

Annual Activity Report

July 2022 – June 2023



In June 2015, Ombudsman Services: Communications (OS:C) was approved by Ofcom to provide alternative dispute resolution under the Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). Services/products that fall within the jurisdiction of OS:C include those provided to domestic and/or small business customers within the scope of "electronic communications services" as defined under Section 32(2) of the Communications Act 2003.

As part of Ofcom's approval under Schedule 5, of the Regulations, OS:C is required to produce an annual activity report which contains the information below:

a) The number of domestic disputes and cross-border disputes the ADR entity has received

OS:C received 43,214 disputes during the reporting period. A dispute is defined as a request from a complainant notifying OS:C of an unresolved complaint for investigation. Of these cases 19,085 fell within the scope of what OS:C can deal with.

None of the total cases received related to Cross Border disputes.

b) The types of complaints to which the domestic disputes and cross-border disputes relate

Non-Cross Border Complaints

Complaint Type	Number of cases
Billing	4669
Service Quality	5022
Customer Service	3013
Contract Issues	2051
Mis-sell	1553
Equipment	1792
Security	616
Other	250
Unknown	119
Grand total	19,085

c) A description of any systematic or significant problems that occur frequently and lead to disputes between consumers and traders of which the ADR entity has become aware due to its operations as an ADR entity

When consumers experience a loss of service, or a delayed installation, they encounter considerable inconvenience. In a world that is now always online, the lack of any service, be that fixed line, fixed wireless, or mobile coverage, is even more detrimental to a consumer.

We receive complaints where consumers have been without service for extended periods of time. Where the provider has not kept them updated as to what the problem is, what progress

has been made, or when an expected resolution is likely to be reached, the consumer is often left having to find an additional source of connectivity.

This could involve spending more money using their mobile phone to make calls or tether their devices; or sourcing a 4G dongle to connect them to the internet. There are consumers who live in areas where a 4G solution is not possible and who face even further difficulties.

We welcome the automatic compensation scheme to ensure that consumers are adequately compensated for the loss of service, or delay in activation, but in instances that fall outside of that scheme, whether this be non-signatories or being affected by an issue on the exclusions list, consumers may still experience detriment.

d) Any recommendations the ADR entity may have as to how the problems referred to in paragraph (c) could be avoided or resolved in future, in order to raise traders' standards and to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices

The most common element of a complaint relating to a loss of service, or a delay in installation, relates to the consumer not being kept informed of progress, and that they usually must contact the provider for any updates. It would be beneficial for providers to give more regular updates, to help the consumer feel listened to and show an appreciation of the difficulties experienced.

In delivering this, providers might find it beneficial to provide realistic expectations of when they hope to be able to provide the service and any escalation of any third-party involvement should be expedited where possible.

There could be a consideration made for providing a suitable alternative service if a repair or installation will be delayed, to allow the consumer to keep connected.

e) The number of disputes which the ADR entity has refused to deal with and upon what grounds

The number of disputes which OS:C has refused to deal with during the reporting period was 13,496.

The percentage breakdown of the reasons for refusal is given below.
(Figures rounded to the nearest second decimal place)

Reason for refusal	% of cases
(a) Prior to submitting the complaint to the Ombudsman, the consumer has not attempted to contact the trader concerned in order to discuss the consumer's complaint and sought, as a first step, to resolve the matter directly with the trader	99.76%
(b) The dispute is frivolous or vexatious.	0.10%
(c) The dispute is being, or has been previously, considered by another certified ADR provider or by a court;	0.09%
(d) The value of the claim falls below or above the monetary thresholds the Ombudsman have set.	0.00%

Reason for refusal	% of cases
(e) The consumer has not submitted a complaint to the Ombudsman within the time period specified by you for dealing with complaints, provided that such time period is not less than 12 Months from the date upon which the trader has given notice to the consumer that the trader is unable to resolve the complaint with the consumer.	0.00%
(f) Dealing with such a type of dispute would seriously impair the effective operation of your ADR operation.	0.06%

f) The percentage of alternative dispute resolution procedures which were discontinued for operational reasons and, if known, the reasons for the discontinuation

During the reporting period, OS:C discontinued a total of 0 cases.

g) The average time taken to resolve domestic disputes and cross-border disputes;

The average time taken to resolve a domestic dispute is 37 days. No cross-border disputes were received.

h) The rate of compliance, if known, with the outcomes of the alternative dispute resolution procedures;

In the reporting period 93.41% of remedies were implemented within 28 days and 4.9% implemented outside of 28 days. Of the total confirmed remedies 1.6% remain unimplemented after 28 days.

i) The co-operation if any, of the ADR entity within any network of ADR entities which facilitates the resolution of cross-border disputes

OS:C is a member of the Telecoms-Net group of European ADR entities. The group shares best practice relating to ADR in the sector.



Communications Ombudsman

Getting in touch

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Additional support:

We are committed to treating everybody with fairness and respect. Our commitment includes providing additional support to consumers needing help to access our services fully.

Please see below some of the services we can help with:

- Speaking to us in a foreign language & translation services
- Visual impairments (including Braille)
- Hearing impairments (including Sign language)
- Accessibility

If you need any more information or would like to request access to any of the services above, you can do this over the phone, online or in writing.

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