What is The Property Ombudsman?

The Property Ombudsman (TPO) scheme offers an independent and impartial dispute resolution service to consumers who have been unable to resolve their disputes with a registered agent. The scheme was established in 1990. The Ombudsman can provide redress to place the consumer back in the position they were before the complaint arose, achieving a full and final settlement of the dispute and all claims made by either party. Where appropriate, the Ombudsman can make compensatory awards in individual cases up to a maximum of £25,000 for actual and quantifiable loss and/or for aggravation, distress and/or inconvenience caused by the actions of a registered agent.

TPO is free to all consumers. Agents pay a single annual subscription covering them for sales, lettings, commercial, international and auction activities. TPO does not charge case fees.

At 1 February 2015 over 13,900 sales offices and 13,100 letting offices were registered with TPO. We estimate that these figures represent 95% of sales agents and 85% of lettings agents operating within the UK.

Independence

Whilst TPO charges registered agents an annual subscription, the Ombudsman is accountable to the TPO Council which is chaired by a member of the House of Lords and with the majority of its members being independent from the industry. The Council appoints the Ombudsman and sets his Terms of Reference.

The Ombudsman is not a regulator and does not have the authority to take regulatory or legal action against a registered agent. However, registered agents can be referred to the TPO Disciplinary and Standards Committee, appointed by the Council, which has the power to expel agents from the scheme and/or report them to the appropriate authorities, with the power to ban agents from carrying out estate agency business.

Further information

The Ombudsman’s Terms of Reference, Codes of Practice, Consumer Guides and other documents about the operation of the scheme are available on our website [www.tpos.co.uk], together with previous annual and interim reports, case summaries, further explanation of governance arrangements and a full list of registered agents.

For more information about TPO, please visit our website at [www.tpos.co.uk]