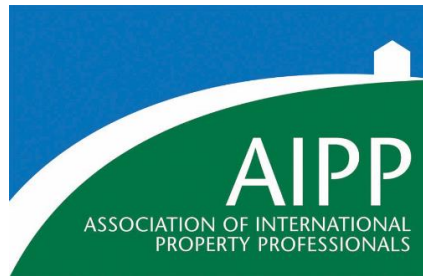




Complaint Handling Toolkit

Sales of foreign property to British Nationals

In association with



APPROVED BY:

OMBUDSMAN
ASSOCIATION

APPROVED BY:


Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government


APPROVED BY:

**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**
Estate Agency Team
Protecting Consumers
Safeguarding Businesses

APPROVED BY:



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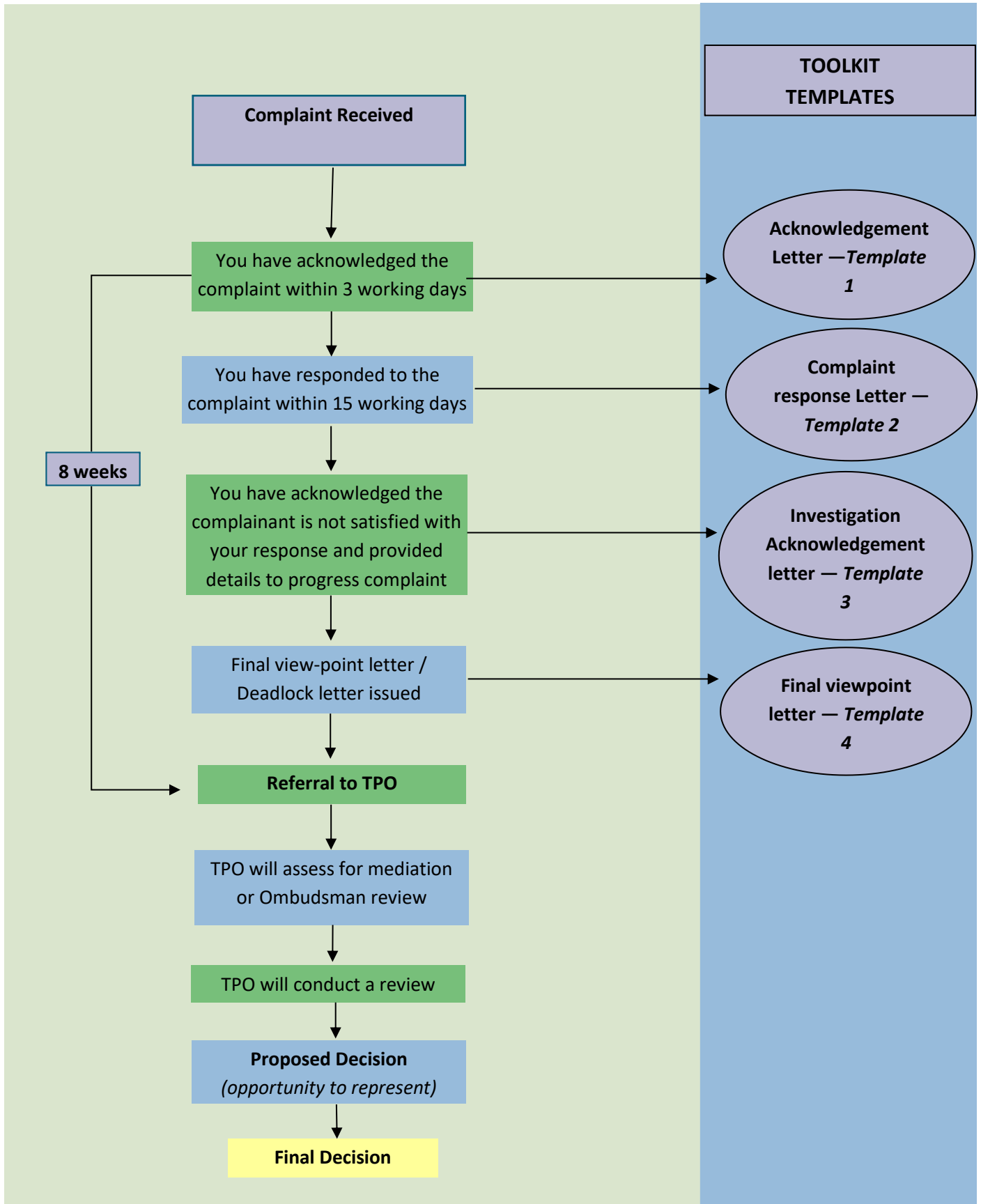
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About this Guide



