



The Civil Justice Council's response to the Ombudsman Association's Consultation on changes to its Terms and Rules

**FAO: Donal Galligan
Ombudsman Association**

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The Civil Justice Council (CJC) is a statutory body whose role is to advise and make recommendations to improve the civil justice system. Our primary role is to use our power of convening to make informed recommendations for others to take forward.

We recognise that civil justice can embody a number of different disputes. On this basis the CJC provides a forum for the collective sharing of best practice to enhance the role that [A]DR can play in supporting the swift and fair resolution of cases that would otherwise end up in the court system. We therefore recognise the importance of Ombudsmanry within the Civil Justice Sector, and the value of Ombuds Schemes in providing a level of access to justice which may not otherwise be economically viable.

It is against this backdrop that the CJC has welcomed the Ombudsman Association's consultation, recognising the critical role of effective validation and revalidation in protecting the credibility and brand of the Ombuds sector. In this brief response we have set out to provide support for the three main changes proposed by the consultation.

In particular:

- The CJC supports any move towards raising standards of dispute resolution and to protecting the consumer.
- We support the focus of the proposed changes on dispute resolution and service improvement as both being core to the work of an Ombuds scheme.
- We support a clearer distinction being drawn between Ombuds schemes and Complaint handling organisations.
- Our initial view is that we support moves that might improve accessibility on the part of consumers and the ability of Ombuds schemes to receive approaches directly from consumers without being reliant on the oversight of an external body but would need to further review the specifics.

We look forward to ensuring the CJC can effectively work and deliver justice alongside the Ombudsman Association, recognising our shared focus on ensuring effective and efficient access to justice.