

Policy on unreasonably persistent complainants

The Pensions Ombudsman recognises that his office is often the last resort for complainants. However, we are also accountable for the proper use of public money and must ensure that that money is spent wisely and that the work of the office is not disrupted to the detriment of all users of the service.

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service. As part of this service we do not normally limit the contact that parties to complaints have with the office. However there are a small number of complainants who, because of the frequency of their contact with the office, hinder our consideration of their, or other people's, complaints. We refer to such complainants as 'unreasonably persistent complainants'.

When we consider that a complainant's level of contact is unreasonably persistent we may take action to limit their contact with us. The decision to restrict access to the office will be taken at Team Leader level or above and will normally follow a prior warning to the complainant. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options we are most likely to consider are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only);
- requiring contact to take place only with a named person within the office;
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times; and/or
- asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their future contacts with us.

In all cases where we decide to treat someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant, we will write to tell them why we believe his or her behaviour falls into that category, what action we are taking and the duration of that action. We will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it.

If these steps are taken during an investigation, and the investigation has not been completed within 3 months, we will review the situation to decide if the restrictions should still apply.

Where a complainant whose case is closed persists in communicating with us about that complaint, we may decide to terminate contact with that complainant. In such cases, we will read all correspondence sent to us but we will simply acknowledge it or place it on the file with no acknowledgement.

New complaints from people to whom this policy has been applied in the past will be considered. But, the policy may be invoked immediately where it is evident that these new complaints are in fact the same as complaints previously referred to the Pensions Ombudsman.