1. This guide has been produced in collaboration with the AIPP – Association of International Property Professionals. Business members of the AIPP have their clients purchasing a foreign property automatically covered by the TPO, as part of their AIPP membership package. Non-members of AIPP are not covered by this agreement.
2. That said, AIPP members who undertake any activity that requires mandatory redress under current UK legislation will be required to register separately and pay the relevant TPO membership fee. For clarity, this applies to AIPP members based in the UK who also sell UK-based property.
3. The TPO offer this service to AIPP Business members in accordance with the EU Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Directive which came into effect 1st October 2015.
4. AIPP members are encouraged to use this guide and templates to resolve any complaints through internal procedures as quickly and amicably as possible. If this is not possible, TPO will initially attempt to resolve appropriate cases by acting as mediator or through Early Resolution. This will require the agreement of both parties to the dispute and will not deny either party access to a full case review by TPO.
5. If a Complainant accepts TPO's Final Decision (which is made in Full and Final Settlement on those issues on which the Ombudsman made a decision), this is binding on the relevant organisation. The Complainant is entitled to reject the Final Decision and pursue the matter through an insurance claim or via the Courts. Any award accepted by the Complainant is done so in full and final settlement of the dispute.
6. Where an AIPP member has failed to abide by a decision and / or any award made by the Ombudsman, that firm will be referred to AIPP who will determine what action should be taken against the firm.
7. TPO will not divulge any information concerning cases to any party other than AIPP, the Complainant making the complaint, and the relevant firm against whom the complaint is made. The only exception is where TPO needs to seek information from a third party in order to resolve an issue; in such cases, the information divulged will be the minimum needed to seek the answer required.
8. Please read and use the following pages of information and templates for use in your own business.
Please remember: Handling a complaint properly will reduce the chance of referral to the Ombudsman or the courts, save you time and maintain (and sometimes even enhance) your reputation.

The Complaints Process – Timeline



How to Handle Complaints...and Resolve Them

TPO has been dealing with disputes between consumers and property agents for 27 years. In that time, we have seen many complaints referred to us that could have been resolved had the trade member acted differently. The following tips are based on that experience.

Please remember: *Handling a complaint properly will reduce the chance of referral to the Ombudsman or the courts, save you time and maintain (and sometimes even enhance) your reputation.*

Acknowledge the complaint

Whether you think the complaint is justified or not, the consumer will always consider that it is. Acknowledge the complaint and explain what you will do next and by when. NEVER, EVER IGNORE A COMPLAINT

Understand the complaint

Take the time to make sure you fully understand the issues being raised. If you address all the issues at the outset you are more likely to resolve matters there and then.

Be honest

Everyone knows that everyone makes mistakes. If you have made a mistake, acknowledge and apologise for the error. Do not attempt to avoid, gloss-over or omit issues central to the complaint.

Be thorough

Spend the time investigating the issues. Complainants will know when you have not investigated their concerns properly - this will cause further dissatisfaction and the dispute to escalate.

Be polite and professional

Regardless of the complainant's manner always be polite and professional when responding. Never use inappropriate or provocative language or make personal allegations.

Take complaints off-line

Consumers may complain via social media platforms. Regularly check your social accounts and always take complaints off-line by acknowledging the contact and then directly contacting the consumer.

Don't be afraid of complaints

If you want to grow as a business, you need to know when you get it wrong! Make it easy for consumers to contact you and take active steps to change processes or behaviour where shortcomings are found.

ADD COMPANY NAME AND/OR LOGO

In-house complaints procedure -

We are committed to providing a professional service to all our clients and customers. If things go wrong we need you to tell us about them. This will help us to improve our service going forward and resolve issues as soon as possible.

If you have a complaint, please put this in writing (letter or email) to us. We will then acknowledge and respond in line with the timescales and stages set out below.

Stage 1—Your Complaint

Please put your complaint in writing either by letter or email and address it to **[xxxx (including role)]**. Please include as much detail as possible, including dates, names of any members of staff you dealt with, and where you are able to enclosing/attaching any supporting evidence.

