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## When should I complain to my service provider?

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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.

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## Who do I complain to?

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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'. If you have a complaint about a barrister, address it directly to him/her.

We can, with your agreement, send a letter to your service provider to let them know that you have been in touch with us, although we are unable to make a complaint for you. 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.

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## How do I make sure my service provider knows I am complaining?

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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.

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## When can I come to the Legal Ombudsman?

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

# LEGAL OMBUDSMAN

## How to complain to your legal service provider

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.

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### How to contact us

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Website: [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)  
Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@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 6806,  
Wolverhampton,  
WV1 9WJ

**If you need information in another language or in another format such as large print, Braille or on audio CD, please get in touch.**

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### Important things to know about how we handle your information

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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 use information from the complaints that come to us to improve our service, and to help shape how we work and our policies. We may share information about this case, including your contact details, with carefully selected third parties for research purposes, such as customer satisfaction surveys. If you do not want us to share this information, or to be contacted for these purposes, please let us know.

We publish data about all cases that require an ombudsman's decision, including the name of the service provider, the decision of the ombudsman and the area of law. We will not publish

your name or personal details. Further information can be found in the 'Data and decisions' area of our website.

We comply with data protection rules at all times. You can contact our dedicated team ([compliance@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto: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.

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## Additional information

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

We wouldn't normally look at a complaint where you have already accepted an offer from the service provider to put things right. For example, where you have accepted a reduction in your bill to resolve your complaint. However, we will consider the circumstances before letting you know whether we can help. We are also unable to sort out any issues with your service provider 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.