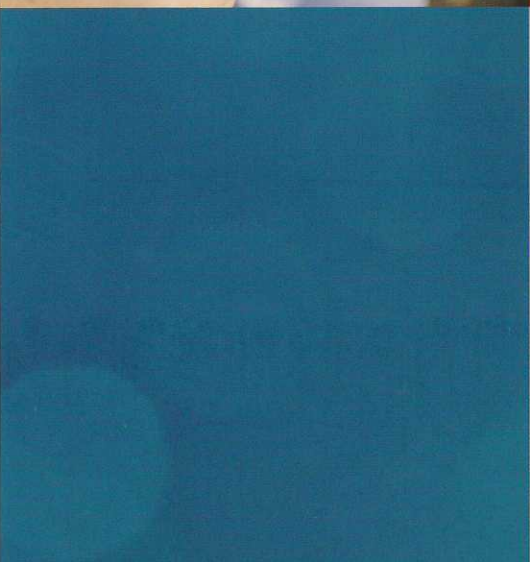
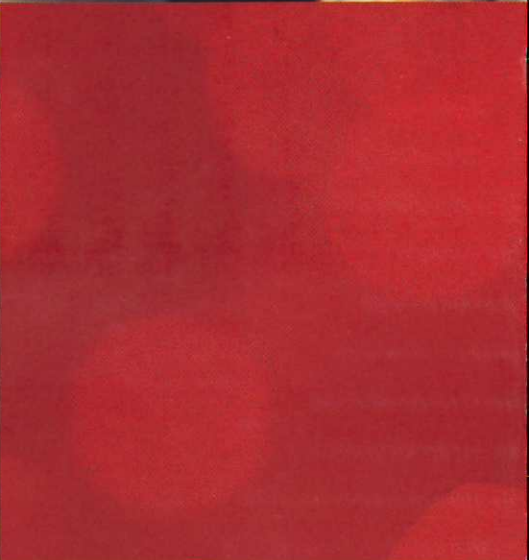




Creating Partnerships With Retailers

Who are we?

About us...

The Retail Ombudsman is an ombudsman service that provides dispute resolution for the retail sector – including complaints that originate from in-store and internet sales.

We are a not for profit company authorised by the Secretary of State as an 'ombudsman' and Chartered to The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 as an alternative dispute resolution provider (ADR). We operate under appropriate legislation and regulatory authority, and our governance ensures that we are independent. Our Chief Executive/Chief Ombudsman is Mr Dean Dunham, a barrister with in excess of 17 years experience in consumer law. We employ a large team of highly trained complaint handlers and our ombudsman are all barristers or solicitors.

Our services...

Our members and their customers recognise the value that The Retail Ombudsman provides via its unique suite of services, which range from access to free legal advice from our barristers and solicitors, through to our bespoke online portal which allows retailers and consumers to track their case throughout the entire process.

Furthermore, our complaint handlers team is highly trained in consumer law, ADR and customer services. They have a wealth of experience in dealing with customer complaints and in particular pacifying upset customers and then mediating between the parties to reach a recommendation acceptable to all. We are fast becoming the largest and most experienced provider of ADR in the retail sector. In this respect we processed in excess of 10,000 complaints in the first half of 2015 92% of which have been successfully resolved at the complaint handlers level, without the need for ombudsman intervention. A statistic that we are very proud of. Our independent, fair, and impartial approach is at the heart of all that

we do. To this end, complaint handlers recommendations and ombudsman determinations are periodically reviewed by our Independent Standards Board, chaired by Sir Eric Peacock, to ensure decisions are fair and just, and made in accordance with UK consumer law.

Based at our office locations in Milton Keynes and London, our experienced team of ADR specialists - inclusive of complaint handlers, ombudsman solicitors and barristers - are perfectly suited to work in a collaborative manner with businesses to resolve and reduce complaints.

We would like you to consider The Retail Ombudsman to be an extension of your customer service operations. Our approach is fresh, innovative, and responsive.

We deliver the results that our members seek - to diffuse situations, achieve resolution, and ensure better retailer customer relationships. In this regard, we work in partnership with our retail members, not against them.



Complaints Software Overview

Consumer complaints are dealt with through our unique online complaints software system, which ensures that all complaints are dealt in a fast and efficient manner.