[Xxxx

Xxx

Xxx

Xxx

Email: **[xxxxx]**

[Remember to include details for complaints from a 3rd party or contractor if they differ from your usual complaints procedure]

Stage 2—Our Acknowledgement

Your complaint will be acknowledged and we will start our in house complaints process

Timescale

Within 3 working days of receiving your complaint

Stage 3—Our Investigation

Your complaint will be investigated and **[xxxx (relevant member of staff if applicable)]** will provide a formal written response addressing your specific complaints and proposing resolutions where appropriate

Timescale

Within 15 working days of receiving your complaint

Stage 4—Final Viewpoint

If you remain dissatisfied, you should contact us again and we will conduct a separate review to take place by **[xxxxx relevant member of staff if applicable]**. This will outline our final viewpoint on the matter.

Timescale

Within 15 working days of receiving your request for a further review

Stage 5—The Property Ombudsman

If our final viewpoint letter does not resolve matters (or more than 8 weeks has elapsed since the complaint was first made) you can request an independent review from The Property Ombudsman without charge.

Timescale

You must refer your complaint to the Ombudsman within 12 months of receiving our final viewpoint letter

The Property Ombudsman
Milford House
43-55 Milford Street
Salisbury

SP1 2BP, United Kingdom
+ 44 (0) 1722 333306

www.tpos.co.uk admin@tpos.co.uk

If we have not addressed your complaints within eight weeks, you can refer your complaint to the Ombudsman.

No charge will be made for any complaint we handle.

Company details etc



ADD COMPANY NAME AND/OR LOGO

In-house complaints procedure

[Template 1]

Dear **[Complainants name]** |

RE: **[Property Address]**

Thank you for your email/letter dated **[date]**. I acknowledge receipt of your complaint and **[company name/member of staff]** will provide a formal written response to your complaints by **[date]**. Should I need more time to investigate the issues raised I will contact you to explain why.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[Job title] |

[Company details etc]



ADD COMPANY NAME AND/OR LOGO

In-house complaints procedure

[Template 2]

Dear **[Complainants name]**, |

RE: [Property Address]

Thank you for your email/letter of **[date]**, raising your complaint to us.

Having considered your complaint letter, I understand your specific complaints to be;

- **A**
- **B**
- **C**
- **D** |

Based on the evidence available to me, I have concluded that...

Please explain the company's position with regard to the complaints listed above. Include any resolution where possible.

You may like to enclose supporting evidence of your argument if appropriate. |

I hope this resolves the issues above. Should it be the case you are dissatisfied with this response you may escalate your response to **[member of staff name]** who will conduct a separate review of your complaint within 15 working days of your escalating this to us.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[Job Title] |

[Company details etc]



ADD COMPANY NAME AND/OR LOGO

In-house complaints procedure

Template 3

Dear **[Complainants name]**

RE: **[Property Address]**

Thank you for your email/letter of **[date]**, in response to our initial investigation into your complaint. We are sorry you are not satisfied with the outcome of our initial investigation. Your complaint will be independently investigated by **[name of member of staff]**. This review will result in a final viewpoint letter/deadlock letter. **[delete if not the final stage]**. This will be provided to you by **[date]**.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[Job Title]

Company details etc



ADD COMPANY NAME AND/OR LOGO

In-house complaints procedure

[Template 4]

Dear **[Complainants name]**, |

RE: [Property Address]

Thank you for your email/letter of **[date]**, in response to our initial investigation into your complaint.

I understand that you remain dissatisfied with our position. Having thoroughly considered the correspondence to date, I understand your specific complaints to be;

- **A**
- **B**
- **C**
- **D** |

Based on the evidence available to me, I have concluded that|...

***Please explain the company's final position with regard to the complaints listed above.
You may like to enclose supporting evidence of your argument if appropriate.*** |

This represents the final viewpoint of **[Company & Branch]**. | I hope that I have been able to resolve the matter to your satisfaction. If, however, you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to refer your complaint to The Property Ombudsman, details of which can be found below.

The Property Ombudsman
Milford House
43-55 Milford Street
Salisbury
SP1 2BP
United Kingdom
+ 44 (0) 1722 333 306
admin@tpos.co.uk
www.tpos.co.uk

Please be aware that you have up to **12 months** from the date of this email/letter to refer your complaint to the Ombudsman in writing, although it is preferable that you do so as soon as possible if you wish to pursue this matter further. Please do refer to The Property Ombudsman's Consumer Guide, for your information, available to [read via this link](#)

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[Job Title] |

[Company details etc]

