

Housing

Ombudsman Service



Dispute Examiner
Candidate information pack

The recruitment process

Enclosed within this document you will find:

- Overview of recruitment process
- Indicative timetable for the recruitment process
- The role profile for the Dispute Examiner
 - job profile and person specification
- Benefits

Our website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk has details about what we do and how we do it.

The following corporate publications may be of interest and can be found under the Corporate Information menu, under Publications on our website:

- Business Plan 2022-23
- Corporate Plan 2022-25
- Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21

We hope that you decide to apply to this key role within our organisation.

Candidates who are long-listed will be asked to complete a one-hour written exercise. Candidates who are successful at this stage will be asked to 'attend' a short-list interview with the Housing Ombudsman Service - it is likely that this interview will be conducted remotely (via MS Teams).

Indicative Timetable

Closing date for receipt of applications: 23.59 on Sunday, 14th August 2022.

Note: Following unprecedented levels of interest in our vacancies, we reserve the right to close the role early.

Short-list interviews: from 7th to 14th September.

Throughout the process, we will advise you about the outcome of your application at the earliest opportunity.

Application Process

Our application process is anonymised. Submitting an application is a two stage process:

- 1) Stage 1 - create an account. This largely focuses on the information that you would include in your CV.
- 2) Stage 2 - upload and submit your supporting statement.

Please note that once you have submitted your application for a specific role, that application for that role cannot then be changed. Any changes you make to your account will be reflected in any subsequent application you choose to make.

If you have any questions, please contact Jonathan McIntyre, Managing Director of CJA Group, our advising consultant on 020 7588 5407 or via jmm@cjagroup.com.

Job Description

Position: Dispute Examiner

Working pattern: Permanent

Hours: 35

Location: Home-based

Overall purpose of the role

Working as part of a small and busy team, you will apply your detailed knowledge of housing law, the Ombudsman's jurisdiction and your excellent customer care skills to agree with residents what remains unresolved for them and the most appropriate route for complaint resolution.

Where complaints are to be progressed, you will define the outstanding issues to make clear and relevant evidence requests to landlords to ensure that case files support a speedy investigation, or provide them with insight as to how they can attempt resolution themselves.

Where complaints are judged outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction you will set out the grounds for this decision in a report to the resident and landlord to protect against potential review requests.

A proportion of our residents are vulnerable and you will be responsible for supporting and guiding them through this process.

You will also share knowledge and insight gathered from your triaging activity internally to help shape our added value sector reports and tools.

You will also comply with all corporate requirements.

Main Accountabilities

- As part of a team of Dispute Examiners dealing with all cases potentially entering our formal remit, you will work independently and at pace to meet internal targets, scheduling your work to meet business requirements and to support your colleagues.
- On receipt of a complaint file, you will be responsible for completing initial checks to ensure that the complaint meets the criteria for entry into the Ombudsman's formal remit and that all necessary documentation to support this is held on file. This ensures that the Ombudsman acts only within their legal remit and does not breach Data Protection laws.
- Following review of the file documentation on file, based on an excellent understanding of the Ombudsman's mandatory and discretionary jurisdiction, you will use your judgement to determine if the case is one best resolved through the Ombudsman route. This will be clearly documented on file to provide a clear audit trail in the event of a review request or a judicial review.
- Where the Ombudsman is an appropriate route, you will be responsible for undertaking further exploratory discussions with the resident to understand why the resident remains dissatisfied, what would resolve the complaint for them and the best route for delivering the outcome they desire. As part of this activity, you are responsible for managing resident expectations as to what an Ombudsman's determination can deliver.
- You will be responsible for judging the most appropriate internal triage route for the case drawing on your knowledge, expertise and experience.
- Where a case is appropriate for mediation you will write to the landlord setting out what remains under dispute and liaise with the Mediation Adjudicators as they attempt to take this forward to resolution.
- Where a case is appropriate for investigation, you will use your judgement to determine if this a straight-forward or complex case, write to the landlord with a clear and focussed evidence request to support a speedy determination and liaise with the Investigation Adjudicator.
- Where a case is decided to be outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, you will write to the landlord and resident setting out the reasons for your decision in a short report. This must be clearly evidenced to reduce the risk of a request for review or, ultimately, a judicial review.

