

Executive Office - Correspondence Process

Letters

The Corporate Casework team open all post directed to the Chair/CEO, given that the majority regards casework. If it is marked private and confidential, it is passed to the Chief of Staff or PPS. All letters that are received are date stamped. If the letter is from an individual in relation to a casework issue, it will be taken forward by the Corporate Casework Team.

If the casework correspondence is from an MP, the PPS will be informed so that he can send an acknowledgement directly from the Chair by email along with the relevant corporate narrative, as well as brief the Chair on any relevant issues from the correspondence.

Non-casework Letters

If the correspondence is from an external stakeholder and does not regard a specific case, then it will be handed to the PPS (if it is for the Chair) or to the Chief of Staff (if it is for the CEO).

The CoS/PPS must then:

- **Consult** with the relevant department in the organisation upon receipt of the letter, before producing any response or acknowledgement.
- **Acknowledge** the correspondence by email, including information of who it is being sent to for action (if relevant) and date they will receive a response
- **Submit** to CEO/Chair with cover note detailing intended approach, including any further advice being sought (see cover note at Appendix A). Approach will usually be either:
 - a) Responsible Officer will respond on Chair/CEO's behalf
 - b) Responsible Officer will send through draft for Chair/CEO's signature, with cover note that details the outcome of the advice sought
- **Save** the original correspondence and acknowledgement in Meridio (if there is no relevant place in stakeholder files, then save in Exec Office Admin). If the correspondence has been shown to the Chair/CEO for comment/input then this must be recorded with the acknowledgement when it is saved in Meridio.
- **Ensure** that the internal responsible officer copies Executive Office in to their response (if being taken forward elsewhere) so you are aware of what action has been taken
- **Chase** the internal responsible officer if a response has not been sent within a reasonable timeframe, or if a draft has not been received for Chair/CEO signature

- **Save** the final response that is sent along with the original letter in Meridio

The CoS/PPS must not:

- **Respond directly** to any correspondence themselves or on the Chairs/CEOs behalf (unless in an exceptional circumstance that merits a simple response)

*Note: Executive Office will not necessarily acknowledge or respond to letters cc'd to the Chair and CEO - it will depend on the content. This will be cleared by the PPS/CoS on a case by case basis.

Emails

The Executive Office mailbox is no longer in use. All external emails to the Chair should be sent to the PPS - ppstochair@ombudsman.org.uk.

Emails regarding casework that are sent to the Chair/CEO are forwarded as appropriate by the PPS to:

- Corporate Casework Team - New enquiries or complex/high risk cases
- Customer Care Team - Complaints about our service/review requests
- Legal Team - FOI/DPA requests

If there is any lack of clarity around an email sent from a complainant, Executive Office must speak to the Corporate Casework Team to ascertain if there are any specific sensitivities around the case and to ensure that it is appropriate to acknowledge the email.

Emails from individual complainants are acknowledged by the Chair's team, and they are informed where their enquiry has been directed.

The Customer Care Team maintain a spreadsheet with updates on all the cases that have been passed from Executive Office to their team. The Chair should receive regular updates on this correspondence for assurance purposes.

If the Chair receives an email from an external stakeholder, then the same process should be followed as for a letter (above).

Appendix A – Cover Note (to Chair/CEO)

Correspondence Received:

Received From:

Subject:

Responsible Officer from whom advice sought:

Background:

Recommended next steps:

Additional Notes:

Comments: