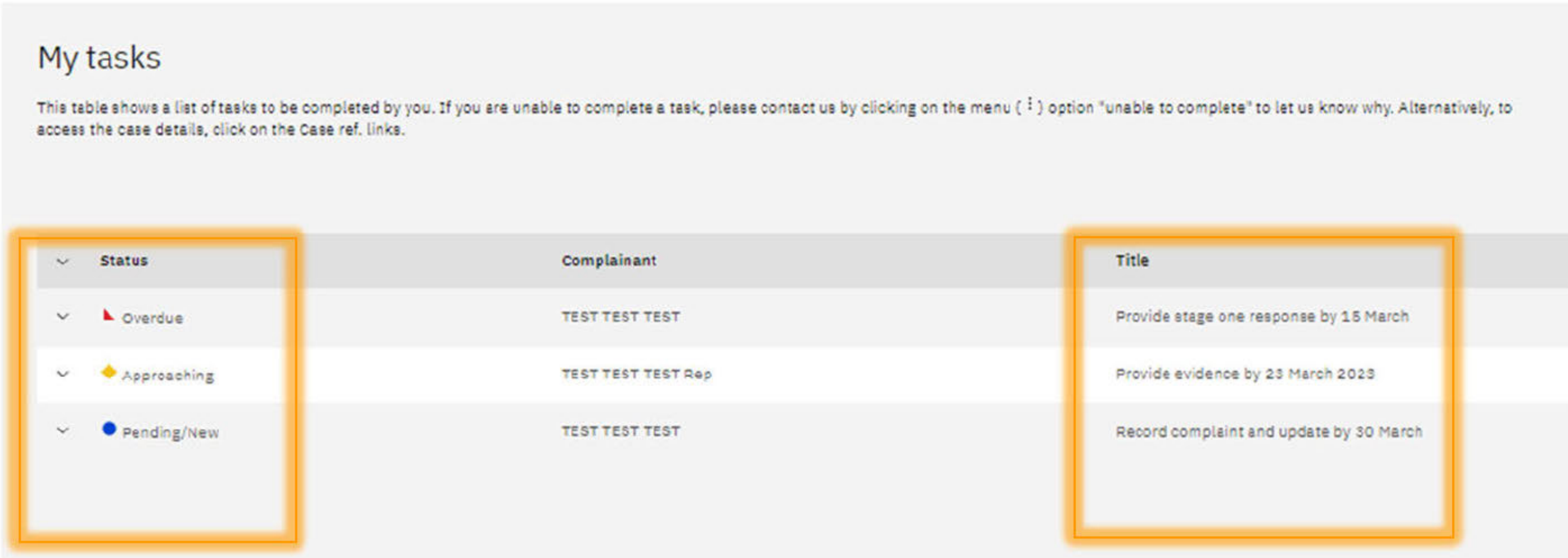
- We'll be sharing an example evidence pack shortly that shows how we'd like you to provide information.

Using the Portal – managing tasks

- You can view *Tasks* that we have assigned to cases from the Portal Homepage or by accessing the *My Tasks* Menu on the bar at the top of the screen



- You can use the arrows to the left of the task *Status* header to view more details.



- *Tasks* have a colour coded *Status* (*Pending/New, Approaching or Overdue*) which tells you when the deadline to carry out the required action is approaching.

- The *Task Title* will depend on the action we need to you to take and each task will have a deadline associated with it (which will be when you need to respond to us by).

Example tasks are shown below;

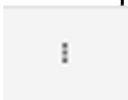
- **Record complaint and update** – you need to record a complaint and update us with supporting information