Main Accountabilities

- You will be responsible for providing excellent customer service, ensuring residents understand what we can deliver and what we will do next while the case is within the triage team to ensure we hit our customer feedback targets.
- A proportion of our customers are vulnerable or have specific needs. You will be responsible for identifying and supporting these residents effectively so our service is accessible to all and thereby avoiding complaints against the Ombudsman.
- You will be responsible for identifying and sharing trends and insights from the cases that cross your desk that will be used to inform the Ombudsman's wider programme of support to the sector. As part of this, you will be expected to communicate regularly with colleagues across wider teams within the Service.
- The Ombudsman holds a great deal of personal data and some of this is sensitive. You will be responsible for treating this data responsibly and in line with internal policies to ensure the Ombudsman remains compliant with Data Protection legislation and avoids breaches which could result in severe harm to our residents.
- You will deal with relevant Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act requests within the legislative timescales to protect the Ombudsman's reputation.
- You will build strong and effective relationships with a range of stakeholders including landlord complaint handling teams and other Ombudsman Schemes with housing-related responsibilities.
- You will carry out any other duties which fall within the scope and purpose of this role profile and which are commensurate with the grade of the post.

Person Specification

Qualifications

- Degree level or equivalent.

Knowledge and Experience

Essential

- Expert knowledge of housing law and / or working knowledge within an ombudsman service
- Knowledge of the role of an Ombudsman
- Knowledge and experience of dispute resolution and complaint handling
- Experience of delivering against set targets and KPI's
- Active listening skills
- Speaking confidently, clearly and fluently avoiding jargon or criticism
- Experience working with high volume of information at pace and with accuracy
- Experience of determination of cases outside of the jurisdiction
- Experience collating and interpreting data/information

Skills and Abilities

Essential

- Research skills
- Customer care skills
- Proactive
- Autonomous
- Organised – planning and prioritising skills Collaborative working
- Pro-actively seeks to learn
- Objective analysis
- Excellent report writing skills
- Ability to have effective conversations with a wide range of people including those with additional needs
- Ability to deal with difficult situations in an effective manner
- Ability to analyse a large volume of complex information

Additional Requirements

Essential

Willingness to work flexibly within the team to ensure high quality, effective and efficient services are delivered.

To comply with the Housing Ombudsman Equal Opportunities policies.

To comply with the Housing Ombudsman Health & Safety policies.

To comply with the Housing Ombudsman IT policies and procedures.

This role profile is not exclusive or exhaustive. It is intended as an outline indication of the areas of responsibility and may be amended in light of the changing needs of the organisation.

Benefits

Rewarding career, rewarding benefits

In addition to a basic salary of £40,491 per annum, you will also receive a benefits package including:

- Local Government Pension Scheme – opportunity to join the Local Government Defined Benefit Pension Scheme.
- Healthy Work/Life Balance – 35 hour working week, flexi-time scheme, working from home opportunities.
- Generous Annual Leave – Minimum of 25 days holiday, rising after four years of continuous service plus eight statutory bank holidays and three, paid Christmas closure days.
- Commitment to health and wellbeing – Free on site gym and shower facilities, cycle to work scheme, free yearly health check-up, employee assistance programme, access to CSSC Sports and Leisure website, discounts on days out, restaurants and high street shopping, contribution towards eye-tests and glasses.
- Season ticket loan – Interest free public transport ticket loan.
- Commitment to ongoing development - Payment of professional memberships fees. Regular training workshops.
- Office location – within walking distance of Underground and DLR stations, waterside location near Canary Wharf Shopping Centre and various bars, cafes and restaurants.



"I joined the service because I relish the opportunity to make a difference every day"

Richard Blakeway
The Housing Ombudsman

