

Accessibility Policy

We are here for anyone who needs assistance to resolve their pension complaint or dispute. Applications to us need to be made either online or in writing, but we are committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure that everyone can use our service.

If there is something we can do to make it easier for you to use our service, please let us know and we will do our best to help. In most cases, there will not be a need for any contact with us in person, with the only exception being if we decide to hold an oral hearing.

If you cannot see easily or you need reading support, we can provide information in different formats:

- Large font
- Braille
- Coloured paper or email background
- Audio clips

If you are deaf or hard of hearing and are unable or prefer not to use email, you can:

- talk to us using Relay UK (Previously Next Generation Text) or Text Relay
- communicate with us using BSL live video interpreters

There are other things that we can do to make it easier for you to use our service and to communicate with us. For example:

- Appointing your chosen representative: We can speak to someone else about your complaint, this could be a friend, relative, or anyone else you choose to represent you.
- We can give you a specified point of contact (depending on where your case is in our process) so you know who will be dealing with your case.
- We can contact you at agreed times of the day to fit in with your routine.
- Wherever possible, we will use your preferred method of communication.

It is important that the person who is bringing the complaint (or someone empowered to act for them) gives their consent for us carry out an investigation.

How we communicate in writing:

- We aim to use plain English in all of our communications but we can adapt what we write in letters and emails, so they meet your needs.
- We can provide written summaries of your telephone conversations with us, or, if you need them, audio recordings of them.

If there is another organisation better placed to assist you, we will let you know about them.

If you consider that your circumstances mean that your case should be prioritised ahead of others, this will be considered under our Acceleration Policy.

Literacy

By law applications to us must be made in writing. We also, generally expect you to send us (or be able to send us) any relevant evidence and/or further information in written format.

We are committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure that those who find this difficult can still use our service. Where you require help with making a complaint and/or completing an application form, we will normally refer you to MoneyHelper for advice and assistance.

However, in very exceptional circumstances, we may make an appointment to take a complaint by telephone and send this to the you for agreement and signature. In such circumstances we would take no further action in dealing with the complaint until we received signed agreement.

Meetings

Where we ask you for a meeting, usually referred to as an oral hearing, we will check with you to see whether you have any special access requirements, or require an interpreter. We will take reasonable steps to ensure that such requirements are met and, if necessary, pay reasonable costs to ensure that such needs can be met. Where you ask to meet us in our office and we agree to that request, we will ask whether you have any special access requirements. If they require an interpreter, we will normally expect that you should provide and pay for that interpreter.

Access to our office

Our processes are such that, generally, the parties to a complaint to the Pensions Ombudsman do not meet each other or the staff investigating the complaint. However, if this should be necessary, our building is equipped with step-free access, lifts and accessible toilet facilities.

General

Any complaints about our response to a request for an alternative communication method should be directed to our Service Complaint Policy.

Policies

When we develop new policies or amend existing ones, we will carry out an internal Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that no one is disadvantaged as a result of the change because of their gender, race or disability.

Website

Our website has been developed to meet best practice coding standards and substantially conforms to guidelines laid down by World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) as well as Level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG 2.1).

Adhering to these standards makes our site accessible to those browsers that also adhere to these standards and makes our web pages more accessible to those using screen readers and similar devices. We have a statement on our website regarding its accessibility: <https://www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk/accessibility-statement>

Online access

We encourage all parties to deal with us by email where this is possible and can be done securely. We find this generally the most efficient method.