

Quick start guide

Inspiring consumer confidence
SINCE 1992

www.thefurnitureombudsman.org

0333 241 3209

What can you help with?

We look into disputes across the retail and service sectors. Your dispute must be with a registered member of the Ombudsman, or with a business that is covered under a trade body such as British Association of Removers (BAR). You can find a list of registered members on our website: www.thefurnitureombudsman.org

The Ombudsman cannot deal with your complaint if;

-  Your complaint is against a business who has entered administration, liquidation or who has ceased trading.
-  Your complaint is not made as a private individual.
-  Your complaint is being, or has been, dealt with by a Court or another tribunal/Ombudsman scheme.
-  Your claim is for more than £10,000 (this does not include the purchase price of the goods/services that were bought).

How can I complain?

You can raise your case online via our website or if you'd prefer, you can download an application form which can be posted or emailed back to us. If you'd rather talk to one of our team first, or enquire about alternative methods of raising your dispute you can call us on 0333 241 3209. Please note that we will not be able to provide you with legal advice during this call.

When can I complain?

It's important that you first give the business a chance to address your complaint, and you must exhaust their complaints process before contacting the Ombudsman. You can contact us if:



The business has finished considering your complaint (they will normally inform you of this) and you are still dissatisfied.

OR



The business has not dealt with your complaint to your satisfaction within 12 weeks of you first registering it with them.

How will you look into my dispute?

To review your dispute we will;



Ask for your side of the story - you will be required to support your case with evidence;



Ask the business to provide their response and their evidence;



Find out what's happened and assess the evidence; and



Start the conciliation process between you and the business

Where an agreement cannot be reached or where the Ombudsman has conflicting evidence and is unable to make a decision, a case may move to adjudication. All of our decisions and adjudications are binding upon the business.

Each case is decided based on the evidence available, considering the relevant legal position, and what appears to be fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

Whilst the business is bound by our decision, you as the consumer are not. You remain free to withdraw from the process at any time, and you may pursue your dispute elsewhere.

How long will it take?

The time we need to look at each case will depend on the complexity. Based on our experience, cases can take up to 3 months.

If you rule in my favour, what is the likely outcome?

As an Ombudsman, we have more flexibility than the courts to identify creative remedies to resolve a situation. These remedies may include full or partial refunds, replacement products, works to put things right or financial compensation. Other remedies may be an explanation, an apology or a gesture of goodwill where appropriate.

What if I don't agree with your decision?

Our decisions are not binding on you as the consumer and you do not have to accept it if you don't want to.

If you agree with our decision and accept it, this would be in full and final settlement of the dispute you have raised with us.

Full Member Code of Practice

As part of their membership declaration, Full Members abide by our Code of Practice.

Full Members will:

1. Provide consumers with goods that are as described, of satisfactory quality and fit for purpose having due regard to any relevant legislation;
2. Supply any services with reasonable care and skill having due regard to any relevant legislation;
3. Provide clear and accurate product information prior to a transaction which will assist consumers in making well informed decisions;
4. Provide consumers with information regarding the likely performance of a product and any maintenance regimes that may be required;
5. Provide consumers with clear, transparent and accurate information regarding product prices, guarantees, delivery costs and any cancellation rights having due regard to any relevant legislation and guidance;
6. Deliver products as agreed, on time and in good condition and advise the consumer of any issues that may compromise delivery as soon as is practicable;
7. Promote good customer service and professionalism amongst staff and encourage them to meet all service requests with courtesy and efficiency;
8. Avoid any commercial practice that could be adverse to the consumer and the principles of fair trade in general;
9. Listen to all complaints in a fair and reasoned manner and adopt an effective procedure when trying to resolve them. In the event of an unresolved dispute, accept the ruling of the Ombudsman's Alternative Dispute Resolution Service;
10. Listen to feedback from customers and the Ombudsman and where appropriate use it as a tool to improve service and raise standards.

About us

We are an independent, not for profit Ombudsman scheme. We provide alternative dispute resolution (ADR), helping businesses and their customers resolve disputes without the need of the courts.

Set up by the Office of Fair Trading in 1992, we are overseen by an independent Standards Board. Our pool of members extend to many thousands of retail outlets, service businesses and online traders.

Members of the Ombudsman pledge to abide by a Code of Practice giving their customers clarity and telling them what they can expect from that business.

Contact us

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