



LEGAL SERVICES
OMBUDSMAN

The Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman

**Freedom of Information
Publication Scheme**

January 2009

The Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman

The Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman (OLSO) was established by the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. An Associated Office of the Ministry of Justice, it is sponsored by the Ministry but independent of it in terms of determination of individual cases. The Legal Services Ombudsman is appointed by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, cannot be a qualified lawyer and is completely independent of the legal profession.

The Ombudsman oversees the handling of complaints about solicitors, barristers, legal executives, licensed conveyancers, patent attorneys and trade mark attorneys by the six professional bodies for setting and maintaining standards of conduct and service within the legal profession.

Complainants must first make their complaint to the relevant professional body: The Law Society (Legal Complaints Service/Solicitors Regulation Authority), the Bar Standards Board, the Institute of Legal Executives, the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys or the Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys. If complainants are not satisfied with the way the professional body has dealt with their complaint, they may refer the matter to the Legal Services Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's services are free of charge.

The Ombudsman has powers to recommend that the professional body reconsider the complaint. She may also recommend that the professional body and/or the lawyer(s) complained about pay compensation for loss, distress or inconvenience. The Ombudsman has a further power to making binding orders for the payment of compensation, although this power is only used in exceptional cases.

The Publication Scheme

Where this publication scheme refers to 'an authority' this refers to the Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman.

This publication scheme commits an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme commits an authority:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information, which is made proactively available.
- To make this publication scheme available to the public.

Classes of information

Who we are and what we do.

Organisational information, locations and contacts.

What we spend and how we spend it.

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing.

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions.

Decision making processes.

Our policies and procedures.

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and registers.

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

The services we offer.

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available

Where it is within the capability of OLSO, information will be provided on its website.

Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, OLSO will provide the information in hard copy.

Information will also be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where OLSO is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by OLSO for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge. Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

Written requests

Any requests for information outside this scheme should be made in writing; and will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Request should be made to OLSO at the following address:

The Corporate Services Manager
Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman
3rd Floor Sunlight House
Quay Street
Manchester
M3 3JZ
Email: lso@olso.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.olso.org

Documents available under the Publication Scheme

Who we are and what we do

Document	Availability
OLSO organisation chart with job titles.	Hard copy or electronic version on request to OLSO.
Leaflet – “Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman (OLSO) explained” (includes OLSO contact details).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Annual Report and Summary Financial Statement (from 2000/01 to 2004/05 inclusive).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy to purchase from The Stationery Office. (www.tsoshop.co.uk)
Full Annual Accounts (from 2000/01 to 2004/05).	Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Annual Report and Accounts (from 2005/06).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy to purchase from The Stationery Office. (www.tsoshop.co.uk)
The Ombudsman’s response to the Clementi consultation – a paper on the Review of the Regulatory Framework for Legal Services in England and Wales (June 2004).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Response from the Legal Services Ombudsman and the Legal Services Complaints Commissioner to the Legal Services Reform White Paper-“The Future of Legal Services: Putting Consumers First” (November 2005).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Legal Services Bill – briefing by the Legal Services Ombudsman for the Public Bill Committee.	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Statement from the Legal Services Ombudsman - Government must be “Bold and Innovative” on legal reforms (January 2006).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
“Legal Services Reform – A Perspective”. A special report on the legal reforms by the Legal Services Ombudsman and the Legal Services Complaints Commissioner (June 2007).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
The Miners’ Cases – a Special Report on the handling of complaints by the Law Society (January 2008).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.

What we spend and how we spend it

Document	Availability
Annual Report and Summary Financial Statement (from 2000/01 to 2004/05 inclusive).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy to purchase from The Stationery Office. (www.tsoshop.co.uk)
Full Annual Accounts (from 2000/01 to 2004/05).	Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Annual Report and Accounts (from 2005/06).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy to purchase from The Stationery Office. (www.tsoshop.co.uk)

What are our priorities and how are we doing

Document	Availability
Annual Reports (from 2000/01 to 2007/08 inclusive).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy to purchase from The Stationery Office. (www.tsoshop.co.uk)
OLSO service standards and internal complaints procedure.	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Aim, values and strategic objectives.	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Communications strategy	Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Quarterly casework statistics showing summary of incoming cases, turn-around times and outcomes.	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.

How we make decisions

Document	Availability
Notes of Senior Management Team meetings.	Hard copy or electronic version on request to OLSO.

Policies and procedures

Document	Availability
Annual Reports (from 2000/01 to 2007/08)	Free of charge on website.

inclusive).	Hard copy to purchase from The Stationery Office. (www.tsoshop.co.uk)
Information leaflet – “Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman (OLSO) explained” (includes internal complaints procedure for dealing with complaints about the service provided by OLSO staff).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Records retention schedule showing the types of records held by OLSO and the policy on retention.	Hard copy or electronic version on request to OLSO.

Lists and registers

There are no publications available under this class.

The services we offer

Document	Availability
Information leaflet – “Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman (OLSO) explained” (includes internal complaints procedure for dealing with complaints about the service provided by OLSO staff).	Free of charge on website. Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Application form to make a complaint about a legal professional body.	Free of charge on website Hard copy on request to OLSO.
Information leaflet for former miners (or their representatives) on how to make a complaint about the way compensation claims have been handled.	Summary on website. Full hard copy leaflet on request to OLSO.