

# About Ombudsman Services

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 and with the approval of regulatory authorities and trade bodies. We are not a watchdog or a regulator – our job is to resolve complaints, not punish the companies we resolve complaints about. We are independent so we do not take sides.

We run ombudsman schemes for the following sectors:

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

In making decisions we take into account:

- relevant law;
- regulatory rules, guidance and standards;
- codes of practice; and
- what is accepted as good industry practice.

## **Who can use our service?**

We help to resolve complaints for domestic and small business customers of companies that have signed up to our service. The definition of a small business can be found on our website:

[www.ombudsman-services.org](http://www.ombudsman-services.org)

## **Who is your complaint about?**

We can help if the company you are complaining about has signed up to our service. A list of these companies is available on our website.

## When can we become involved?

Before contacting us you 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 you with a written copy of its complaints procedure.

If you receive the company's final response to a complaint and you remain unhappy, or eight weeks pass and the complaint is unresolved, we may be able to help. If the company you are complaining about it is SSE only six weeks have to pass before you can contact us.

## Timeframes

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

- complain to a company within 12 months of becoming aware of the issue; and
- contact us within nine months of first complaining to the company.

For some complaints there are different timescales; we may accept a complaint anyway if we are satisfied that there are exceptional reasons to justify the delay.

## **How we handle complaints**

We help to resolve complaints as quickly as possible with the most appropriate outcome. We aim to resolve complaints using negotiation. Complaints are usually resolved within six to eight weeks.

## **Putting things right**

Our role is to resolve the complaint appropriately for you. We are not here to punish companies when things go wrong. Our decisions are binding on the company and are enforceable in court.

We can require:

- an apology;
- an explanation of what went wrong;

- a practical action to correct the problem;  
and/or
- a financial award (subject to a limit).

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

If you accept our decision it becomes final and the company has 28 days to put the remedy in place.

If you reject our decision you lose the right to the resolution we have offered, but you retain your right to take your complaint elsewhere, such as the courts.

## **Accessibility**

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

## Want to know more?

Visit our website for more information about the way we work and to read our latest news and advice: [www.ombudsman-services.org](http://www.ombudsman-services.org)

## How to contact us

You can contact us by visiting our website ([www.ombudsman-services.org](http://www.ombudsman-services.org)) and completing an online complaint form or general enquiry form.

You can also call us Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm, or you can email us, fax us, textphone or write to us.

## For energy complaints:

Phone: 0330 440 1624

Email: [enquiries@os-energy.org](mailto:enquiries@os-energy.org)

Fax: 0330 440 1625

Textphone: 0330 440 1600

Post: Ombudsman Services: Energy  
PO Box 966  
Warrington  
WA4 9DF

## **For communications complaints:**

Phone: 0330 440 1614

Email: [osenquiries@os-communications.org](mailto:osenquiries@os-communications.org)

Fax: 0330 440 1615

Textphone: 0330 440 1600

Post: Ombudsman Services: Communications  
PO Box 730  
Warrington  
WA4 6WU

## **For property complaints:**

Phone: 0330 440 1634

Email: [enquiries@os-property.org](mailto:enquiries@os-property.org)

Fax: 0330 440 1635

Textphone: 0330 440 1600

Post: Ombudsman Services: Property  
PO Box 1021  
Warrington  
WA4 9FE

## **For copyright licensing complaints:**

Phone: 0330 440 1601

Email: [enquiries@os-cpl.org](mailto:enquiries@os-cpl.org)

Fax: 0330 440 1602

Textphone: 0330 440 1600

Post: Ombudsman Services: Copyright  
Licensing  
PO Box 1124  
Warrington  
WA4 9GH