

Annual Report and Accounts **2022**



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The Vision of the Association is that throughout the public and private sectors:

- It is straightforward and simple for people to complain.
- People making a complaint are listened to and treated fairly.
- A complaint is dealt with quickly, fairly and effectively at the earliest stage by suitably trained staff.
- People have access to an ombudsman in all areas of consumer and public services.
- The learning from a complaint is used to improve services.

The objects of the Association are to:

- 1) Support and promote an effective system of complaint handling and redress in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Britain's Crown Dependencies and Britain's Overseas Territories.
- 2) Encourage, develop and protect the role of an ombudsman in both the public and private sectors as the 'best practice' model for resolving complaints, according recognition through membership.
- 3) Provide an authoritative voice and promote best practice and policy for those involved in complaint handling and redress to ensure an effective service for the public.
- 4) Support open and transparent accountability and endorse principles of good complaint handling.

FOREWORD

Foreword by the Chair of the Association

I was delighted, and very grateful, to be elected Chair of the Ombudsman Association at the AGM in September 2021. This annual report covers the last six months of Anthony Arter's term as Chair and the first six months of mine and I want to express my thanks to Anthony for all he did to steer the OA through the pandemic period.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on all the sectors and nations that our members cover heightened the importance of complaints and the role of our offices to drive learning and service improvement. The current cost of living crisis has underlined that further.

As a result, it is a critical time to highlight the importance of our work in driving improvements, to close gaps in accessing redress, and to strengthen our roles. The OA is perfectly placed to coordinate and drive that work.

That can range from the coordinated activities for #OmbudsDay in October or the briefing for UK civil servants in December to help raise general awareness of the sector, to the hard-nosed engagement with Ministers and officials on specific policy proposals, such as those for the UK consumer sector or the Jersey public services ombudsman, to ensure that the best practice reflected in the OA's criteria is followed.

The 2021 survey of members confirmed that the priorities we set out in our 2020-23 Business Plan are still the key priorities that members want us to focus on: developing standards; facilitating networking; and influencing policy.

The past few years has seen unprecedented pressure on many services, including that of our members. Developing support networks and providing learning and development opportunities through the OA is essential.

The excellent online conference in September was just one example of that; the regular activities of the OA Networks, both through their meetings and the forums in the *OA Community*, provide that opportunity on a regular basis.

There was broad agreement in the survey responses that the OA does not currently have enough resources to deliver members' priorities and a willingness to contribute more to enable the OA to do so. Membership fees have therefore been increased for 2022/23 to support delivery of those priorities and alongside that we will also utilise our reserves to provide the necessary resources to take that work forward.

The first winners of the Outstanding Contribution Award, Kieran FitzGerald and Tom Morgan, were announced at our AGM in September and I'm delighted that the award will become a regular fixture going forward to recognise the fantastic work that so many in our sector do.

Change is of course a constant in our sector, and this year saw several office holders come to the end of their terms and many new colleagues join us. February brought the shock of the passing of Aled Roberts, the Welsh Language Commissioner, following a short illness; our thoughts remain with his family and colleagues.

I am grateful to colleagues on the Board for their work in helping steer the OA, to the members of the Validation Committee for their time and expertise, and of course to Donal and Maz for all they do to ensure that the OA continues to maintain standards, bring the community together, and enhance the voice of the sector.

By the time this report is published we will have already had our first face-to-face conference for many years, and I very much look forward to the return of those essential opportunities for us all to network and share experiences.



A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Richard Blakeway'.

Richard Blakeway
Ombudsman Association Chair
Housing Ombudsman

OUR ACTIVITIES

Support and promote an effective system of complaint handling and redress in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Britain's Crown Dependencies and Britain's Overseas Territories.



UK Administrative Justice Council (AJC)

Through his position on the Steering Group, the Chief Executive continues to inform the work of the AJC to ensure it reflects the expertise of the ombudsman community in its discussions and activities. There were several Steering Group and full Council meetings during the year. The Chief Executive also chaired an online meeting of the Ombudsman / Tribunal Familiarisation Group in October, attended the face-to-face AJC networking / awayday in November, and the launch of the *Supporting Online Justice* project in March, which has developed short animated videos to support those using the tribunal system.

IOI World Conference

In May the Chief Executive attended the online International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) World Conference. The conference provided the opportunity to keep up-to-date with the latest challenges and developments across the ombudsman sector.