Here's how it works:

Making a claim

All consumers that come to The Retail Ombudsman have made an initial complaint to a retailer and are unsatisfied with the response that they have received.

In the first instance the consumer will log on to The Retail Ombudsman complaints portal via our secure website and log their complaint by following a simple three-stage process. This process is designed to:

- Obtain all the necessary information needed for The Retail Ombudsman to deal with their complaint efficiently
- To filter spurious complaints made without merit

Once they fill out the intelligent mediation request form, we will receive details of their complaint. Our system then automatically allocates a complaint handler and one of our legal experts to the case. The complaint is initially read by the complaint handlers, to establish the best way forward, at which stage further questions may be asked. When the complaint handler agrees that enough information has been solicited, a complaint notice is sent electronically to the retailer and further information about the complaint is requested.

Communication

Each person involved in the complaint, that is the consumer, the representative of the retailer and The Retail Ombudsman personnel, have their own secure admin dashboard within the software. This allows them to:

- track the progress of the complaint
- manage tasks that they need to complete i.e. response times
- communicate with other parties via our internal messaging system which will be consumer to The Retail Ombudsman and vice versa and The Retail Ombudsman to retailer and vice versa

Statistics

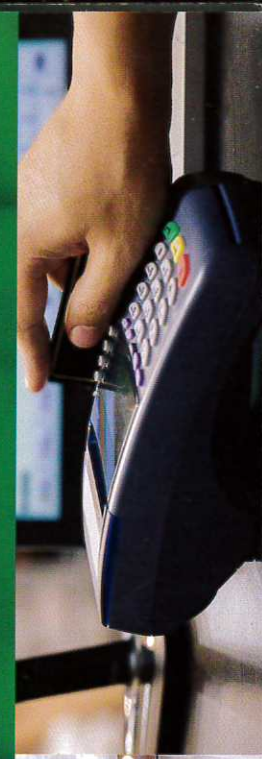
The retailer can see the status of all their complaints via their admin dashboard and gain the advantage of detailed reports so they can analyse complaint trends.

The process

All complaints to The Retail Ombudsman go through a six-step process. We aim to complete the process within 60 days of receiving a complete complaint file.

A complaint file is deemed to be complete once step three of the complaint process is complete.

When the complaint handler is satisfied that they have enough information to make a recommendation to both parties, their recommendation is then posted online to both parties. If any party is not satisfied with this recommendation, they can dispute it online. This then automatically sends the complaint to The Retail Ombudsman who will make the final decision following which the software will let all parties know of the decision, which they have agreed to abide by.





Files

Files such as receipts, voice recordings, contracts, email conversations etc may be uploaded to a secure area by all parties, which the complaint handlers has privileged control over.

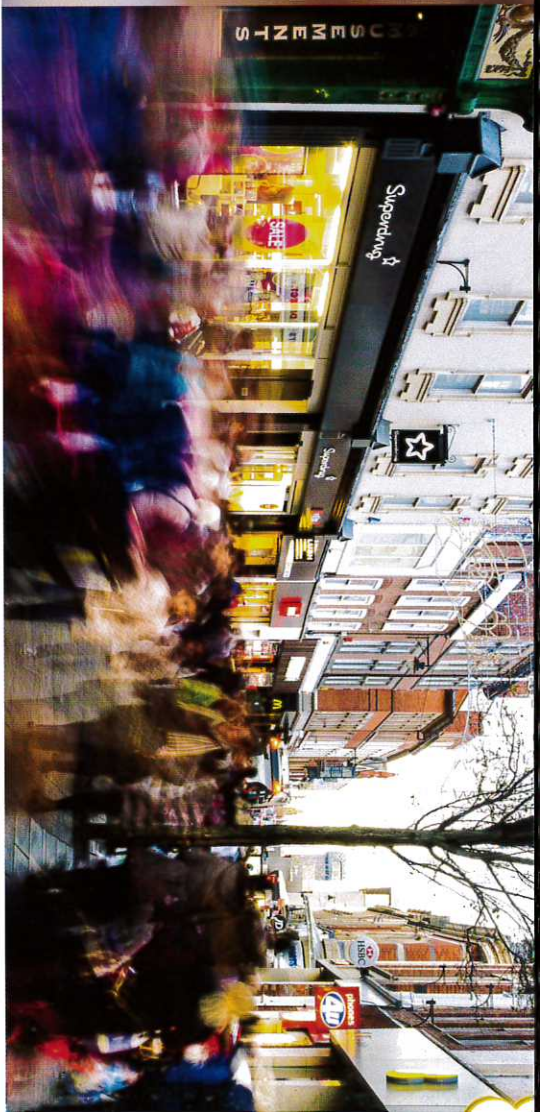
Retailer legal information and returns policy

To ensure that the complaint handlers and the ombudsman has a full understanding of the retailer's terms and conditions and returns policy, etc. so that they can make an informed recommendation, all the relevant legal policies and documents are uploaded to the system and categorised by complaint type. The complaint handler or ombudsman then has a very clear understanding of the retailer's legal perspective.

Intelligence

The software is constantly evolving. A weekly assessment of 'claim types' is made by our development team and the consumer face of the system is adjusted to accommodate new types of claims and trends. This makes the system more intelligent and streamlined to accommodate higher levels of claims and faster conclusions.

This is a very simplified overview of the software, but the software has been developed in such a way so that thousands of complaint cases can be active at any one time.



Integrating with existing retailer customer service software

Many retailers will already have a customer service software system of their own in place. To save time reinputting a complaint, we have developed functions that will integrate with such systems, so that all the details of a complaint are sent directly to the retailer's software.

The retailer's software compatibility requirement will vary, so we have an in house team that develop a bespoke integration for the retailer.

Demonstration of the software

If you wish to trial the software please contact:



support@theretailombudsman.org.uk



0203 137 8268



techsupport@theretailombudsman.org.uk

100% Independence

Our Independent Standards Board is impartial and autonomous, and will periodically review the recommendations made by our complaint handlers and adjudications from our ombudsman.

In the same way that all Retail Ombudsman employees have been selected for their suitability and credibility, the same applies to the selection of individuals who represent the Independent Standards Board.

The board is chaired by Sir Eric Peacock (a prominent government adviser) and comprises individuals experienced in retail: Nicholas Rhodes QC (a barrister, Judge, and a highly-experienced ADR practitioner), Steve Smith (founder of Poundland) and Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick (a retail academic).

