

Behaviour Policy

The Ombudsman is independent, impartial and free. The ombudsman is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and to providing a good service. Occasionally the behaviour or actions of individuals using the service makes it very difficult for the ombudsman to deal with their complaint. In order to protect the Ombudsman's ability to continue working we may have to take appropriate and proportionate action. This policy sets out how we approach these situations.

Inevitably, some complainants will disagree with the Ombudsman's decision. Where an investigation has been carried out the complainant will always have had the opportunity to comment on a draft decision. The Ombudsman will consider very carefully any further representations made after the final decision but will not continue to respond to contacts from complainants indefinitely where the correspondence raises no significant new issues which call the original decision into question. To do so would not be a good use of resources and might have a detrimental effect on the service provided to other complainants.

Very occasionally a complainant may behave so unreasonably that it is necessary to restrict access to the scheme's services in some way. The Ombudsman understands that complainants often feel very strongly about their complaints, but abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour is not acceptable. In the very rare cases where unacceptable behaviour occurs, the ombudsman will tell the complainant why that is the case and ask them to change their behaviour. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, the ombudsman may take action to restrict that person's contact with the office and inform the person of that restriction and the reason for it.

Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options the Ombudsman is most likely to consider are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (for example letters only);
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times; and/or
- asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct

If the complainant continues to behave in a way which is unacceptable, the Ombudsman may decide to terminate contact with that person.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of the Ombudsman or staff, other options will be considered, for example reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action. In such cases prior warning of that action may not be given.