United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

During the summer the Chief Executive engaged with officials from the UNCTAD team on their report '*Consumer online dispute resolution in the world*', providing information on the benefits that having a mandatory ombudsman, that meets the OA's criteria, provides for consumers. In December the Chief Executive contributed to an online UNCTAD training programme for officials in Indonesia and Thailand on consumer dispute resolution. The session provided the opportunity for the OA to highlight the pitfalls of the approach taken in the UK and the benefits that having a mandatory ombudsman provides for consumers.



Reforming Consumer Policy

The Chief Executive was involved in a series of engagements throughout the year regarding the UK Business Department's (BEIS) consultation on *Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy*, including meetings with BEIS officials in the summer and the autumn. He also attended a Ministerial Roundtable discussion with the Minister for Small Businesses and Consumers on 22 September. The roundtable provided an excellent opportunity to raise concerns directly with the Minister (around the 'pay-as-you-go' model, nominal fees, and 'lower limits') and to network with key stakeholders from across the business and advocacy sectors. The OA's *response* to the consultation was informed by discussions with members via the Policy Network.

Federation of Small Businesses

In October the Chief Executive met with Martin McTague, the then Vice-Chair Policy and Advocacy at the Federation of Small Businesses, to discuss how the ombudsman sector can better persuade small businesses of the value of an ombudsman.



Gambling sector

Throughout the year the Chief Executive engaged with stakeholders in the gambling sector to explain the key features and benefits of establishing an ombudsman, giving evidence to the Westminster All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Gambling Harm in July, and meeting with the Betting and Gaming Council in July and December. The CEX has also been engaging with the civil servants leading the *Review of the Gambling Act*. The meetings provided the opportunity to promote the benefits of an ombudsman and the OA's criteria.

Dispute Resolution in England and Wales

The UK Ministry of Justice issued a call for evidence during the year on *Dispute Resolution in England and Wales*. Focused on the Courts, the project represents a potentially momentous shift with the statement that “‘alternative’ methods of dispute resolution need to be mainstreamed” coming jointly from the Lord Chancellor, the Master of the Rolls, the Senior President of Tribunals, and the President of the Family Division. The Chief Executive engaged directly with the civil servants leading the project over the summer and the autumn and a meeting of the Policy Network was held in October to coordinate members’ input, ahead of the OA submitting a [response](#).

Rail sector

The Chief Executive engaged with officials from the Department for Transport and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) throughout the year regarding best practice in the rail sector.

Jersey Public Services Ombudsman

During the year, work commenced on legislative drafting instructions for the Jersey Public Services Ombudsman. In September the Chief Executive met with those leading the work to stress the aspects of the OA's criteria that the new ombudsman would need to meet, particularly in terms of independence from the Chief Minister / Government.

New Homes Ombudsman

Following the launch of the tender by the New Homes Quality Board, to provide the New Homes Ombudsman service, the Chief Executive had several meetings in October and December with the New Homes Quality Board, and also with the preferred provider, in relation to the OA's criteria for membership.

Briefing for UK Civil Servants

In December the OA held an online briefing session for UK Civil Servants. Mick King (LGSCO), Mariette Hughes (SCOAF), and Ric Blakeway (Housing Ombudsman) spoke on the value of ombudsman schemes and the role they can play in driving service improvement and sharing data and insight. The session was well attended, with over 40 officials from various departments and policy areas, including the Business department, the Ministry of Justice, Cabinet Office, gambling, aviation, rail, leasehold, private rented sector, communications, and the armed forces covenant, providing the opportunity to influence more broadly.

Setting the standard

- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Fairness
- ✓ Effectiveness
- ✓ Openness and transparency
- ✓ Accountability



- Recognised by UK Government through: [Cabinet Office Guidance](#) and [Companies House criteria](#)

Evaluating trust in justice – research project

During February the Chief Executive contributed to the initial work of the Nuffield Foundation project ‘*Evaluating trust in justice: How has the pandemic changed how people access justice and enforce their rights?*’ as part of his role on the project’s Advisory Board. The research project is looking at the effects of rapid digitalization on the delivery of justice in the areas of housing, special educational needs and disability, and social security. The focus of the project is on pathways to redress through the advice sector, ombudsman schemes and tribunals.

Private Rented Sector & Leasehold

The Chief Executive met with officials from the UK Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities during the spring to discuss policy developments for redress in the private rented and leasehold sectors. The meeting provided the opportunity to promote the benefits of an ombudsman scheme.

