

Issue 7 – January 2020

The Pensions Ombudsman News

Welcome to the seventh edition of The Pensions Ombudsman (TPO) News. In this issue, we are delighted to welcome contributions from our Legal Team and our Stakeholder Manager. If you are interested in contributing in future newsletters, please contact mairi.dearden@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk

Introductory message from Pensions Ombudsman, Anthony Arter

Happy new year! I hope you have all had a very enjoyable and restful festive period.

As we enter a new decade, we have a lot to reflect on and many successes to celebrate.

As you know, in August 2019, DWP published the results of its [Tailored Review of The Pensions Ombudsman](#) and we have been working hard to deliver on the recommendations of the review.

In September, we welcomed Caroline Rookes as our new interim Chair and have established a new Corporate Board. We have now advertised for a new [Chief Operating Officer](#) on Veredus' website. I am looking forward to working closely with Caroline, the Corporate Board and the new Chief Operating Officer to continue the implementation of our ambitious transformation programme that will make it easier for people to resolve their pension complaints.

With the same aim firmly in mind, we are also focusing on internal changes and have started implementing our Casework Reorganisation Programme which includes expanding our stakeholder engagement and quality assurance processes.

The new year will bring a number of opportunities for us to continue to work closely together with dates set for our:

- Legal Forum
- Stakeholder event
- Consumer Panel.

You can find further details on page three.

Another exciting development for us is the expansion of our Digitalisation Programme and we will shortly be appointing a supplier to redevelop our website.

Giving people access to the information and tools they need will greatly improve the process for everyone. I am very much looking forward to seeing the results of this piece of work.

This year also marks the end of our three-year Corporate Plan. We are currently reviewing the existing plan and looking to refresh the layout and content for this year. We would very much like your input into this process. Watch this space.

It's already looking like being another incredibly busy year!



Anthony Arter
Pensions Ombudsman



Out and about with our Stakeholder Manager

Working together to improve the customer journey



We continue to grow and evolve our stakeholder strategy by working with people across the pensions industry. By building trust and sharing ideas, we are working hard to improve our services by listening to

customers and users.

Since the last newsletter in June, we've visited 11 new stakeholders and attended 9 key events. We are promoting who we are, what we do and sharing the widescale change we have introduced. At events, we have used our platform to recruit new volunteers for our ERT Team and increased membership of our Legal Forum.

We've been building collaborative relationships with The Pensions Regulator (TPR), the Financial Conduct Authority, the Pension Protection Fund and the newly formed Money and Pensions Service (MaPS). We are currently planning a joint event with MaPS in the Houses of Parliament in the near future. We want to raise awareness of our respective roles amongst MPs and to drive joined-up thinking and improvements in the customer journey.

This builds on work started in September where we worked with colleagues in the Library of the Houses of Parliament to produce a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for MPs and Peers to support their constituency work relating to occupational and personal pensions.

Visit to the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA)

On 6 December I met with members of the new Senior Management Team at the SPPA in Edinburgh. The meeting was extremely productive. We will be working closely together to improve signposting, share good practice and discuss how we can best share management information to reduce complaints and identify emerging themes and issues more effectively.

Work with Master Trusts

We have gone out to meet staff, ran Lunch and Learn events and spoken to various boards in the emerging Master Trusts market.

Industry Events

This year we have continued to raise our profile attending national events sponsored by: The Pensions Management Institute, Eversheds, Association of Member Pensions Schemes, TPR, MaPS, Pensions & Benefits Trust and the Local Government Pensions Scheme Annual Conference in Torquay. All of which enables us to share our key messaging, share good practice in complaints handling and most importantly work with the industry to improve the customer journey.

We look forward to continuing to build on this work through our upcoming Stakeholder, Consumer and Legal Forum events.

Mairi Dearden
Stakeholder Manager

TPO news

Our Stakeholder Team is growing



Hi, I'm Rebecca Orr and I am joining Mairi at the end of this month as part of our stakeholder initiative. I've worked for TPO for around 15 years, in a variety of roles from administration, jurisdiction, management,

project work and case investigations. So, a very well-rounded knowledge of what we do and how we do it!

Prior to moving to the UK, I worked for a couple of MPs in the Queensland Parliament, which involved a lot of stakeholder engagement. I'm looking forward to doing this type of work again and getting to know you all better this year.

Legal update

Legal Forum

Thursday 30 January 2020, Canary Wharf

The Legal Team hosted its fourth Legal Forum in June.

The Legal Forum provides a transparent forum to discuss matters such as proposed changes in legislation; changes in our organisation and our relationship with other industry bodies.

It also aims to help attendees understand TPO's approach to handling complaints and to enable us to improve communication and achieve a better understanding of our customers' needs.

The next Legal Forum meeting has been scheduled for 30 January 2020.

If you are a lawyer and would like to attend, please contact Liz:

elizabeth.mcallister@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk.

Dates for your diary

Stakeholder Event: Collaboration, customers and future planning

Wednesday 5 February 2020 10.45am-3pm, Canary Wharf

To register your interest in attending, please email: mairi.dearden@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk or rebecca.orr@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk

Consumer Panel:

Wednesday 11 March 2020, Canary Wharf

The Consumer Panel is for people working within the pension industry, complaints arena and those delivering consumer advice and support services. The aim is to better understand our customers and how we can improve our service to them.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact: mairi.dearden@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk

Recent events for TPO

October

- 8 – Association of Member Pensions Schemes Technical Compliance Seminar & AGM, London
- 10 – Meeting MaPS, London
- 14 – TPR Stakeholder Event, London
- 17 – Meeting Cabinet Office, London

November

- 4 – First Actuarial Scheme Meeting, Manchester
- 5 – Lunch and Learn at Premier Pensions, Croydon
- 7 – TPO Staff Conference

December

- 4-14 – Annual Pensions Conference, London
- 12 – Creative Pensions Board Meeting, Croydon

Can you make a difference?

Our Early Resolution Team received 2,566 cases last year, 50% more than anticipated. We couldn't cope with this workload without the help of our pool of volunteer advisers.

We are looking for pension professionals with at least ten years' industry experience (less if you have an appropriate qualification), to give up some of your time to become dispute mediators. We would be grateful if you could see if any of your colleagues are interested.

We believe volunteering benefits the whole industry; volunteers, employers, and pension scheme members. Take it from one of our volunteers:

"My dispute mediation experience has broadened my horizons. I've learned a lot about pensions from both the guidance documents TPO produces and their regular training sessions. You get great insights into how other areas of the industry work, which I might never have seen, and how complaints happen (and more importantly, can be avoided). I believe volunteering has made me a better pension professional".

Gareth Stears,
Early Resolution volunteer



Interested in volunteering?

If you are interested in helping the service in any way, please contact Paul Day at paul.day@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk