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

Energy and Communications Sector Liaison Panels (SLPs) Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Sector Liaison Panel (SLP) is a forum to promote discussion between participating companies and Ombudsman Services (OS). The SLP will:

- be a key forum for Ombudsman Services to provide updates of its performance and seek the views of attendees of any proposed business changes that may impact upon them.
- provide an opportunity for participating companies to discuss the service being provided by Ombudsman Services and for Ombudsman Services to raise any concerns about participating companies' engagement with the service.
- Allow Ombudsman Services and participating companies the opportunity to discuss any regulatory changes that may have an impact on complaint handling in the sector.
- promote effective complaint handling in the sector and to drive improvements for the benefit of customers.

Sector Liaison Panels are available to the following:

- Energy Retail (domestic and non-domestic)
- Communications
- Energy Networks

It shall be for the Chief Ombudsman to decide whether an SLP should be formed for any other sector[s].

Agenda

The standard agenda for each SLP will include the following:

1. OS will provide a business update which will include:

- The financial performance of Ombudsman Services including any debts or case fees outstanding
- An update on service and quality metrics
- An update on the forecasts supplied by members

- The announcement of any new projects and initiatives which may impact on participating companies
- Updates of any relevant ongoing projects and initiatives
- Announcements of key appointments at OS.

2. A review of complaints data, including:

- The number of complaints being accepted for investigation.
- The types of complaint being investigated.
- The outcome of complaints.
- Remedy implementation.
- Signposting.

3. Ombudsman complaints feedback session

- A session to allow participating companies and Ombudsman Services to talk about any issues experienced in the handling of complaints. Participating companies will be asked to submit topics for discussion prior to the event.

4. Insight on complaints

- Ombudsman Services will highlight one or more issues which are causing people to complain, giving an opportunity for participating companies to discuss the issues identified and for Ombudsman Services to provide its view.

There may be occasions when the standard agenda is amended to meet the needs of an individual meeting.

Attendance

- All companies that participate in the relevant sector scheme will have the opportunity to attend.
- We may also invite representatives from trade organisations.
- To promote consistency, each organisation is encouraged to nominate one representative who will normally attend each meeting. The nominated representative should be in a position to discuss how complaints are handled and to influence change within their organisation.
- Ombudsman Services may invite other organisations to participate at an SLP, 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. SLP attendees will be informed beforehand of any external organisations that will be in attendance.
- Participating companies will be invited to submit possible agenda items. Ombudsman Services will be responsible for deciding the final agenda.
- Ombudsman Services will have appropriate representation at each meeting, as per the agenda.

Meetings

- There will be a minimum of two SLP meetings per calendar year in each sector.
- Ombudsman Services will confirm the dates by 31 October of the previous year.

- One SLP each year will be run as a cross-sectoral Ombudsman Services; conference, which will have a standalone agenda.
- Meetings will normally take place between 11am and 3pm. Timings may be adjusted for each individual SLP, members will be given appropriate notice of any changes to timings.
- Ad-hoc meetings of the SLP may be organised, if required.
- Appropriate, senior members of the team(s) at Ombudsman Service will lead the sessions, for example, the Business Update section of the meeting will be led by a member of the Key Account / Relationship Management Team; the data session will be led by a member of the Data Insights Team and the complaint insight section will be led by an Ombudsman/Sector Expert.
- An agenda will be circulated no later than two weeks prior to each SLP setting out the topics to be discussed and informing attendees of any information they need to bring.
- After the meeting, Ombudsman Services will circulate a copy of the business update and outputs from any of the sessions. Copies may also be published on the Ombudsman Services Partner website, as appropriate: partners.ombudsman-services.org