Aviation ombudsman

In March the OA **responded** to the Department for Transport’s consultation on Aviation Consumer Policy reform, setting out that an aviation ombudsman would best deliver the Department’s aims to ensure that customers are protected and treated fairly.

Encourage, develop and protect the role of an ombudsman in both the public and private sectors as the ‘best practice’ model for resolving complaints, according recognition through membership.

Despite the restrictions in place during the year the Chief Executive engaged with government officials and other stakeholders where possible, through online meetings and responding to relevant **consultations**, to promote the OA’s Principles and membership criteria.

#OmbudsDay

On 14 October the OA, and our members, celebrated #OmbudsDay with a series of videos, statements and publications. A positive development this year was the marking of the day by stakeholders outside the ombudsman sector, including the Betting & Gaming Council, the Westminster Parliament Gambling Related Harm APPG, Citizens Advice, the Irish Government’s Minister of State for Sport, the Gaeltacht & Defence, the ALLIANCE in Scotland, and JUSTICE.



“Over the years, Ombuds have helped millions of people affected by maladministration and administrative injustice. It is impossible to imagine an effective justice system without them, and they are well worth celebrating.”

Peter Binning, Chair of JUSTICE

Provide an authoritative voice and promote best practice and policy for those involved in complaint handling and redress to ensure an effective service for the public.

Race Equality Week

The OA and several of our members took part in various activities during Race Equality Week, 7-11 February. The themed week saw the launch of tools to support the #MyNameIs campaign of encouraging businesses to adopt the phonetic spelling of names in email signatures. The Chief Executive talked about his own experiences in a comment piece on the OA website: [#My Name Is | Ombudsman Association](#).

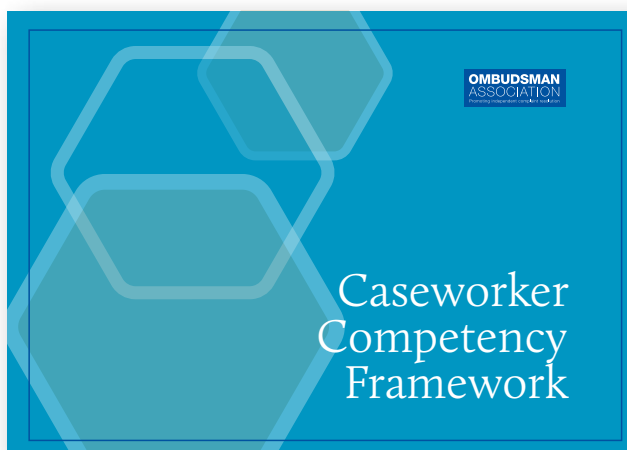
Caseworker Competency Framework

In November, Kate Wellington and the Chief Executive gave a joint presentation at the IOI / PHSO seminar in Manchester on the OA's Caseworker Competency Framework. The seminar provided the opportunity to promote the value of the Framework and a number of ombudsman schemes have expressed an interest in discussing it further, including the Netherlands' Ombudsman, the Israeli Ombudsman, and the European Ombudsman. It is hoped that this will reinvigorate discussions amongst OA members on adoption and implementation of the Framework.

Engagement with members

Whilst social distancing removed many of the opportunities for face-to-face meetings, the Chief Executive continued to liaise with members via online meetings regarding developments across the sector and the challenges facing their organisations, and how the OA could support them.

In particular, the Chief Executive attended meetings of the Irish Forum in Dublin in April and online in December, gave an online presentation to the staff of the Channel Islands Financial Ombudsman in August, and attended meetings of the Public Service Ombudsman Group in Dublin in September and online in March.



Cameroon delegation

In March, the Chief Executive presented to a delegation from Cameroon, including the newly appointed Public Independent Conciliators, at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office as part of their study trip to identify best practice in the ombudsman sector.



Networks

The OA's Networks facilitate communication between members and enable staff to share experiences and best practice. Building on the new ways of working developed during the pandemic, the Networks have continued to meet online. The online *OA Community* area has further supported that networking and sharing of information through the dedicated areas for each Network and the discussion forums.

Casework Network

The Casework Network met in November 2021, with discussions focused on the Motor Ombudsman's (TMO) thought leadership paper on managing vulnerable customers. Several discussions subsequently took place between members on how they could incorporate this approach into their casework, including amending template letters to identify vulnerable complainants earlier in their processes, and identifying training providers in this area. The Network also discussed climate policies, and the growing importance of these to staff, and other current issues, including financial remedy, closing communication at the end of the case, and focusing on the most serious cases.

