

Removals Industry Ombudsman Scheme

Ombudsman Annual report 2016-17

This report is presented to the board of the scheme and contains details of the cases handled by the Ombudsman in the year ending 30th June 2017.

165 cases were received and 10 determinations issued, all domestic in nature in that they were disputes between a UK remover and a client based in the UK for at least one end of the removal operation. There were no disputes between a consumer abroad using a UK remover for a job between two locations abroad.

In contrast to previous years, there is only one issue that may be described as systemic or significant. That issue is as below.

Complaint handling. This issue is the main source of consumer frustration. Service issues and insurance issues are the most significant source of substantive complaint but many cases could be diverted away from our involvement if the remover were more effective at engaging with the complaining client at an early stage. This had been improving during the year but sadly the improvement was not maintained.

The obvious opportunity that this provides is for removers to address complaints more directly and so avoid escalation. It is fair to say that there were a number of complaints which were rejected by me because the remover's own complaints procedure had not been completed. Some of these were later resolved by those procedures some of which included involvement of the mediation services provided by the National Guild of Removers (NGRS).

Disputes rejected.

1. Insurance matters. 14.

These are outside the scope of our scheme and are therefore rejected. Where there is a complaint that includes an insurance element, that specific issue is set aside.

2. Non-member disputes. 104.

This number reflects complaints against removers who are not members of the scheme and are not identifiable members of any other trade body with its own alternative dispute resolution (ADR) scheme. See item 4 below. This scheme is restricted to members of the NGRS. This ensures that any determinations are honoured by remover members who must abide by NGRS rules. Those who do not are removed from membership.

In the year in question, no members were removed.

3. Complainants who have not completed the remover's own complaints procedure. (22). Part of membership of NGRS allows the remover to use them to attempt to mediate between the client and the company as part of the company's own complaints procedure. Where that has not occurred, cases are referred back to

the complainant. If that mediation is not successful, the Ombudsman scheme can then accept a complaint.

4. Referred to other trade association ADR process. (20). In these cases, where we could identify that the remover was a member of another scheme, the complainant was referred to that other scheme.

5. Five cases were rejected because they were subject to litigation or included criminal allegations.

6. Referred to CAB. 78. Where the remover is not an identifiable member of an ADR scheme, the complainant is referred to CAB. This group is included within item 2 above.

There were no cases that were discontinued because of operational reasons.

Average time to resolve disputes: 27 calendar days. There were 4 cases that took 28 days or more with a maximum of 30 days in one case.

There were no cross border disputes.

Compliance rate is 100%. All member companies complied with my determinations. None had to be removed from membership of the guild.

As Acting Ombudsman I would like to express my thanks to the board for their support and the membership for their co-operation throughout the year. In all cases I have been treated courteously by the members, even when issuing unwelcome determinations.

As a final footnote, I would say that moving house is recognised as one of the most stressful activities undertaken by any family. Sometimes things happen that could not have been foreseen and their significance is multiplied by the stress factor of the move itself. While recognising that this adds to the challenges of the move, we hope to encourage our members to also recognise the responsibility that they carry in this regard and to improve the speed, efficiency and courtesy with which they respond to complaints.

Tony Kaye JP, BA, MBA, MCI Arb, MBCS.

Acting Ombudsman

September 2017