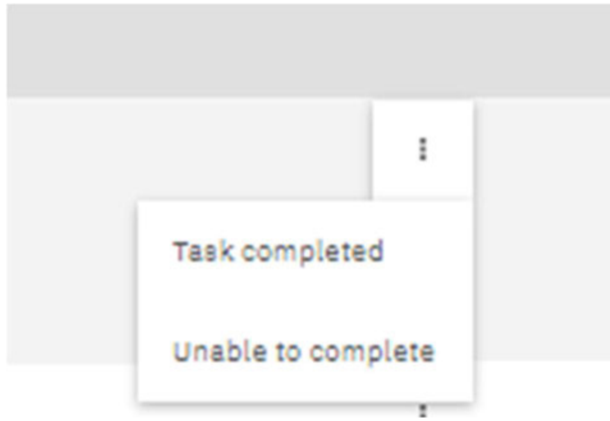
- **Escalate complaint and update –** you need to escalate a complaint within your complaint process and update us

- **For information** – when we're providing you with information or an update. You won't need to take any action apart from review the letter or email associated with the task.

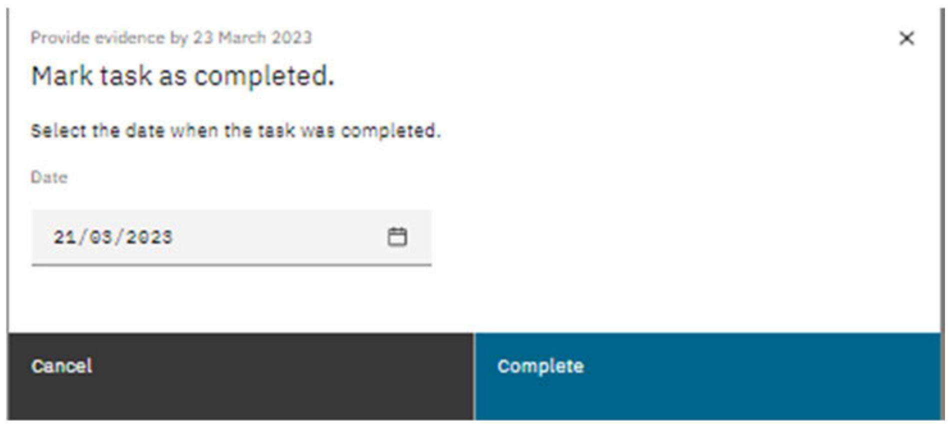
- **Respond to information request -** you need to respond to an information request in line with our preferred format, reply to a mediation request or provide any other information we've requested.

- **Confirm compliance –** you need to confirm compliance with orders provided within a determination.

- To complete a *Task* or tell us about why you've not been able to complete one, click on the  symbol to the right of the *Task* you want to action and select one of the options shown below

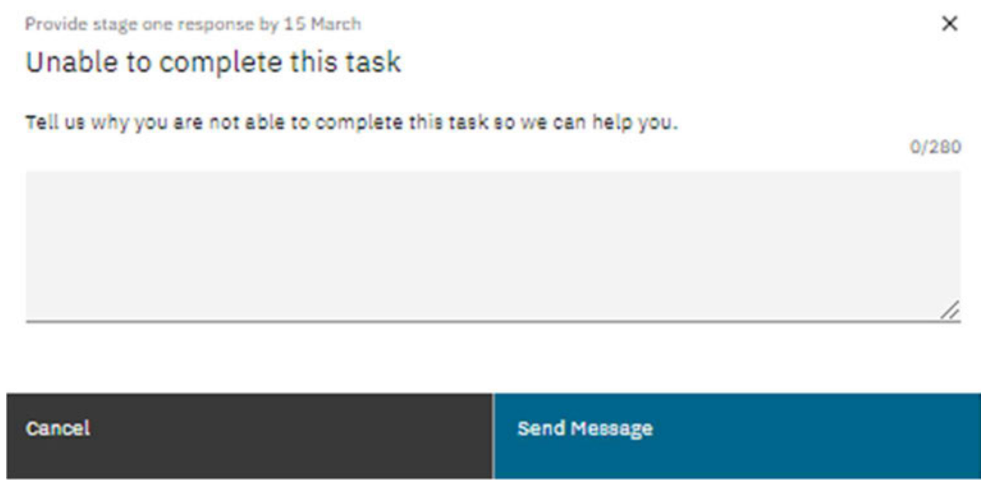


- *Task completed* will bring up the menu below so you can tell us the completion date of the *Task.*



- *Unable to complete* will show the box below, so you can send us a short message explaining why you've not been able to take the action required.

