

Matthew Vickers
Chief Executive and Chief Ombudsman
Ombudsman Services
mvickers@ombudsman-services.org

By Email Only

19 June 2020

Dear Chief Executive

Ombudsman Services response to Covid-19 and return to a more normal way of working

In April this year we wrote to you to outline the steps we were taking to adapt to the Covid-19 crisis. We set out the way we were aligning with industry in focussing on prioritising resources for the most vulnerable customers and how, where necessary, we would allow participating companies to do the same. Specifically, we:

1. Prioritised in-flight complaints according to our assessment of customer vulnerability.
2. Provided customers and suppliers additional time (an extra 28 days) to submit case evidence.
3. Allowed suppliers to focus on only the most vulnerable complaints, where this was strictly necessary.

We believe this was the right approach and provided much needed breathing space as suppliers and customers adapted to new ways of working.

Following discussions with Ofcom, we have agreed that it is the right time to revisit these changes, and we wanted to explain what this means for our service.

In summary, we intend to return to normal requirements and timelines at the beginning of July. In practice, that means from 1 July 2020 the following changes will take effect:

1. All suppliers will be required to deal with all Ombudsman cases – there will be no prioritisation at point of contact with customers.
2. We will work with providers who have been working on only prioritised complaints to agree how to release any held (non-priority) cases in a staged and manageable way.
3. The usual timeframes for providing evidence will apply – i.e. there will be no time extensions by default (the additional 28 days will not apply to new cases, but will remain for cases accepted up to and including 30 June).

If you have any queries, the Relationship Team will be available to explain what this means for your business specifically.

Should the Covid-19 situation change materially in the coming months, we will consider whether these changes remain appropriate. We also recognise that there may be exceptional situations that arise beyond a supplier's (or a customer's) control that mean it is not able to operate as normal with these requirements on each case. Should such situations arise we will consider and



accommodate these where possible, and I would encourage you to keep in close contact with our team over the coming months to ensure we are aware of any challenges you may be having.

I would like to thank you for your continued engagement during this period. I fully appreciate that this transition back to a more normal way of working will be challenging for some suppliers and I would like to assure you that we remain open to supporting you wherever we can.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Vickers
Chief Executive and Chief Ombudsman