Communications Network

The Communications Network met in April and July 2021. The Network updated their Terms of Reference to reflect the opportunities brought about by remote working and the new *OA Community* and discussed the latest key activities.

Data Protection Network

The Data Protection Network continued to meet monthly throughout the year to provide support and share best practice on key data protection and security themes. The Network continues to make use of the *OA Community* discussion forums as a useful way of seeking advice and best practice in-between meetings.

First Contact Network

The First Contact Network met in June and December and discussed handling challenging behaviour / conversations, operational hours of telephone lines, and the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) complaints portal. The Network has also used the *OA Community* forum to generate a range of discussion items for the agenda, including experiences of managing hybrid first contact operations/teams, ensuring appropriate online identity and consent and 'LAST' contact.

Human Resources Network

At their meeting in June discussions focussed on equality, diversity and inclusion. In November, the Network discussed future ways of working, recruitment issues at present, including diversity, the OA Mentoring Scheme, the challenges faced by the Learning & Development Sub-Group, blended working, long term absence, and staff productivity. After several years leading the group, Chris Vinestock stepped down as Chair, with Dawn Hamlet (Furniture & Home Improvement Ombudsman) elected Chair and Helen Wilson (Scottish Public Services Ombudsman) elected as Vice Chair.

Learning & Development Sub-Group

The Learning & Development Sub-Group met in April 2021 with a focussed conversation about the OA Mentoring Scheme. Due to the pressures on members' L&D Teams the Sub-Group found it challenging to take forward work during the year.

Legal Network

The Legal Network met in May 2021 and January 2022. Alongside discussions on the impact of the pandemic, confidentiality of information, compensation limits, alternative legal remedy, and *functus officio*, the Network also discussed the updating of their terms of reference. The Network members have agreed to increase the frequency of the meetings.

Policy Network

The Policy Network was very active during the year, meeting in April, June, September, October, and February, often to focus on specific issues such as the signposting project or the UK Government consultations on *Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy*, and Dispute Resolution in England & Wales. The Network also discussed the best ways of demonstrating impact, including data and case studies.

Senior Leaders Network

The Senior Leaders Network met in September, receiving a presentation from the Legal Ombudsman and the Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman on the benefits of taking a strategic approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. It was agreed to establish a separate EDI Network, focusing on the corporate strategic approach. The first meeting of that network took place in May 2022.

Outstanding Contribution Award

At the OA's AGM in September, Kieran FitzGerald and Tom Morgan were announced as the inaugural winners of the OA's Outstanding Contribution Award.

As members will know, the OA's Outstanding Contribution Award (OCA) was established in Caroline Mitchell's memory to recognise the outstanding work that so many in the ombudsman community do.

Caroline was a firm fixture in the ombudsman landscape for many years having joined the Insurance Ombudsman Bureau (the first private sector scheme in the UK) in 1984 and also working for the Building Societies Ombudsman and the Police Complaints Authority. Many in the sector will have known her from her time at the Financial Ombudsman Service from 2002-2019, before she sadly passed away. Caroline also spent several years on the OA's Executive Committee and chaired the OA Policy Network.

There were a number of strong nominations for the inaugural award, recognising the fantastic work that goes on across the sector, and the panel therefore jointly awarded the OCA this year to Kieran FitzGerald and Tom Morgan.

Colleagues will know that Kieran was of course one of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commissioners for two terms, and a former Chair of the OA.



His nomination highlighted the support he has provided to colleagues across the sector, particularly when they have been facing challenging situations, and the role he has played in strengthening ombudsman institutions.

Tom Morgan's nomination highlighted the remarkable contribution he made over 25 years at the Office of the Ombudsman in Ireland, particularly in leading high-profile investigations which have resulted in systemic change across the Irish Public Service, such as the 'Opportunity Lost' investigation about the Magdalen laundries in Ireland.

In making the announcement as Chair of the OA, Anthony Arter highlighted:

"We would all recognise Kieran from the description in his nomination form of someone who is '*actively supportive of the wider Ombudsman community, sage and unstinting with his time*'."

