

Consumer Liaison Panels

Terms of Reference

To be reviewed by Ombudsman Services Board annually and revised as appropriate

Introduction

The Consumer Liaison Panel (CLP) is an advisory panel for Ombudsman Services. Its role is to identify emerging trends and issues, and to facilitate two-way communication between the consumer sector and Ombudsman Services.

The relationship exists to ensure that Ombudsman Services and the consumer sector are well informed through early sharing of concerns, information, ideas and proposals from both sides. There are Sector Liaison Panels (SLPs) for Energy, Communications and Property which provide the same opportunity for the participating companies.

Membership

- Membership of the CLP will be determined by the Executive Team of Ombudsman Services, in consultation with the Board. Membership will be reviewed annually.
- Members will include:
 - The Chief Ombudsman who will normally chair the CLP.
 - The Ombudsman Services Relationships manager
 - An Ombudsman Services board member.
 - Representatives from consumer organisations
- Appointment to the CLP will be undertaken in accordance with any procedure required by Ombudsman Services.

Role

- To act as a key forum for Ombudsman Services to raise and inform on matters relevant to consumer organisations who deal with Ombudsman Services and their participating companies.
- To consider and advise Ombudsman Services on key policies and issues relating to the consumer.
- To advise Ombudsman Services on the general effectiveness of alternative dispute resolution as a means of strengthening trust and confidence in service provision.
- To comment annually on the Ombudsman Services activities such as the draft strategy and business plan.
- To receive updates on the work of Ombudsman Services, such as the Annual Report of Ombudsman Services and relevant sector reports.

- To discuss the means of improving the signposting arrangements between consumer organisations and Ombudsman Services and other relevant bodies to ensure a successful customer experience.
- To discuss trends in types of contacts and complaints
- To help in the early identification of concerns and solutions
- To help in forecasting complaint levels
- To act as a forum where matters relating to consumer information and education about dispute resolution and Ombudsman Services can be discussed.
- To share plans, where appropriate, where aims are common or mutual support would benefit the consumer, eg information campaigns aimed at consumers.
- To advise Ombudsman Services, as appropriate, on key Ombudsman Services policy proposals.

Meetings

- The CLP will normally meet twice a year, with provision for additional meetings as necessary.
- The meetings will be chaired by the Chief Ombudsman.
- Attendance at such meetings may be extended to others who are not CLP members at the Chair's discretion, where it is deemed desirable to do so and where the expertise or contribution of those others would be of benefit to the meeting, task or issue in hand.
- Notes of the meetings and any action points will be circulated and copies will be provided to the Ombudsman Services Board and may also be published on the Ombudsman Services website.
- The Ombudsman Services Annual Report will contain a summary report of the work of the CLP in the preceding year.
- OS will provide the administrative support for the CLP including the taking and distribution of notes which will be made available to organisations who participate.