
How do we sort out problems?

Our job is to look at complaints about service providers fairly and without taking sides.

After we have looked at the facts, we will let you know whether the service provided was reasonable or not. We will explain why we have reached our view. We will try to reach an agreement between you and the service provider about whether anything should be done to put things right. We also have formal powers to put things right.

Our service is free to you.

Who can use our service?

All members of the public, very small businesses, charities, clubs and trusts. If someone has died, and there is a problem with their will or estate, we may also be able to help.

We prefer you come to us directly, but you can ask a friend, relative or anyone else to help you. You do not need to use a professional to complain to us, but if you do, they may charge you a fee for this. In almost all circumstances we will not be able to tell your service provider to refund this to you.

What problems can we help you with?

We can help you with lots of different types of service problems; for instance, if you've had poor service when you bought or sold a house, made a personal injury claim or been involved in litigation.

We can look into complaints about regulated solicitors, barristers, licensed conveyancers, cost lawyers, legal executives, notaries, patent attorneys and trademark attorneys.

What we can't help you with.

We can't:

- Give legal advice or represent you;
- Recommend service providers;
- Look into a complaint about someone else's service provider; or
- Look at a complaint where you have already accepted an offer from the service provider to put things right.

When can you bring a complaint to us?

You must give your service provider the chance to look into your complaint first. Please see our “How to complain to your service provider” factsheet and example formal complaint letter for tips on how to do this.

Once you have made a complaint to your service provider, they have up to eight weeks to respond to you. If you aren't happy with their final response, or they haven't responded within the eight weeks, you can then ask us to look at it.

Generally, you can ask us to look at your complaint if you are referring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within either:

- One year of the problem happening; **or**
- One year from when you found out about it.

For complaints that are referred to the Legal Ombudsman before 1 April 2023, we can accept complaints where the matter complained about happened in the past six years, or if the matter happened more than six years ago, you must have become aware of it no longer than three years ago.

You need to bring your complaint to us within six months of your service provider's final response. If your complaint does not meet these time limits, we may not be able to investigate it.

A final response is when the service provider has nothing further to say and tells you that if you are still unhappy you can contact the Legal Ombudsman.

When sending information to us we cannot accept documents from online stores such as Microsoft SkyDrive, Xdrive, Livedrive and other cloud platforms such as Dropbox, Google Drive, etc. Attach the documents to the email instead.

Documents can also be sent. Please only send copies as we scan with our mail and destroy the originals. Make copies of any important documents relating to your complaint (letters, statements, official documents or certificates).

What we can do to put things right.

If we find that the service you received was poor, we can tell the service provider to:

- Apologise to you;
- Give back any documents you might need;
- Do more work for you, if this will put right what went wrong;
- Refund or reduce your fees; or,
- Pay compensation if you have lost out or been badly treated (most of our awards are under £1,000).

Anything we tell the service provider to do to put things right will always be based on the individual circumstances of the complaint and what the impact of the poor service has been.

How to contact us

Postal address: Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6167
Slough
SL1 0EH

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 555 0333
NGT Lite users: 18001 0300 555 0333
Overseas: +44 121 245 3050

If you need information in another language, large print, Braille or on audio CD then please let us know when contacting us.

Additional information

I want to complain, should I still pay the service provider's fee?

Your service provider may decide to take action against you if you do not pay any outstanding fees. To avoid this, you may wish to pay those fees. We would still be able to look into your complaint.

Are the Legal Ombudsman's decisions legally binding?

If it is not possible to resolve a complaint informally, then we have official powers to sort problems out. Your investigator will tell you their view of how things need to be resolved. If an agreement cannot be reached, an ombudsman may be asked to make a final decision where, for example an agreed outcome cannot be reached, the service provider is closed, or the comments received from you or your service provider show a possible error in fact or law or provide additional new evidence. If a decision is made, and you accept the decision, this is final and binding.

How long will all this take?

Our current data shows that on average we begin investigations within two to three months, and from there we complete the majority of our investigations in 3-6 months. Straightforward cases can be resolved more quickly. More complex cases, which need specialist input or support, can take up to 12 months.

Can I withdraw from the process once I have brought a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman?

Yes. You can withdraw your complaint at any time.

Important things to know about how we handle your information

Visit our website to find out [how we use your personal data](#).

We comply with data protection rules at all times. You can contact our dedicated team (infosec@legalombudsman.org.uk) for further information about this and any freedom of information requests.

Please **do not** send us original documents unless we ask you to. If we do ask you to send us original documents, we will keep them safe and return them to you.

In accordance with current data protection legislation, we may collect and hold your personal information. For further details on how we will use your information, including processing your complaint file and entities we may share information with such as other regulators or research companies please visit our privacy statement at www.legalombudsman.org.uk.