

# A Guide to Ombudsman Offices in the UK





The Ombudsman Association has produced this guide to help the public and wider stakeholders find which ombudsman scheme can help with their complaint.

It also provides contact details for other bodies that deal with a variety of other complaints.

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### **Role of an Ombudsman**

An ombudsman is an independent service that investigates and seeks to resolve complaints. Ombudsman schemes are free to use and impartial in their investigations – so they don't take sides. They make decisions based on what is fair. As well as providing redress for an individual, an ombudsman also identifies any systemic issues and provides feedback to help improve services and complaint handling.

Different ombudsman schemes have different powers. All ombudsman schemes have the power to investigate and make decisions on complaints. Their decisions could include recommendations to apologise, to change processes or procedures, or to pay compensation for distress and inconvenience.

An ombudsman is always free to use for a member of the public. They receive their funding either from parliament or from a levy on the businesses in their jurisdiction. Ombudsman schemes act independently, objectively and fairly, and are available to help people navigate through complex issues and procedures.

There are different ombudsman schemes covering different sectors in the UK. You can find which ombudsman can help you in this document or at *Find an Ombudsman*.

All members of the Ombudsman Association have to meet our criteria of

Independence; Fairness; Effectiveness, Openness & Transparency; and Accountability.

They also have to publish their service standards and report against them. What we consider to be best practice is set out in our *Service Standards Framework*.

# ADVICE

## HELP

# TIPS

# ASSISTANCE SUPPORT

# GUIDANCE

### Area of complaint Communications

Coverage UK

## Communications Ombudsman

The Communications Ombudsman provides independent dispute resolution services within the Communication sector. As one of the largest alternative dispute resolution (ADR) schemes approved by Ofcom, with over 1,450 telecommunications companies

signed up to our scheme, and 15 years' experience in the sector, we also provide data and insights to providers to support them in improving overall customer experience.

#### **Contact us:**

Communications Ombudsman P.O. Box 730 Warrington WA4 6WU

Email enquiry@commsombudsman.org

 tions
 Telephone

 0330 440 1614

Website

www.commsombudsman.org/

(((·)) Communications Ombudsman

Energy

Coverage

### England • Scotland • Wales

### **Energy Ombudsman**

The Energy Ombudsman was founded in 2006. We help sort out unresolved disputes within the energy industry, whilst helping suppliers understand their consumers and improve their experience. With more than 2,000 energy companies signed up to the scheme, we offer an independent and impartial service, free for consumers, and approved

by Ofgem.



#### **Contact us:**

Energy Ombudsman P.O. Box 966 Warrington WA4 9DF

Email

enquiry@energyombudsman.org

Telephone 0330 440 1624

Website www.energyombudsman.org/

Banking and credit • Fraud and scams • Insurance • Mortgages • Other financial services

Coverage

UK

### Financial Ombudsman Service

The Financial Ombudsman Service is a free and easy-to-use service that settles complaints between consumers and businesses that provide financial services. We resolve disputes fairly and impartially and have the power to put things right.



#### **Contact us:**

The Financial Ombudsman Service Exchange Tower London E14 9SR

Email

complaint.info@financial-ombudsman. org.uk

Telephone 0800 032 8000 or our helpline 0800 023 4567

Website

www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk/

Furniture • Home Improvements • Removals • Retail goods and services • Renewable energy and domestic retro-fit installation

Coverage UK

### **The Furniture & Home Improvement Ombudsman**

We are an independent, not-for-profit, government approved Ombudsman. We offer Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

training and advice to traders and consumers in the retail, furniture, and home improvement industries.

#### **Contact us:**



Furniture & Home Improvement Ombudsman Premier House First Floor, 1-5 Argyle Way, Stevenage, SG1 2AD

Email *info@fhio.org* 

Telephone 0333 241 3209

Website www.fhio.org/

Housing

Coverage England

### Housing Ombudsman Service

The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with us. We resolve disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities) and our voluntary members (private landlords and letting agents who are committed to good service for their tenants). Our dispute support service works with residents and landlords to resolve issues while they are within the landlord's complaints procedure. Our dispute resolution team makes the final decision on complaints that remain unresolved through independent, impartial and fair

investigation. We set complaint standards for our members through our statutory Complaint Handling Code and undertake systemic investigations, sharing the learning from our work through our Centre for Learning with landlords and residents to promote positive change in the social housing sector.

### Housing Ombudsman Service

#### **Contact us:**

Housing Ombudsman P.O. Box 1484 Unit D, Preston PR2 0ET

Email *info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk* 

Telephone 0300 111 3000

Website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/ residents/make-a-complaint

### Area of complaint Legal Services

Coverage

### England • Wales

### Legal Ombudsman

The Legal Ombudsman is the body responsible for investigating complaints between consumers and regulated legal service providers in England and Wales.