"Tom's nomination form also succinctly captured a much-loved colleague; '*Tom's contribution to the Ombudsman sector and to the Office of the Ombudsman over the past 25 years cannot be overestimated. He goes about his work in a quiet, understated, but highly effective manner*'."

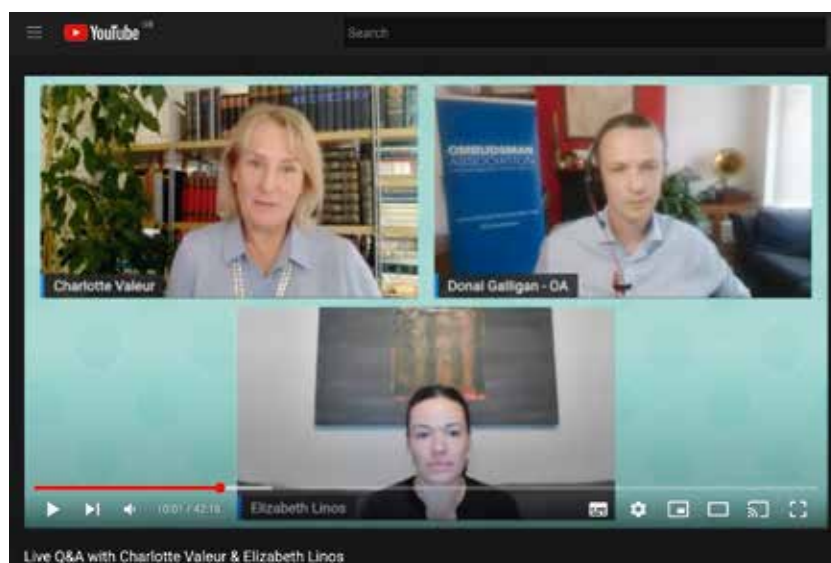
Both Kieran and Tom were characteristically humble in accepting the award, with Tom commenting that "No man or woman is an island...every result that we get over the line is the work of a large group of people. This award is recognition not just of me personally, but also of the office and the staff."

Kieran highlighted the 'fellowship' that the OA provides, commenting that "I always got more out of the OA than I've ever put in" and finishing by stating, "I know I don't deserve this award but that doesn't mean I won't cherish it all the more for that."

The recording of the presentation of the Outstanding Contribution Award and the acceptance speeches by Kieran FitzGerald and Tom Morgan can be viewed in the *OA Community*.

OA Conference

The OA's Conference took place online on 15 September 2021, with a focus on 'Strength through diversity'. Alongside plenary sessions with Charlotte Valeur on neurodiversity and Dr Elizabeth Linos on 'belonging' and burnout, there were a number of workshops where members discussed challenges and best practice, and pre-recorded videos. The event was attended by over 100 delegates and we received very positive feedback on both the content and the platform used for the event. Recordings of the sessions are available for members in the *OA Community*.



GOVERNANCE

Annual General Meeting 2021

The 28th AGM of the Association took place via Zoom on 10 September 2021. Members received a report on activities during the year and the audited accounts for 2020/21. Elections for the vacant positions on the Board took place, with the following elected for a two-year term (2021-23):

Chair:

Richard Blakeway
Housing Ombudsman

Vice-Chair:

Felicity Mitchell
Office of the Independent Adjudicator
for Higher Education

Ombudsman Member representatives:

Rosemary Agnew
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Bill Fennell
The Motor Ombudsman
Kevin Grix
Rail Ombudsman
Margaret Kelly
Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Matthew Vickers
Ombudsman Services

Complaint Handler / Associate Members representative:

Rónán Ó Domhnaill
An Coimisinéir Teanga - Language Commissioner, Ireland

Board

The role of the Board is to manage the business of the OA. Several positions changed during the year following the elections at the AGM in September. The membership of the Board during 2021/22 was:

April-September

Chair

Anthony Arter
Pensions Ombudsman Service

Vice Chair

Rob Behrens
Parliamentary & Health
Service Ombudsman

Board directors:

Rosemary Agnew
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Richard Blakeway
Housing Ombudsman
Douglas Melville
Channel Islands Financial Ombudsman
Felicity Mitchell
Office of the Independent Adjudicator
John Munton
CEDR
Rónán Ó Domhnaill
An Coimisinéir Teanga
(Language Commissioner)
Matt Vickers
Ombudsman Services
Joanna Wallace
Independent Complaints Examiner
Donal Galligan
Chief Executive,
Ombudsman Association

