

About Ombudsman Services – some information for providers

Ombudsman Services is here to give independent and impartial decisions on complaints. Our service is free for consumers to use. We operate under appropriate legislation, with the approval of regulatory authorities and trade bodies.

We're not a watchdog or a regulator. Our job is to resolve complaints, not punish the companies we resolve complaints about. We're independent, so we don't take sides.

We run ombudsman schemes for the following sectors:

- Communications (telephone, mobile, broadband etc)
- Energy (including the Green Deal)
- Copyright licensing

In making decisions we consider:

- Relevant law
- Regulatory rules, guidance and standards.
- Codes of practice.
- What is accepted as good industry practice.

Who can use our service?

We help resolve complaints for domestic and small business consumers of companies that

have signed up to our service. The definition of a small business is slightly different for each sector.

For communications providers, a small business is defined as a person or entity with 10 or fewer employees.

For energy providers, the term used is micro business. A micro business is defined as a company that has:

- An annual consumption of electricity no more than 100,000 kWh, or gas consumption no more than 293,000 kWh. **Or**
- Has an annual turnover or annual balance sheet that does not exceed €2 million, **and** fewer than 10 employees (or their full-time equivalent)

Before contacting us, consumers must give the company a reasonable opportunity to resolve the complaint. A company will usually give information on its website about how to complain or will provide consumers with a written copy of its complaints procedure.

We may be able to help if a consumer's complaint is eight weeks old and still unresolved. We may be able to help before this if you issue a full and final response to the consumer, also known as a deadlock letter.

Timeframes

There are rules about when we can accept a complaint. For most complaints, consumers must:



- Complain to a company within 12 months of becoming aware of the issue.
- Contact us within six years of first complaining to the company, if the complaint was made after 1 October 2015.
- Give the provider a chance to resolve the issue. Consumers must complain to the provider for eight weeks before coming to us.

How we handle complaints

We help to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. We aim to resolve complaints within six to eight weeks.

Putting things right

Our decisions are binding on the company and are enforceable in court. Some things we can require:

- An apology.
- An explanation of what went wrong.
- Practical action to put the issue right.
- A financial award.

We may also make recommendations to the company so that it can avoid similar problems happening again.

If a consumer accepts our decision, it becomes final and the company has 28 days to put any remedies in place. If the consumer rejects the decision, they lose the right to the remedies,

but they are free to take the complaint elsewhere, such as the courts.

Accessibility

Our website meets all priority two requirements of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG 2.1). This used to be called Level AA compliance. We've designed our website to be completely responsive so that it caters to the needs of consumers who may need a more accessible online experience.

We can provide documents in alternative formats such as large print, audio and Braille.

Contact us

Find more information, guidance and our scheme rules on our website:

www.Ombudsman-Services.org

For admin queries, you can contact the applications team at:

Applications@Ombudsman-Services.org

For any other queries about your participation in our scheme, you can contact the Account Management team at

OSAccountManagers@Ombudsman-Services.org

