

**Providing a free, impartial and independent service for the resolution of unresolved disputes between consumers and property agents.**

## What we do

The Property Ombudsman (TPO) provides an impartial and independent service for resolving disputes.

Agents who are members of TPO follow our Codes of Practice which set the standard expected from property professionals.

The Ombudsman's Codes can be found on our website or can be requested directly from the agent.

Our service is free of charge to consumers.

The Ombudsman does not regulate the property industry that is the role of Trading Standards and the government. His role is to provide redress for consumers, which aims to put them back into the position they were in before the complaint arose. The Ombudsman's powers do not allow him to fine or punish an agent.

## What complaints can we consider?

- Poor or incompetent service.
- Infringement of your legal rights.
- Failure to follow the rules set for agents under the Code of Practice and membership obligations.
- Unfair treatment.

## What complaints can't we consider?

- Complaints against an agent who is not registered with TPO.
- Complaints being, or have been, dealt with by a court.
- Complaints outside our timescales.
- Complaints that happened before the agent was registered with TPO.

## What happens if I have a complaint?

The Ombudsman must allow the agent the opportunity to resolve the issue themselves. Accordingly, you must:

- Tell the agent why you are unhappy, setting out the act or omission you believe has occurred.
- Let the agent know what you would like them to do to resolve your complaint.
- Follow up any conversations in writing or by email, making a note of the date and time and who you spoke to.
- Keep copies of all correspondence with the agent.

## What should the agent do?

All agents are obliged to maintain and operate an in-house complaints procedure. The procedure must be in writing and explain how to complain to the agent and if you remain dissatisfied to the Ombudsman.

The key points they must adhere to are:

- Provide you with a copy of their complaints procedure on request (this may be available on their website).
- Abide by the timescales set out in the Code of Practice.
- Produce their final viewpoint letter if they cannot resolve your complaint.

## When can you refer your complaint to us?

We can consider complaints:

- Once you have received the agent's final viewpoint letter, and you remain unhappy; or
- If eight weeks have passed since you first complained and the issues remain unresolved.

## Further information

Our website contains guidance to assist you in making your complaint to the agent.

It also provides links and contact details for other organisations that may be able to assist with your complaint, if the Ombudsman is unable to consider it:

**Consumer Advice Services** – such as Citizens Advice and Which?

**Industry Regulators** – such as Trading Standards

**Tenancy Deposit Schemes** – covering England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

**Industry Trade Associations** – such as the National Association of Estate Agents and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

**Consumer Associations** – such as the National Landlord Association and the Residential Landlords Association

**Other Ombudsmen** – such as the Financial Ombudsman Service