  The caseworker responsible for the case will review the message and contact you to confirm the next steps.



Using the Portal – providing documents and evidence

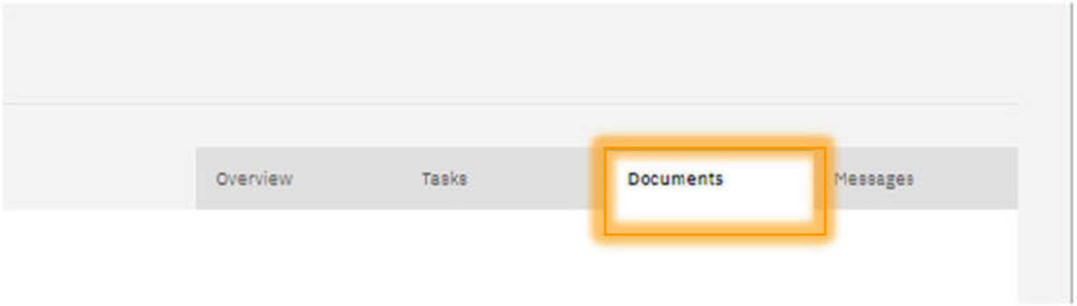
- From any screen, select the *Case ref.* link to show the case details screen

Open cases

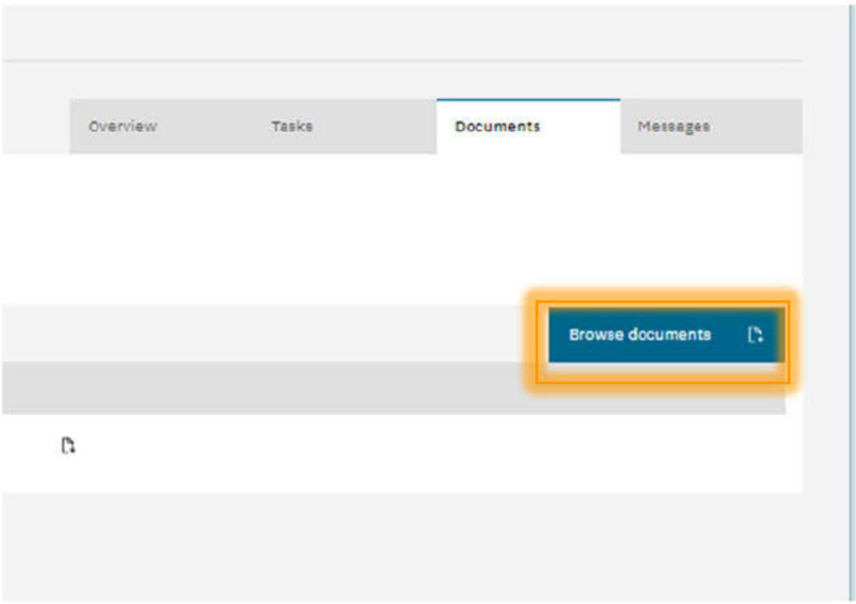
Click on the Case ref. link to access the case details.

Complainant	Landlord	Case ref.	Case Type
TEST TEST TEST	TEST TEST TEST Landlord	[redacted]	Complaint about a member landlord
Mr Test Test	TEST TEST TEST Landlord	[redacted]	Complaint about a member landlord
TEST TEST TEST Rep	TEST TEST TEST Landlord	[redacted]	Complaint about a member landlord
TEST TEST TEST	TEST TEST TEST Landlord	[redacted]	Complaint about a member landlord