We resolve complaints about the standard of service legal providers have given. We cover most legal services, including those involved in wills, family issues, buying or selling a house, personal injury claims, employment, or litigation. Common complaints we look into include those about delays, costs, and poor communication.

A second vital part of our work is the sharing of learning and insight from the complaints we see. This promotes better complaint handling, prevents future complaints and helps drive higher standards in legal services.



### **Contact us:**

Legal Ombudsman PO Box 6167 Slough SL1 0EH

#### Online

https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/ contact-us/

#### Telephone

0300 555 0333 or if calling from overseas +44 121 245 3050

#### Website

www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Adult Social Care • Children's Services • Education • Housing • Benefits and Tax • Planning and Building Control • Environment, Regulation and Waste Services • Transport and Highways

Coverage England

### Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at complaints about councils and some other authorities and organisations, including education admissions appeal panels and

adult social care providers (such as care homes and home care providers). It is a free service. Our job is to investigate complaints in a fair and independent way - we do not take sides. By law, some kinds of complaint cannot be considered. Examples are personnel complaints and complaints about the internal running of schools.

#### **Contact us:**

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman P.O. Box 4771 Coventry CV4 0EH

To make a complaint online *https://complaints.lgo.org.uk/* 

Telephone 0300 061 0614

Website www.lgo.org.uk

#### Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

### Area of complaint Automotive • Retail goods and services

Coverage

UK

### The Motor Ombudsman

We provide an independent and impartial dispute resolution service dedicated to the UK automotive industry. With more than 7,500 automotive businesses including vehicle manufacturers, franchised dealers, independent garages and used car outlets.

We're governed by an independent Board and an Independent Compliance Assessment Panel (ICAP), are audited by CSTI

to maintain and ensure our transparency and integrity, and strive to improve standards across the industry through our Codes of Practice.



#### **Contact us:**

The Motor Ombudsman, 71 Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2BN United Kingdom

Make a complaint online www.themotorombudsman.org/ consumers/make-a-complaint

Telephone 0345 241 3008

Website www.themotorombudsman.org/

### Area of complaint Construction • Housing • New Homes

Coverage England • Scotland • Wales

## New Homes Ombudsman Service

The New Homes Ombudsman Service resolves complaints from people who have purchased a new-build home and are dissatisfied with an aspect of the service they have received, or the quality of the new home. Our service covers homes built by developers who

are registered with the New Homes Quality Board and applies to a wide range of issues arising in the first 2 years after someone reserved or purchased the property.



### **Contact us:**

West Wing, First Floor Maylands Building, 200 Maylands Avenue Hemel Hempstead HP2 7TG

Email

customer.services@nhos.org.uk

Telephone 0330 808 4286

Website www.nhos.org.uk/

Education • Health & Social Care • Housing • Council Services • Government Departments • Standards in public life

Coverage Northern Ireland

### Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

NIPSO are independent of Government and provide a free and impartial investigation service in relation to;

1). Unresolved complaints about public services in Northern Ireland including hospitals, care homes, GP's government departments, local councils, schools, and social housing providers;

2). Allegations that councillors may have breached the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors;

3). Complaints of maladministration by applicants for judicial roles.

In addition to seeking redress for complainants, we also make recommendations to improve public services. We also set standards for how public services in Northern Ireland deal with complaints.

#### **Contact us:**

Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6HN

nipso@nipso.org.uk

Email



Telephone 0289 0233 3821 or freephone 0800 34 34 24

Website www.nipso.org.uk

# Area of complaint Education

Coverage England • Wales

## The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

The OIA is the independent student complaints scheme for England and Wales. We review unresolved complaints from students about their higher education provider, and if we find the provider has done something wrong we make recommendations for it to put things right. Our service is impartial and free of charge

for students. We also share learning from complaints and work with other organisations to help improve policy and practice in the higher education sector and promote fairness for students.

#### **Contact us:**

#### OIA

Second Floor, Abbey Wharf 57-75 Kings Road Reading RG1 3AB

Email enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

By phone 01189599813

Website www.oiahe.org.uk/students/can-youcomplain-to-us

oia

office of the independent adjudicator

### Government Departments • NHS

Coverage

England (Health) • UK (Governmental)

### Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

We independently investigate complaints about UK government departments, other public organisations, and the NHS in England. We believe complaints have the power to reveal the truth, create lasting change and inspire a better relationship between people and

public services. Our service is free, fair and open to everyone.

