

Introducing the Disciplinary and Standards Committee

Estate Agents registered with The Property Ombudsman (TPO) agree to maintain certain standards in dealing with customers and handling complaints.

Sales agents may have either:

- full Membership of the Voluntary TPO scheme. They agree to comply with a detailed Code of Practice, which has been approved by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) under its Consumer Codes Approval scheme; or
- simply be registered with TPO under the OFT's Approved Estate Agents Redress Scheme, established by the Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 (CEARA). That places more limited demands upon sales agents than the TPO Code of Practice for Sales, and therefore offers less protection to consumers.

Lettings agents may:

- also be full Members of the Voluntary TPO scheme. They agree to comply with a detailed Code of Practice, which successfully completed Stage One of the OFT's Consumer Codes Approval Scheme in August 2011;
- there is no equivalent to CEARA registration for lettings agents.

All full TPO Members for sales and/or lettings (but not sales agents who are only registered under CEARA) are subject to comprehensive monitoring procedures – including mystery shopping exercises and customer satisfaction surveys – to check whether they are complying with the relevant Codes.

The TPO Council has established a Disciplinary and Standards Committee (DSC) to deal with the small number of Member Agents who breach the relevant Codes of Practice or fail to meet their obligations as Members in other ways. A range of disciplinary action can be taken including expulsion from the Ombudsman scheme. The DSC also deals with disciplinary issues relating to Sales agents registered under CEARA.

For more detailed information about the DSC see:

- The role of the DSC
- DSC Terms of Reference
- DSC Procedures