- Select the *Documents* tab at the top right of the screen

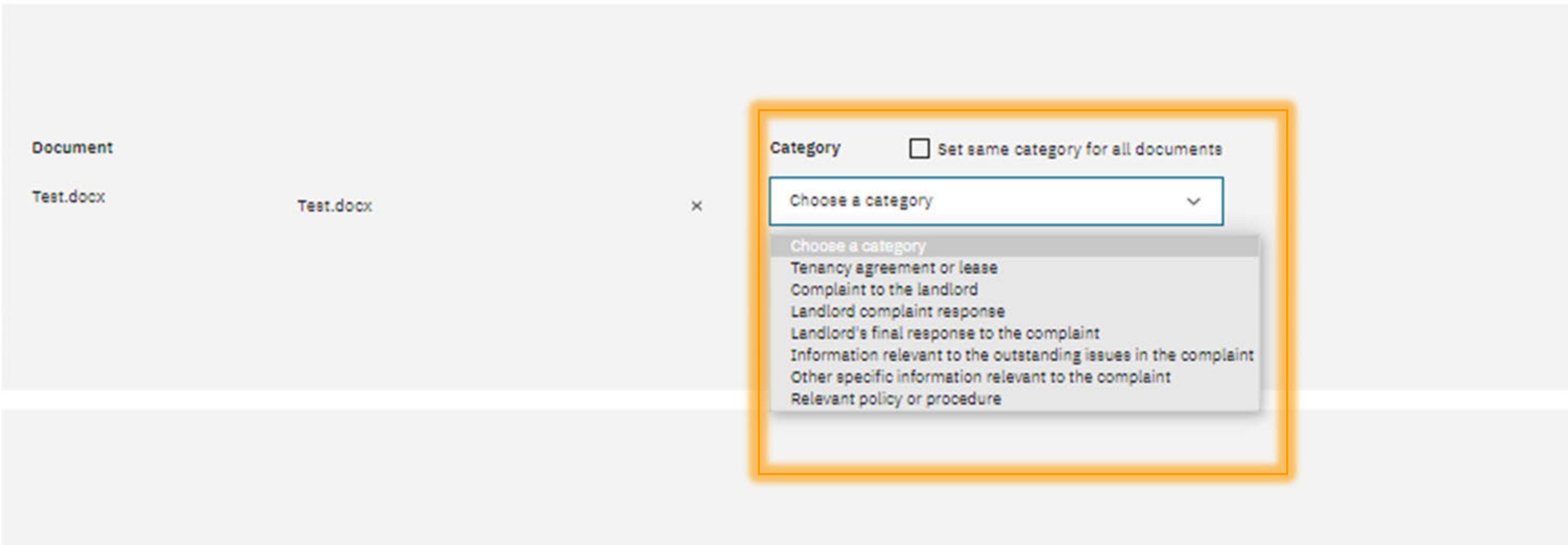


- Click on *Browse Documents* which will allow you to explore the files on your system and select them for upload. You can upload more than one document at a time by holding Ctrl on your keyboard when selecting the individual files.

