

B REDRESS SCHEMES

B.1 Since October 2008, unless exempted, all persons engaging in residential estate agency work in the UK have been required by law to belong to an officially approved estate agents redress scheme.

B.2 An estate agents redress scheme provides a free and independent service for buyers or sellers of residential property who are in dispute with an estate agent that belongs to the scheme. It can investigate complaints and, if appropriate, require the estate agent to pay compensation or apologise to the complainant.

B.3 There are currently two OFT-approved schemes:

Ombudsman Services: Property

Consumers can contact Ombudsman Services: Property by phone on 0330 440 1634 or 01925 530270, by email at enquiries@os-property.org, via its website at www.ombudsman-services.org/property, or by writing to its address at PO Box 1021, Warrington WA4 9FE.

The Property Ombudsman (TPO)

Consumers can contact The Property Ombudsman by phone on 01722 333306, by email at admin@tpos.co.uk, via its website at www.tpos.co.uk, or by writing to its address at Milford House, 43-55 Milford Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2BP.

B.4 Estate agents who register with the TPO may also agree to follow its Code of Practice for Residential Estate Agents. This code is currently approved by the OFT under the Consumer Codes Approval Scheme. For more information on the code, see the TPO website (above).

B.5 Solicitors that engage in estate agency work within their solicitor practices are exempt from the requirement to join an officially approved scheme. However, they are subject to oversight by other bodies that can investigate complaints against legal practitioners. These services are also independent and free of charge to complainants, and they too can require the business to pay compensation (or provide other redress) if the complaint is upheld.