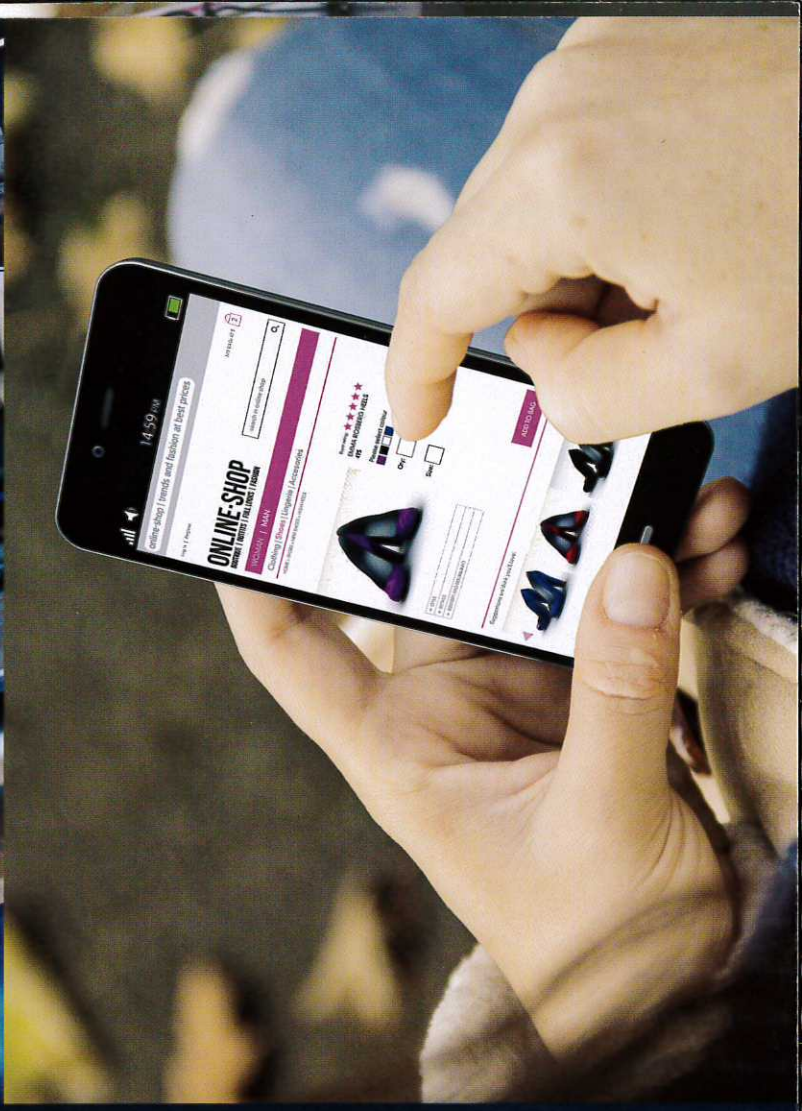
Public perception

The significant number of complaints that we process on a daily basis demonstrates the public awareness and confidence in The Retail Ombudsman.

“ At Hobbs, we always aim to deliver exceptional customer service and we hope that by joining The Retail Ombudsman, this further demonstrates our commitment to ensuring our customers are fully satisfied. ”

*Anna Braithwaite
Head of Marketing and PR*

THE RETAIL
OMBUDSMAN



Here's how we compare to other ADR providers

Who offers what to retailers & customers?	The Retail Ombudsman	Others
Online, real-time, portal, accessible to both retail and customer, with a complete, and accurate, record of all communications between all parties	✓	✗
Written ombudsman determinations with an explanation as to the decision made	✓	✗
Independent standards board (inclusive of a government adviser, a QC, and a founder of a major UK retailer) to impartially and autonomously review recommendations made by complaint handlers, and determinations made by our ombudsman.	✓	✗
Target time of processing complaints within 60 days	✓	✗
Low annual fee to retailers	✓	✗
All complaint handlers trained and competent in consumer law, and have passed exam set by Chief Ombudsman	✓	✗
Initial and annual complete review of retailer T&Cs	✓	✗
Specific mandate to help retailers "reduce" complaints	✓	✗
Dominant ADR provider in the retail sector	✓	✗
No charge for weak or spurious complaints	✓	✗

Key: ✓ Yes ✗ No ✗ Not all ADR schemes offer this service

Become a member

In the same way that a crossword can be puzzling, so too can the understandings of consumer law.

This is why you should entrust your retail business to consumer law experts for your ADR solution.

Immediately, and simply, your business will be compliant with the new law. Becoming a member will demonstrate to your customers that you are a responsible retailer who cares about customer service.

Membership, which you can advertise in various ways, will be a "badge of excellence" and this will be recognised by your customers and potential customers.

The Retail Ombudsman.

Buy with confidence.

Sell with confidence.

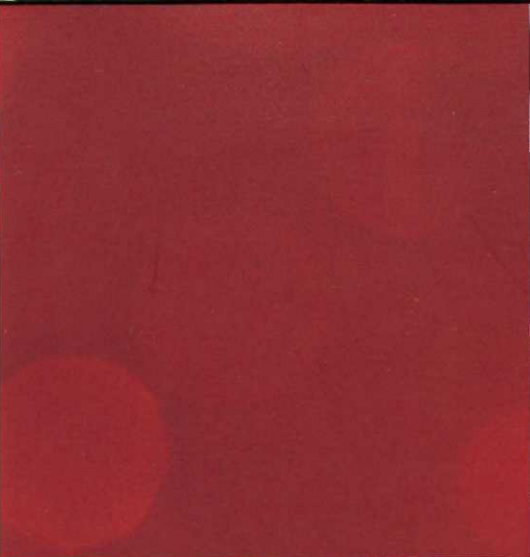
Contact: Brendan Kennedy (Director of Retail) at:
brendan.kennedy@theretailombudsman.org.uk

or

0203 137 8268 to become a member
via the simple registration process.

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T: 0203 137 8268

E: membership@theretailombudsman.org.uk

W: www.theretailombudsman.org.uk

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