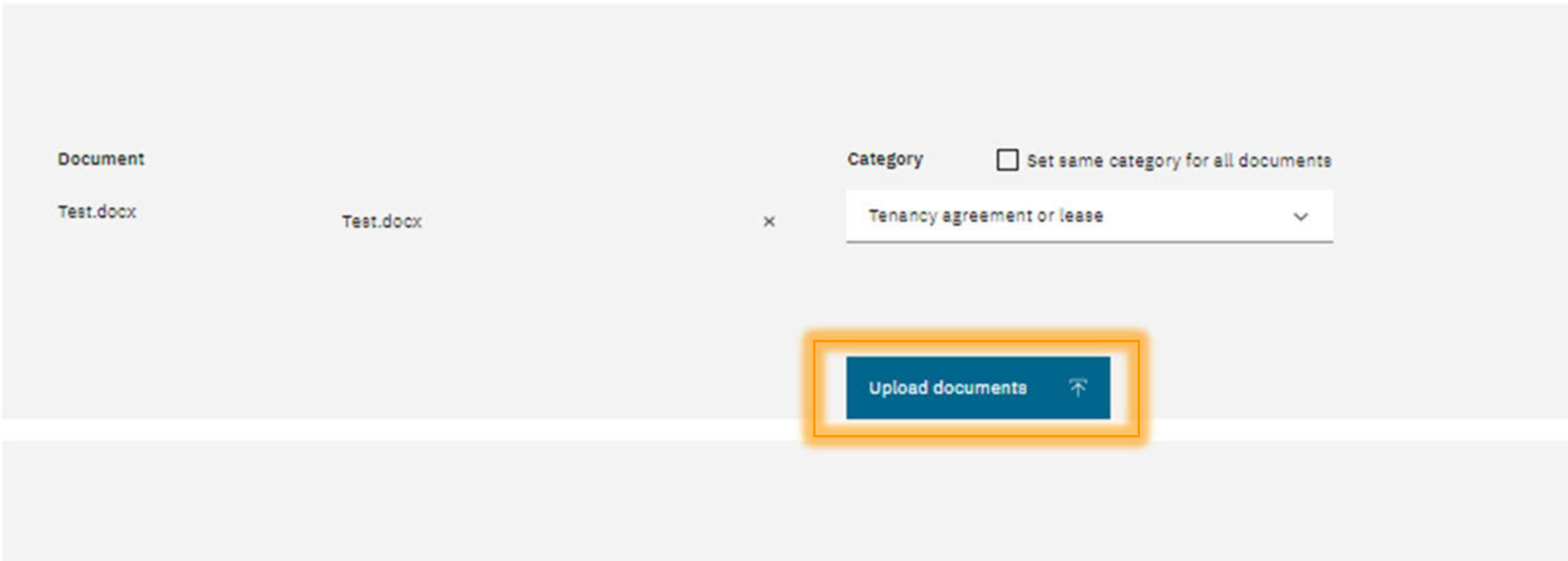


- You can also drag and drop files into the *Documents* section directly from your folders.

- Then select the most appropriate category for the document you're uploading. If you're uploading multiple documents and would like the same category to apply to all, tick the *Set same category for all documents* box.



- Finally, click on *Upload documents*. Your files will be added to the case and we'll receive a notification.

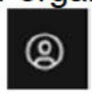


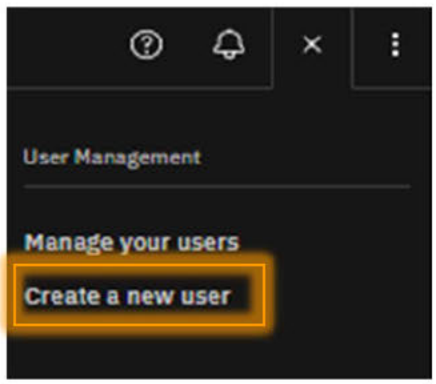
- You can upload an unlimited number of documents to a case but the rules below apply;
  - 20mb is the maximum size of any one document
  - No compressed (zipped), password protected or OpenDocument Text files (end in .odt)
  - Our Portal will accept most commonly used file types including Microsoft Office documents and PDFs

- Please give any files that you upload clear, meaningful names as it helps our caseworkers review the information you provide.