#### **Contact us:**



Citygate Mosley Street Manchester M2 3HQ

Email

phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone 0345 015 4033

Website www.ombudsman.org.uk

### Area of complaint Workplace and personal pensions

Coverage

UK

## **The Pensions Ombudsman**

The Pensions Ombudsman deals with complaints about workplace and personal pension schemes. We look at the facts without taking sides, and customers do not need to pay to use our service. We can

also help with a complaint about a decision made by the Pension Protection Fund or the Financial Assistance Scheme.



### **Contact us:**

10 The South Colonnade, London, E14 4PU

Email

enquiries@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone 0800 917 4487

Website

www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk/

Police

Coverage

### Northern Ireland

## Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

The Police Ombudsman's Office provides independent, impartial investigation of complaints about the police in Northern Ireland. We look at evidence to decide whether police officers have acted properly or not. Examples of the types of things we investigate include complaints that

officers were in breach of Criminal Law; officers failed to conduct proper enquiries; officers used excessive force; officers were rude or aggressive; or acted in breach of the Code of Ethics. We also investigate complaints about some, but not all, civilian employees

of the police. This includes those performing custody and escort duties. Our decisions are made entirely independently of the police, government and complainants.



#### Contact us:

Police Ombudsman's Office New Cathedral Buildings Writers' Square 11 Church Street Belfast, BT1 1PG

By email info@policeombudsman.org

Telephone 0300 123 2989 or 0289 082 8600

Website www.policeombudsman.org/

Housing • Estate Agents • Letting Agents • Managing Agents • Auctioneers • International Agents • Buying Agents • Property Sourcing Agents • Freehold Management Companies • Landlords

Coverage UK

### **The Property Ombudsman**

The Property Ombudsman provides a free, impartial and independent service to resolve disputes between consumers and property businesses.

We were established in 1990 and have both mandatory (agents) and voluntary memberships (other property businesses and landlords) within the scheme. Our Scheme is approved by the Government

as an agent redress scheme, as an ADR provider by Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) and as an Ombudsman by the Ombudsman Association. The Ombudsman also produces codes of practice that are independently approved by CTSI.



#### **Contact us:**

Milford House, 43-55 Milford Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2BP

Email

admin@tpos.co.uk

Telephone 0172 233 3306

Website www.tpos.co.uk

Health & Social Care • Housing • Public Services • Standards in public life

Coverage Wales

## Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has three specific roles:

- 1) The first is to consider complaints about public service providers in Wales;
- 2) The second is to consider complaints that elected members of local authorities have broken the Councillor Code of Conduct;
- 3) The third is to drive public service improvement by promoting good complaints handling and learning from complaints.

We are independent of all government bodies and the service provided is free of charge.



Ombwdsmon Ombudsman

Cymru • Wales

#### **Contact us:**

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Email *ask@ombudsman.wales* 

Telephone 0300 790 0203

Website www.ombudsman.wales/howto-complain

Transport

Coverage

### England • Scotland • Wales

### **The Rail Ombudsman**

The Rail Ombudsman is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. We offer a free, expert service to help sort out unresolved customer complaints about service providers within the rail industry. Our vision is to inspire customer confidence and to deliver our service fairly to ensure the right outcome in every case.

We also support the rail industry to raise standards.



#### **Contact us:**

Rail Ombudsman 1st Floor Premier House Argyle Way Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 2AD

Email

info@railombudsman.org

Telephone 0330 094 0362

Website www.railombudsman.org/

#### Area of complaint Removals • Transport

Coverage

England • Scotland

### Removals Industry Ombudsman Scheme

The Removals Industry Ombudsman Scheme (RIOS) provides an alternative dispute resolution service for clients of members of the National Guild of Removers (NGRS). Complainants are expected

to exhaust the supplier's own complaints process first, but if the matter cannot be resolved, they may contact us at the Removals Ombudsman. No charge is made to the complainant.



### **Contact us:**

PO Box 1651 Beaconsfield HP9 9EB

By email *ombudsman@removalsombudsman. co.uk* 

Online contact form https://removalsombudsman.co.uk/ contact-us/

Telephone 020 7754 4549

Website www.removalsombudsman.co.uk/ making-a-complaint/

### Area of complaint Public Services

Coverage

Scotland

## Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) has four distinct functions:

- 1) It is the final stage for complaints about most devolved public services in Scotland;
- 2) It publishes and monitors complaints handling procedures, while supporting best practice in complaints handling;
- It independently reviews and can overturn decisions on Community Care and Crisis Grant applications for the Scottish Welfare Fund;
- 4) Is the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer for the NHS in Scotland looking at how the NHS considers whistleblowing disclosures, and treats the individuals concerned.

