

Summary of the procedure for resolving grievances

BTPS aims to resolve most queries and complaints in a fair and timely manner.

However, if you have had a complaint response from us but feel it has not been resolved to your satisfaction, a formal Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) is available.

The IDRP process enables grievances to be considered at the highest possible Scheme level - by the BTPS Trustee.

However, the IDRP process cannot be used to resolve any non-pension scheme issues, such as a dispute with your employer.

A detailed procedure for resolving grievances is attached with a brief summary below:

Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP)

Two stage process

There are two stages to the Scheme's Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP):

Stage 1 - Reference to the Secretariat to the Trustee of BTPS

Stage 2 - Reference to the Trustee

Stage 1: Referral to the Secretariat to the BTPS Trustee ('the Secretariat')

If our response to your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, the next step is to refer your complaint to the Secretariat. You can do this either by letter or by email.

Write to: Service Operations Manager, BTPS, Sunderland, SR43 4AD

Email: member@btps.co.uk
(please address your email to: Service Operations Manager)

In your correspondence you should state that you wish to invoke Stage 1 of the Scheme's IDRP process.

If you ask a representative to write on your behalf, we will need a signed letter of authority from you allowing us to release of information to that third party. If a complainant is unable to provide signed authority (e.g. because they are an infant or are incapacitated in some way), the representative should clarify the reasons why and provide appropriate supporting documentation.

Please include the following information when you contact us:

- Your full name, address, date of birth and national insurance number;
- The name and address of any representative acting on your behalf; and
- A statement as to the nature of the grievance or dispute. It is preferable if a personal statement is included (to the extent possible) even if a representative is acting on your behalf.

Next steps

We will confirm receipt of your IDRP application. You should usually receive this acknowledgement within five working days.

The details surrounding your grievance or dispute will be referred to the Secretariat, along with your statement describing the nature of the disagreement.

The Secretariat will normally ensure that you receive a written reply under Stage 1 of the IDRP within four months of receiving your complaint and within 15 working days of a decision being made. The reply will clearly state the decision that has been made about your complaint and will refer to any relevant Scheme Rules or legislation or explain the exercise of any discretion.

If the Secretariat is unable to give you a full written reply within four months, you will be provided with an interim reply stating the reasons for any delay and a date when a full response will be available.

Who can raise an IDRP complaint?

The law permits a range of individuals to make complaints under the IDRP, as set out below:

- A member of the Scheme.
- A widow, widower, surviving civil partner or surviving dependant of a deceased member of the Scheme.
- A surviving non-dependant beneficiary of a deceased member of the scheme. A non-dependant beneficiary is a person who, on the death of the member, is entitled to the payment of benefits under the scheme.
- A person who has ceased to be in one of the above categories or who claims to be in one of the above categories and the dispute relates to whether he or she is in fact such a person. If a complainant is in this category the complaint must be brought within six months of having ceased to have an interest in the scheme.

If the person the complaint relates to has died, his or her personal representative may make or continue the complaint. If the complainant is a minor or is not capable of acting for himself or herself, a family member (or other person who is suitable to represent him or her) may make, or continue with, an IDRP application on his or her behalf. A minor is a person under the age of legal responsibility. This is generally age 18 in the UK, although it may be 16 in some limited circumstances. In any other case, a complainant may nominate a representative to make or continue the application on his or her behalf.

Stage 2: Referral to the Trustee

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 reply from the Secretariat, you may ask for the matter to be considered by the Trustee. Such an application must be made to the Secretariat no later than six months from the date of the full reply under Stage 1 of the IDRP and you should explain in detail why you are dissatisfied with that reply.

Receipt of this second application will be acknowledged and a written reply will be sent to you at the earliest possible date. The Trustee's written reply will be sent to you within four months and within 15 working days of a decision being made. The response will include an explanation of how the decision was reached.

Impartial guidance

You may find it helpful to get in touch with the Money and Pensions Service. This is an organisation sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions. It aims to ensure that people throughout the UK have access to the information they need to make effective financial decisions over their lifetime.

MoneyHelper (previously The Pensions Advisory Service) is part of the Money and Pensions Service. Members and beneficiaries of pension schemes can contact MoneyHelper for a free, impartial, trusted guidance that is backed by the government.

Their contact details are:

Telephone: **0800 011 3797**

Website: **moneyhelper.org.uk**

Pensions Ombudsman

You can refer your complaint to the Pensions Ombudsman free of charge. The Pensions Ombudsman has been appointed under the Pension Schemes Act 1993 to investigate and determine any complaint or dispute of fact or law concerning a pension scheme. The Pensions Ombudsman deals with complaints and disputes which concern the administration and/or management of occupational and personal pension schemes.

The Pensions Ombudsman usually expects members to have made a formal complaint to the Scheme and followed the Scheme's IDRPs before referring the complaint to the Ombudsman's Adjudication Service. However, you can refer your complaint to the Pensions Ombudsman's Early Resolution Service at any time.

Contact with The Pensions Ombudsman about a complaint needs to be made within three years of when the event(s) you are complaining about happened — or, if later, within three years of when you first knew about it (or ought to have known about it). There is discretion for those time limits to be extended.

The address of the Pensions Ombudsman is:

The Pensions Ombudsman,
10 South Colonnade,
Canary Wharf
London
E14 4PU

Telephone: **0800 917 4487**

Email: **enquiries@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk**

Website: **www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk** (you can submit a complaint form online)