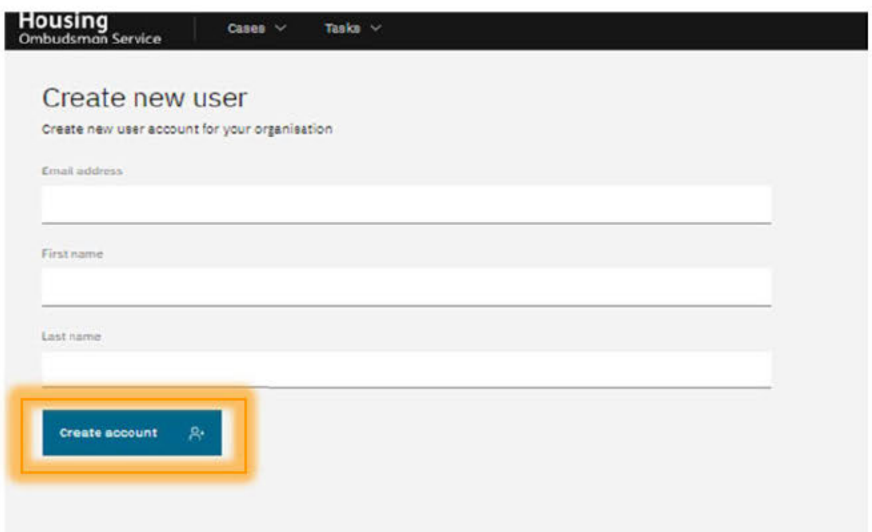
Managing the Portal – sub accounts

- We will send all case related communication to the Administration email account registered on the Portal, but you have the facility to create up to three *sub accounts* so you can manage access to the Portal for users within your organisation. *Sub accounts* will be able to interact and administer all cases assigned to your organisation.

- To create a *sub account*, access the  menu at the top right of the screen and select *Create a new user* .



- Complete the form below and select *Create account*.



- Once you've created a *Sub Account*, you can manage the user's access by selecting the *Manage your users* option. This will take you to the screen shown below

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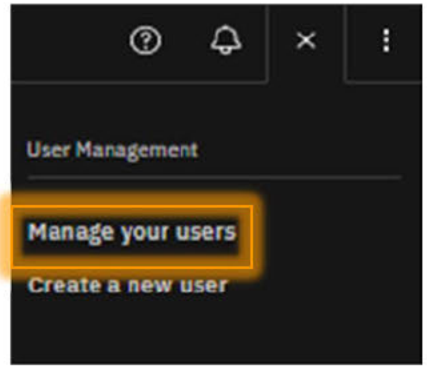

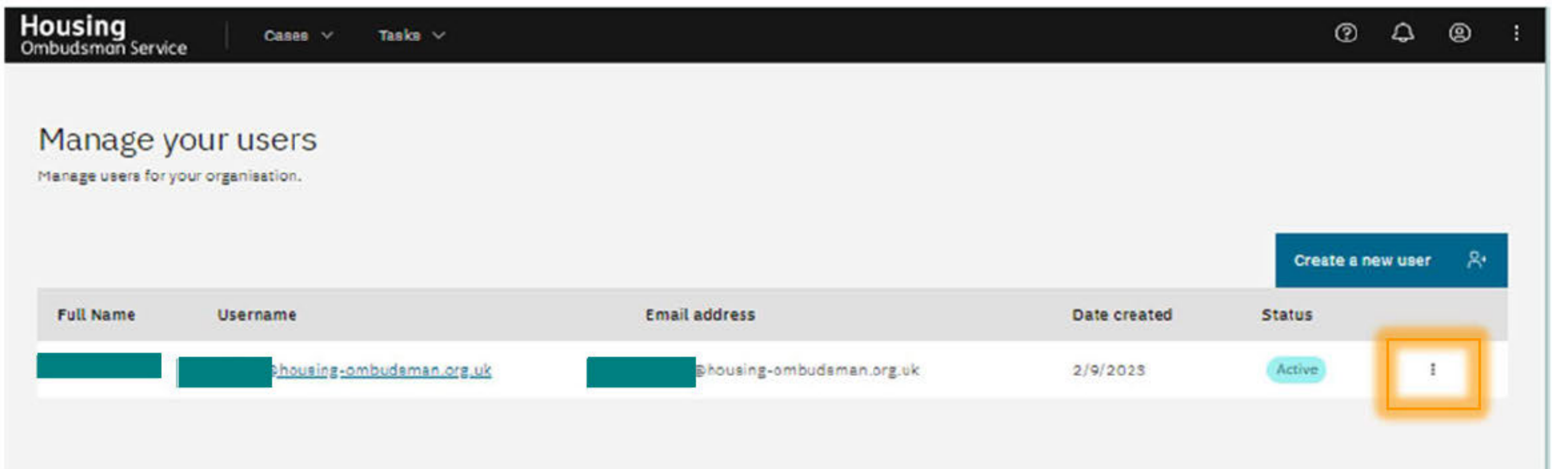

- Select the  icon to the right of each user and you'll be able to reset the password for the sub account or deactivate the account.