September-March

Chair

Richard Blakeway
Housing Ombudsman

Vice Chair

Felicity Mitchell
Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Board directors:

Rosemary Agnew
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Bill Fennell
The Motor Ombudsman
Kevin Grix
Rail Ombudsman
Margaret Kelly
Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Douglas Melville
Channel Islands Financial Ombudsman
John Munton
CEDR
Rónán Ó Domhnaill
An Coimisinéir Teanga
(Language Commissioner)
Matt Vickers
Ombudsman Services
Joanna Wallace
Independent Complaints Examiner
Donal Galligan
Chief Executive,
Ombudsman Association

Note: Biographies of Board members can be found on the [OA's website](#).

Validation Committee

The role of the Validation Committee is to advise the Board on whether applications for Ombudsman and Complaint Handler Membership should be approved. The Validation Committee's membership during 2021/22 was:

Chair

OA Vice-Chair:

Rob Behrens

(April-September)

Felicity Mitchell

(September-March)

Representing Ombudsman Members

Felicity Mitchell

Office of the Independent

Adjudicator (April-September)

Rosemary Agnew

Scottish Public Services

Ombudsman (September-March)

Independent Members

Dr Chris Gill

Dr Richard Kirkham

Kate Wellington

Biographies of members of the Validation Committee can also be found on the [OA's website](#). The Association is extremely grateful to all of the members of the Validation Committee for making themselves available as required.

MEMBERSHIP

Changes in Membership

There were several changes at 'office holder' level amongst the OA's members during 2021/22:

- **Ger Deering** was appointed Ombudsman and Information Commissioner for Ireland
- **Michael DeSilva** was appointed Ombudsman for Bermuda
- **John Edwards** was appointed UK Information Commissioner
- **Judge Rory MacCabe** was appointed Chair of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
- **Michelle Morris** was appointed Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- **Sharon Roulstone** was appointed Ombudsman for the Cayman Islands

The Chief Executive has continued to engage with a number of organisations and stakeholders in the UK, Ireland, the British Crown Dependencies and the British Overseas Territories who have expressed an interest in applying for OA membership, or in establishing an ombudsman in a sector where one does not currently exist, and further applications for membership are expected over the coming years.

Membership of the OA at 31 March 2022, as compared with a year ago:

Members	31 March 2021	31 March 2022
Ombudsman Members	30	30
Complaint Handler Members	19	19
Associate Members		
Corporate	1	1
Individual	27	21
Total	77	71



Members of the Association as at 31 March 2022

Ombudsman Members

1. Bermuda Ombudsman
2. Channel Islands Financial Ombudsman
3. Complaints Commissioner,
Turks & Caicos Islands
4. Financial Ombudsman Service, UK
5. Financial Services & Pensions
Ombudsman, Ireland
6. The Furniture & Home
Improvement Ombudsman
7. Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
8. Gibraltar Public Services Ombudsman
9. Housing Ombudsman Service
10. Legal Ombudsman, England and Wales
11. Local Government & Social Care
Ombudsman, England
12. The Motor Ombudsman
13. Northern Ireland Public
Services Ombudsman
14. Office of the Independent Adjudicator
for Higher Education
15. Ombudsman and Information
Commissioner, Ireland
16. Ombudsman, Cayman Islands
17. Ombudsman for Children, Ireland
18. Ombudsman for the
Defence Forces, Ireland
19. Ombudsman Services
20. Parliamentary & Health Service
Ombudsman, UK
21. Pensions Ombudsman, UK
22. Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
23. Property Ombudsman
24. Property Ombudsman: Scotland
25. Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
26. Rail Ombudsman
27. Removals Industry Ombudsman
28. Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
29. Service Complaints Ombudsman for
the Armed Forces
30. Waterways Ombudsman

Complaint Handler Members

1. The Adjudicator's Office
2. Advertising Standards Authority
3. An Coimisinéir Teanga
(Language Commissioner)
4. CEDR
5. Commissioner for Public Appointments
for Northern Ireland
6. The Financial Regulators
Complaints Commissioner
7. Greffier of the States of Jersey
8. Immigration Services Commissioner
9. Independent Betting
Adjudication Service (IBAS)
10. Independent Case Examiner for DWP
11. Independent Complaints Reviewer
(for HM Land Registry and Northern
Ireland Youth Justice Agency)
12. Independent Football Ombudsman
13. Information Commissioner's Office
14. Lay Observer for Northern Ireland
15. Northern Ireland Certification Officer for
Trade Unions and Employers' Associations
16. Press Ombudsman, Ireland
17. Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
18. The Dispute Service Limited
19. Welsh Language Commissioner

Corporate Associate Members

1. Bevan Brittan LLP

REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

The directors present their report with the financial statements of the company for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Directors

The directors shown below have held office during the whole of the period from 1 April 2021 to the date of this report.

