



**Nicola Williams**  
Service Complaints  
Ombudsman  
for the Armed Forces

## Who is the Ombudsman?

Nicola Williams is the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces.

“ I am the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces. I am independent, impartial and I’m here to help build a better Service complaints system for all members of the UK Armed Forces.

Whether you need help accessing the system to make a new complaint, or you’re unhappy with how your complaint was handled, you can contact my office. We will take your problem seriously and my team will explain what we can do for you. ”

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## How do I contact the Office of the Service Complaints Ombudsman?

The Office of the Service Complaints Ombudsman provides a free, independent and impartial service. To find out more you can contact us:

-  [www.scoaf.org.uk](http://www.scoaf.org.uk)
-  020 7877 3450
-  [contact@scoaf.org.uk](mailto:contact@scoaf.org.uk)
-  PO Box 72252, London SW1P 9ZZ
-  @SCOAF\_UK

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# Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces

Helping to build a better Service complaints system for all Service personnel



## How does the Ombudsman help people access the Service complaints system?

If you believe you have been wronged in your Service life, you have the right to make a Service complaint.

If you don't want to approach your chain of command directly, you can ask the Ombudsman for help. The Ombudsman can help by writing to your chain of command to let them know that you want to make a Service complaint. This is known as a referral.

A referral is not a Service complaint. You will still need to make your complaint formally, in writing, to your chain of command.

For information on what happens after a referral has been made, visit our website.

## I have been told the complaint I want to make is “special-to-type”. Can the Ombudsman make a referral for these types of complaints?

Special-to-type (STT) is a term that refers to issues that have their own complaints process outside of the Service complaints system. This could include issues such as healthcare, housing or pay and allowances.

To have these issues looked at, you need to go through the specific complaints process that applies. If you aren't happy with the outcome you can then make a Service complaint. The timeframes for making a Service complaint are set out in JSP 831.

The Ombudsman can refer your intention to make a Service complaint about these issues. But, any action under the Service complaint process will be put on hold until you have completed the STT process.

## Can the Ombudsman investigate my complaint instead of my Service?

No. Before the Ombudsman can investigate your complaint you need to try and resolve it through the internal Service

complaints process. This includes appealing the decision you receive if you have the option to do so.

## I tried to make a Service complaint but was told it was inadmissible. What can the Ombudsman do for me?

If you receive a decision that says your Service complaint is not admissible you can ask the Ombudsman to review the decision. You have 4 weeks and 2 days from the date the decision is posted or emailed to you to make your application to the Ombudsman.

Any decision the Ombudsman makes about the admissibility of your Service complaint is binding.

## I am not happy with how my Service complaint is being handled. What can the Ombudsman do for me?

If your Service complaint is still open (you haven't received a final decision) the Ombudsman only has the power to investigate alleged undue delay. This means that if your complaint is taking longer to resolve than it should, you can ask the Ombudsman to investigate why.

The Ombudsman can't investigate any other issues while your complaint is ongoing.

## My Service complaint has been finalised and I am not happy with the outcome or how it was handled. What can the Ombudsman do for me?

If you have received a final decision on your Service complaint you can ask the Ombudsman to investigate the:

- substance (merits) of the complaint if you think the wrong decision was reached
- handling of the complaint if you think there was maladministration (i.e. it wasn't handled correctly)

You have 6 weeks and 2 days from the date the final decision is posted or emailed to you to make your application to the Ombudsman. Not all applications to the Ombudsman will be accepted and there is information about this on our website.

## Do I need to be still serving to use the Ombudsman's services?

No. The Ombudsman's services are open to both current and former Service personnel. However, there are timeframes for making a Service complaint or making an application to the Ombudsman. You can find information about timeframes on our website.

## I am a Reservist – can I make an application to the Ombudsman?

Yes. The Ombudsman's services are open to all Service personnel.

## Can someone make an application on my behalf?

No. Only the person who has, or wants to, make a Service complaint can make an application to the Ombudsman.

## I am a respondent to a Service complaint. How can the Ombudsman help me?

Under the current legislation, the Ombudsman has no power to assist respondents to a Service complaint. This is because the law states that only the person who has made the Service complaint can ask the Ombudsman to use her powers of investigation.

However, if a Service person who is a respondent to a Service complaint wants to make their own Service complaint, then the Ombudsman can help them access the system. They can also ask the Ombudsman to use her powers of investigation for the Service complaint that they have made.