
When should I complain to my service provider?

You should complain as soon as you are aware there is a problem - don't leave it too long. Problems are often sorted out more easily if they are dealt with early on.

Who do I complain to?

Complain to the person who handles complaints for your service provider. If you don't know their name then, mark your complaint for the attention of 'The Complaints Handling Partner'.

We can't make a complaint to your service provider on your behalf, but with your agreement, we can send them a letter to let them know that you have been in touch with us. If you haven't already spoken to us about this, please let us know if you'd like us to send a letter to your service provider.

How do I make sure my Claims Management Company knows I am complaining?

It's best to put your complaint in writing so that you can set out clearly what you are unhappy with. Write 'complaint' at the top of your letter or email. Keep a copy of this and all the replies you receive.

You may find it useful to use our example formal complaint letter to help you write your complaint or for tips on what to say.

Make sure you tell your service provider everything that you are unhappy about because we can only look at complaints you have already made to them.

If you choose to make your complaint over the telephone or during a meeting, tell your service provider that you want to complain and ask them to record this on their file. Make a note of the date, the issues you complained about, and who you spoke to. Ask for a written response.

If you haven't heard from your service provider within seven days of making your complaint, contact them to make sure they have got it and that they are going to reply to you.

When can I come to the Legal Ombudsman?

Once you have made a complaint to your service provider, they have up to eight weeks to respond. 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.

Ordinarily, you can ask us to look at your complaint if it meets all three of the steps below:

1. The problem or when you found out about it, happened after 5 October 2010; **and**
2. You are referring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within either of the following:
 - Six years of the problem happening; **or**
 - Three years from when you found out about it; **and**
3. You are referring 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 should tell you that they have nothing further to say in their response to your complaint and, if you are still unhappy with the reply, to contact the Legal Ombudsman.

Come to us as soon as you can after trying to resolve your complaint with the service provider – don't delay.

How to contact us

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Email: cmc@legalombudsman.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 555 0333

NGT Lite users: 18001 0300 555 0333

Minicom text phone user:

18002 0300 555 0333

Overseas: +44 121 245 3050

Postal address: PO BOX 6804,

Wolverhampton, WV1 9WG

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

Important things to know about how we handle your information

Calls are recorded, including calls you make to us, calls we make to you as well as calls to other people and organisations.

We will need to handle personal details about you which could include sensitive information.

We will need to share information we consider relevant about your complaint with the service provider and with their approved regulator.

We may also share details of your complaint with carefully selected third parties for research purposes, such as customer satisfaction surveys. If you don't want us to use these details or to be contacted for these purposes, please let us know.

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

All documents you send to us will be scanned on to our computer system and then destroyed after 28 days. Case related information that is stored electronically will usually be deleted 18 months after the case file is closed.

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.

Additional information

Can I ask the Legal Ombudsman to look at my complaint if I've already accepted a remedy from my service provider?

If you have already accepted a remedy the Legal Ombudsman is unable to help. We are also unable to sort out any issues that have already been looked at by the courts.

What if my service provider wants more than eight weeks to sort out my complaint?

As long as you have given them up to eight weeks to sort out the problem you can bring it to us. Our first step is then to check that we can help resolve your problem – so we will ask about you, your service provider, and the timeframes to make sure we have powers to investigate your complaint. If we can't, we will help you find the right organisation to contact.

Can my service provider charge me for looking into my complaint?

Ordinarily service providers would not charge you for investigating your complaint. If they do charge then this is something we could consider as part of our investigation.

My service provider has asked me to attend a meeting to discuss the complaint. Do I have to go?

It may help to meet and discuss the complaint with them. You could also consider taking a friend or representative with you. However, it's not compulsory so please let your service provider know if you don't wish to attend a meeting.



The Legal Ombudsman is committed to delivering high quality customer service in a timely, flexible manner that meets individual needs, situations and expectations. Our Service Principles are a reflection of our core values of being ***Open, Fair, Independent and Effective***. Our Standards apply to all, and show how we respect and respond to each other internally and externally with our customers and stakeholders. The Service Principles and Standards set out what this commitment means in practice and what our customers can expect from us.



OPEN - We will always be clear with you

Our service standards

- We will communicate using plain English so you can make appropriate, informed choices.
- We will discuss with you at the beginning what you can expect from the service we provide.
- We will explain the complaints process and keep you updated about what is happening throughout.

You can expect us to:

- Communicate in a way that can be understood, avoiding using jargon, providing clear and relevant information.
- Listen carefully and ask questions to understand your complaint.
- Be professional and knowledgeable.
- Make sure everyone is clear about our process at every stage of the complaint



• **OPEN - We will be understanding and approachable**

Our service standards

- We will recognise each individual's perspectives and experiences.
- We will take your individual needs into account.
- We will offer support in a variety of ways via BrowseAloud, large print, and languages other than English to help you access our service.

You can expect us to:

- Be polite and treat you with respect.
- Listen to you and take your views seriously.
- Be empathetic and sensitive to your needs, and support them.
- Make reasonable adjustments for people who require them.



EFFECTIVE - We will make good use of everyone's time

Our service standards

- We will deal with your complaint efficiently and keep you informed about progress.
- We will help both parties resolve the complaint at the earliest opportunity.
- We understand that some complaints can be complicated: we will be honest about what we can deliver.

You can expect us to:

- Ensure we understand your needs and deal with your complaint promptly.
- Keep you informed at all times throughout your involvement with us as to what to expect and when to expect it.
- Let you know as soon as possible if we are unable to help you.



FAIR/INDEPENDENT - We will be impartial, thorough, and base our work on facts

Our service standards

- We will be clear about what information we need from you.
- We will listen to what you have to say and consider relevant information provided by both parties before any final decision is reached.
- We will reach our decision based on information and what is balanced, fair and reasonable.
- We will provide a clear explanation of our decision.

You can expect us to:

- Ensure we are objective, non-judgmental, and fair throughout the investigation.
- Help you identify what information is needed, and be clear what can be used.
- Be consistent in our approach.
- Communicate our decisions clearly and concisely.



EFFECTIVE - We will make a difference

Our service standards

- We will be an independent voice and use our experience to inform debate within the legal, claims management and ombudsman sectors.
- We will help improve the complaint practices of service providers.
- We will identify the main causes of complaints and feed best practice information back to service providers.
- We will publish ombudsman decisions on our website, which will include information that is accurate, easy to find and understandable

You can expect us to:

- Listen to, consider, and learn from feedback we receive.
- Engage with service providers to provide support based on our learning.
- Provide information and learning to service providers by delivering external courses.