

APDO Association of Professional Declutterers and Organisers: Complaints Procedure

This document details the procedures APDO will follow in the event of a complaint being made about an APDO member.

Introduction

At APDO we take complaints about our members' conduct seriously. It is our policy to respond promptly to any complaints received and to investigate them in a way which is fair, proportionate, transparent and effective.

We will be outcome-focused in resolving any complaints and endeavour to resolve all complaints sensitively.

What you can expect from our handling of complaints?

You can expect us:

- To deal with your complaint fairly, sensitively, transparently and promptly
 - To treat you and your complaint with dignity and respect, and without discrimination
 - To keep your complaint confidential. The details of your complaint will be disclosed only to those members of the APDO Board actively involved in investigating it.
 - Any investigation carried out by APDO will involve only members of the board who are not party to your complaint and so can investigate objectively and without prior judgement.
 - We will always act fairly towards our APDO members and treat them in the same way that we treat you; fairly, sensitively and without discrimination or prior judgement.
-

Before you make a complaint

Before making a complaint about one of our members, it is important that you are clear about:

- exactly what you are complaining about
- what outcome you would like to achieve.

Not only will this help you in terms of pursuing your complaint, it will also help the other party and those investigating your complaint to understand your position clearly.

It would be helpful if you could identify:

- The exact circumstances e.g. who, what, where, when
 - What happened e.g. what was said or done, and by whom
 - What you think should have happened instead, or what you were expecting
 - What you would like to happen now e.g. what outcome you would like to achieve
 - Please also identify and collate any relevant documents or other information that might be useful in helping us investigate your complaint.
-

Process

Step 1 – Contact the APDO member directly

In the first instance, please direct your complaint in writing to the APDO member whose services you engaged and share with them the information detailed above. You need to follow Step 1 before bringing your complaint to us.

We expect our members to respond promptly to any complaint lodged with them. In most cases, we would expect the APDO member concerned to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction and agree a mutually acceptable outcome with you.

If your complaint is not resolved, please proceed to Step 2.

Step 2 – Contact the APDO Board

If you followed Step 1 but failed to reach a satisfactory outcome, you can contact APDO directly. Please submit your complaint to admin@apdo.co.uk and provide as much detail as you can.

Your complaint and supporting information will be passed to two designated board members¹, who will acknowledge your complaint in writing within 72 hours and contact the member concerned to tell them that we have received a formal complaint about them.

Investigating your complaint

The designated board members will need the following information about your complaint:

- The exact circumstances e.g. who, what, where, when
- What happened e.g. what was said or done, and by whom
- What you think should have happened instead, or what you were expecting
- What you would like to happen now e.g. what outcome you would like to achieve
- Any relevant documents or other information that might be useful in helping us investigate your complaint.

Once the designated board members have received and studied this information, they will contact the member concerned and request a formal response.

On receipt of the response, the designated board members will study both documents and all other supporting material submitted to them and will decide whether or not the complaint should be upheld and what sanctions, if any, should be imposed.

Informing you of the outcome of the Investigation

Once the investigation is complete, the designated board members will write to you and to the APDO member concerned to inform both parties of their decision.

¹ Designated Board Members: On receipt of your complaint, the APDO Board will appoint two board members to investigate your complaint. These will be board members who have no business or personal connection with the APDO member concerned.

Right of Appeal

If you do not agree with the decision reached by the two designated board members, you can make an appeal to the **Panel**².

If you wish to exercise this right, you must email admin@apdo.co.uk within 7 days of receiving notification of the decision and inform them of your wish to appeal to the panel. The admin team will then pass your complaint and all relevant documentation to the panel for their consideration.

The three board members on the panel will review the information and decide whether or not to uphold the decision of the two designated board members. The decision will be taken by majority vote.

Where the decision is upheld that will conclude the process and there is no further right of appeal.

If the panel does not uphold the decision reached by the designated board members, they will write to you and to the APDO member concerned and will substitute their own decision. This will conclude the process and there is no further right of appeal.

Vexatious, trivial or malicious complaints

When, following an initial investigation, a complaint is found to be vexatious, trivial or malicious, the complaint will not be upheld and APDO will refer back to the complainant and explain APDO's position. In this circumstance, there is no further right of appeal.

² The Panel: If you exercise your right of appeal, the Board will appoint three APDO board members who have not been involved in investigating your complaint, and have no business or personal connection with the APDO member concerned.