

meeting of the industry steering group
(banking)
9 May 2013



present

from the banking sector:

Ashok Vaswani, Barclays
Antonio Simoes, HSBC
Ross McEwan, RBS
Charlotte Hogg, Santander
Alison Brittain, Lloyds Banking Group
Brian Cole, Capital One

from the Financial Ombudsman Service:

Sir Nicholas Montagu, chairman
Natalie Ceeney, chief ombudsman
Tony Boorman, decisions director

apologies:

Alison Robb, Nationwide

welcome and introductions

The chairman welcomed the group and thanked the members for attending.

complaints and moving forward

The ombudsman service is publishing its *annual review* in June and some of the main themes were highlighted by the chief ombudsman. She told the group that she was disappointed to see that complaints to the ombudsman service had risen across all areas in 2012/2013. It was explained that while the most notable increase was in PPI – which now represents three quarters of all the ombudsman service's workload – increases were seen in most other complaint areas, meaning there is significant scope for improvement from all major banks.

The group discussed the drivers of complaints. The chief ombudsman reminded everyone that complaints represented a good opportunity for financial businesses to gain insight in order to improve the service provided to their customers.

The group heard how the ombudsman service has recently piloted new ways of working, such as its PayPal project, where cases were resolved over the phone with the minimum of formality.

The group discussed the possibility of charging case fees according to the complexity of cases and/or the conduct of the parties. The new group charging structure provides a mechanism by which this might be considered in future.

The chief ombudsman set out her vision for transforming the way the ombudsman service handles complaints in the future – and its plans to look at new and innovative ways of working. As part of this, the ombudsman service is currently moving towards a paperless way of working, replacing traditional paper files with e-files. Businesses have been very supportive of this move and members of the group expressed enthusiasm for working with the ombudsman service as it moves towards the transition to e-files.

The group discussed options for new ways of working, including putting in place dedicated teams to resolve issues more rapidly and to ensure information is exchanged promptly. Complaints would be dealt with using the same “standards”. But there would be a greater emphasis on rapid resolution, particularly in the case of more routine issues. This would require flexibility and a new focus by both the ombudsman service and the banks themselves.

The group agreed that working together would enable decisions to be made more quickly – and enthusiastically supported the prospect of new ways of working.

next meeting

The next meeting will be held in six months.