- R Agnew
- R A Blakeway
- D A Galligan
- D W Melville
- S F J Mitchell
- J R Munton
- M J Vickers
- J J Wallace
- R O' Domhnaill

Other changes in directors holding office are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ A L Arter | resigned 10 September 2021 |
| ■ R F Behrens | resigned 10 September 2021 |
| ■ W Fennell | appointed 10 September 2021 |
| ■ K Grix | appointed 10 September 2021 |
| ■ M Kelly | appointed 10 September 2021 |

Statement of directors' responsibilities

The directors are responsible for preparing the Report of the Directors and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit of the company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Statement as to disclosure of information to auditors

So far as the directors are aware, there is no relevant audit information (as defined by Section 418 of the Companies Act 2006) of which the company's auditors are unaware, and each director has taken all the steps that he or she ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself or herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditors

The auditors, Bennewith 2018 Limited (Statutory Auditors), will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

On behalf of the board:



R A Blakeway, Director

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ombudsman Association (the 'company') for the year ended 31 March 2022 which comprise the Income Statement, Balance Sheet and Notes to the Financial Statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 March 2022 and of its deficit for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information in the Report of the Directors, but does not include the financial statements and our Report of the Auditors thereon.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Report of the Directors for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Report of the Directors has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Report of the Directors.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the directors were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemption from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report or in preparing the Report of the Directors.

Responsibilities of directors

As explained more fully in the Statement of Directors' Responsibilities set out on page two, the directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the directors determine necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the directors are responsible for assessing the company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a Report of the Auditors that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that are applicable to the entity and determined the most significant are those that relate to FRS 102 Section 1A, pension laws and regulations and tax regulations.

We assessed the risks of material misstatement in respect of fraud as follows:

- Enquiries made of management and those charged with governance
- Analytical procedures used to identify if there were any unusual or unexpected relationships
- Discussions with management to identify any fraud risk factors of related party relationships and transactions.

Based on the results of our risk assessment we designed our audit procedures to identify non-compliance with such laws and regulations identified above.

Enquiries were made of management and those charged with governance. We corroborated our enquiries through the review of Board minutes and other papers provided. There was no contradictory evidence.

We considered the risk of fraud through management override and, in response, we incorporated testing of manual journal entries into our audit approach. We tested year end journals as well as journal entries throughout the year. There were no transactions identified outside the normal course of business.

Based on the results of our risk assessment we designed our audit procedures to identify and to address material misstatements in relation to fraud. We incorporated an element of unpredictability in the selection of the nature, timing, and extent of audit procedures.

Where transaction meeting risk criteria were identified, we carried out further work such as additional testing to source information.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Report of the Auditors.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in a Report of the Auditors and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

A J Bennewith FCA, FCPA, FFA, FFTA, FIPA, DChA, FRSA
(Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of Bennewith
2018 Limited (Statutory Auditors)

3 Wey Court
Mary Road
Guildford
Surrey
GU1 4QU
6 September 2022

INCOME STATEMENT

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

		Year ended 31.3.22	Year ended 31.3.21
	Notes	£	£
Turnover		171,106	154,495
Administrative expenses		175,925	156,736
		(4,819)	(2,241)
Other operating income		292	1,789
Operating deficit	4	(4,527)	(452)
Interest receivable and similar income		6	53
Deficit before taxation		(4,521)	(399)
Tax on deficit			
Deficit for the financial year		(4,521)	(399)

Balance Sheet

		Year ended 31.3.22		Year ended 31.3.21	
	Notes	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets					
Intangible assets	5		24,079		48,153
Current assets					
Debtors	6	28,259		12,056	
Cash at bank		143,904		90,429	
		172,163		102,485	
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	7	59,603		9,478	
Net current assets			112,560		93,007
Total assets less current liabilities			136,639		141,160
Reserves					
Income and expenditure account			136,639		141,160

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors and authorised for issue on 6 September 2022 and were signed on its behalf by:



R A Blakeway, Director



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