

Reference: 222030

Information Requests

information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

31 July 2026

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about ADR scheme pre-investigation case closures and provider liaison functions.

We received this request on 6 July 2026 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the FOI Act').

Your request

I'm making a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for the following recorded information. I've kept this deliberately narrow to stay well within the cost limit.

- 1. Any information Ofcom holds describing or referencing a BT function known as the "Ombudsman Interface" team, or any equivalent BT team whose role involves liaison with an Ofcom-approved ADR scheme. This includes any reference in correspondence, meeting notes, periodic reviews, or complaint records. If Ofcom holds no such information, please confirm that.*
- 2. For the Communications Ombudsman (Ombudsman Services / Trust Alliance Group), for each of the last three financial years, the number and proportion of telecoms complaints closed through "Facilitated Complaint Resolution" or any equivalent pre-investigation settlement mechanism, compared with the number that proceeded to full investigation and adjudication. If Ofcom doesn't hold this breakdown, please confirm whether it's collected as part of periodic reviews.*
- 3. Copies of, or a schedule listing, any correspondence or meeting records between Ofcom and the Communications Ombudsman in the last two years that concern BT's complaint-handling practices, the validation of complainant authority, or the use of third-party representatives.*

I ask these questions for a specific reason. On 2nd July 2026, [REDACTED] of your Consumer Contact Team confirmed in writing that Ofcom doesn't investigate individual ADR decisions and has no power to overturn them. That leaves periodic reviews as the only mechanism through which Ofcom can identify whether providers are influencing case outcomes before investigation occurs. I hold an internal BT email showing exactly that happening. These three questions test whether Ofcom's oversight can detect it.

We consider that your request as a whole would take a substantial amount of time for us to fulfil. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act") provides that we are not obliged to comply with a request for information if we estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the "appropriate limit". The appropriate limit is set out in the Freedom of Information

and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 ("the Regulations") and is, for Ofcom, £450. That sum is intended to cover the estimated costs involved in determining whether Ofcom holds the information requested, locating, retrieving and extracting the information from any document containing it. The Regulations provide that costs are to be estimated at a rate of £25 per person per hour, which equates to 18 hours of time.

We have considered your request as a whole and estimate that the work required to determine whether information is held within scope, and to locate, retrieve and extract any relevant information, would exceed the appropriate limit. This is because information potentially relevant to your request especially in relation to question 1, if held, may be distributed across a number of business areas and records, and would require extensive searches and review to identify material falling within scope. Furthermore we also note that your request in relation to question 1 has no time frame and therefore would require us to go back as far as reasonably possible. We estimate that complying with the request would take more than 18 hours. Accordingly, section 12 of the FOI Act applies and Ofcom is not obliged to comply with the request.

In accordance with our duty under section 16 of the FOI Act to provide advice and assistance where reasonable, you may wish to consider submitting a narrower and more focused request. For example, you may wish to limit your request to a specific question, time period, document type, or business area. We would be happy to consider any revised request under the FOI Act. Please note that normally, pursuant to section 44 of the FOI Act, we may not be able to disclose information relating to ADR complaints (that is not already published), we have obtained relating to a particular business.

In case helpful, Communications Ombudsman publishes case outcome data on their website, which includes a breakdown by provider of settled, upheld or not upheld cases: [Complaints data | Communications Ombudsman](#)

It is not clear what is meant by "*providers influencing case outcomes before investigation occurs*". If the concern is that providers may seek to resolve complaints by offering settlements before a case reaches ADR adjudication, this is a recognised feature of the ADR process. Customers remain free to reject any settlement offered by the provider and proceed to a full ADR determination. Furthermore, customers who are dissatisfied with an ADR decision are generally not bound to accept it and may instead seek resolution through the courts.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).