Our services are free and independent.



### **Contact us:**

Bridgeside House 99 McDonald Road Edinburgh EH7 4NS

Online www.spso.org.uk/contact-us

Telephone 0800 377 7330

Website

www.spso.org.uk/

### Area of complaint Armed Forces

Coverage

## Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces

The Service Complaints Ombudsman provides independent and impartial scrutiny of the handling of Service Complaints made by members of the UK Armed Forces. We do this so that all Service personnel can have access to and confidence in a Service complaints system that is efficient, effective and fair. SCOAF has the power to refer complaints into the system, to review decisions

made on the admissibility of complaints, and to investigate concerns with the outcome and handling of Service Complaints. We also report annually on the overall performance of the Service Complaint system.

#### **Contact us:**

Email contact@scoaf.org.uk

Online www.scoaf.org.uk/contact-us/ enquiry-form

Telephone 0300 369 0689

Website www.scoaf.org.uk/

Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces

Waterways

Coverage

England • Wales

### The Waterways Ombudsman

We consider complaints of maladministration or unfairness against

the Canal and River Trust and the Avon Navigation Trust, once their internal complaints procedure has been completed. We cannot investigate complaints about personnel matters, or matters which have been, or are being, considered by a court.



### **Contact us:**

The Waterways Ombudsman PO Box 18745 Sutton Coldfield B73 9YE

Email enquiries@waterways-ombudsman.org

Telephone 0777 115 0500

Website www.waterways-ombudsman.org/

# **Other Complaint Handling Bodies**

Area of Complaint	Who to Contact	Contact details
Advertising	Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)	020 7492 2222 enquiries@asa.org.uk www.asa.org.uk
Consumer ADR	Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR)	020 7536 6000 applications@cedr.com www.cedr.com
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Child Maintenance Service, Pension Protection Fund Northern Ireland Department for Communities (benefits, pensions and child maintenance only)	Independent Case Examiner (ICE)	0800 414 8529 Ice@dwp.gov.uk www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ independent-case-examiner
Disputes between larger SME's and certain banks	Business Banking Resolution Service (BBRS)	0345 646 8825 hello@thebbrs.org thebbrs.org
Financial Conduct Authority, the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Bank of England	Financial Regulators Complaints Commissioner (FRCC)	020 4599 8333 info@frccommissioner.org.uk www.frccomissioner.org.uk/
Football Clubs & Football Authorities	The Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO)	0330 165 4223 contact@theifo.co.uk www.theifo.co.uk
Gambling	Independent Betting Adjudication Service (IBAS)	020 7347 5883 ibasteam@ibas-uk.co.uk www.ibas-uk.com/
HM Land Registry	Independent Complaints Reviewer (ICR)	0300 013 2119 enquiries@icrev.org.uk www.icrev.org.uk/
HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and Home Office (Windrush Compensation Scheme Reviewer)	The Adjudicators Office	0300 057 1111 www.gov.uk/guidance/ contact-the-adjudicators-office-online www.gov.uk/guidance/ contact-the-adjudicators-office
Home Office	Independent Examiner of Complaints (IEC)	0300 071 5679 iec@homeoffice.gov.uk www.gov.uk/guidance/make-a-complaint-to- the-independent-examiner-of-complaints

# **Other Complaint Handling Bodies**

Area of Complaint	Who to Contact	Contact details
Information rights	Information Commissioners Office (ICO)	0303 123 1113 Advice services for members of the public   ICO icocasework@ico.org.uk
Legal practitioners in Scotland	Scottish Legal Complaints Commission (SLCC)	0131 201 2130 enquiries@scottishlegalcomplaints.org.uk www.scottishlegalcomplaints.org.uk/
Public Appointments in Northern Ireland	The Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland	028 9052 4820 info@publicappointmentsni.org www.publicappointmentssni.org/
Regulating Immigration Services	Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC)	0345 000 0046 info@osic.gov.uk www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ office-of-the-immigration-services-commissioner
Solicitors in Northern Ireland	Lay Observer NI	02890 816715 marian.cree@legalcommissioner-ni.org.uk www.layobserverni.com
Tenancy Deposits	The Dispute Service (TDS)	0300 037 1000 or 0300 037 1001 Contact us - Tenancy Deposit Scheme www.tenancydepositscheme.com/
Trade union members	NI Certification Officer for Trade Unions & Employers' Associations	028 9023 7773 info@nicertoffice.org.uk www.nicertoffice.org.uk/
Welsh Language	Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC) Comisiynydd y Gymraeg	0345 603 3221 post@welshlanguagecommissioner.wales www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/