



The Dispute Service Competency Framework

Good practices, or 'competencies', are foundational professional strengths that help all caseworkers to do their job well. Competencies underpin the way in which a caseworker approaches a situation, driving their behaviour and guiding their level of success.

In delivering its consumer dispute resolution services, The Dispute Service seeks to adhere to, and where possible build upon, the competencies set out in the Ombudsman Association's Caseworker Competency Framework, which was created in 2018 and sets out what is considered to be good practice in the way in which a caseworker interact with others and make decisions.

The Dispute Service

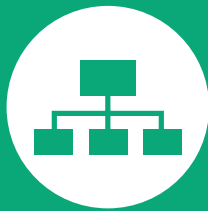
The Dispute Service supports its service users in many different ways.

A caseworker is a member of staff who has a direct role in helping to resolve a complaint or dispute. This includes staff members who give advice, carry out investigations and make decisions on cases.

Caseworkers at The Dispute Service can be distinguished into two groups: Administrative Caseworkers, who are those engaged in the administration of cases but also assist in resolving disputes at an early stage; and Adjudicative Caseworkers, comprising the adjudicators, conciliators and mediators, who carry out case investigations and evaluate the merits of cases in order to reach decisions.

Complaints or disputes referred to The Dispute Service may be resolved by mutual agreement between the parties, in which case users will have contact with perhaps an administrative caseworker. Alternatively, a complaint may involve a full investigative adjudication and assessment of its merits, where an adjudicative caseworker will be involved. Different caseworkers will become involved depending on the unique circumstances of each case.

An effective Caseworker is...



PROFESSIONAL

Organised, Responsive, Focused & Ethical



IMPACTFUL

Authoritative, Clear & Persuasive



OPEN-MINDED

Progressive, Collaborative, Resourceful & Impactful



CONSTRUCTIVE

Flexible, Pragmatic, Proactive & Resilient



APPROACHABLE

Inclusive, Empathetic, Engaging & Authentic



ANALYTICAL

Methodical, Questioning, Perspective & Reflective

Core Competency 1

ANALYTICAL

An effective caseworker critically examines information and issues to arrive at well-reasoned and appropriate decisions that stand up to scrutiny.

	METHODICAL	QUESTIONING	PERCEPTIVE	REFLECTIVE
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carries out tasks systematically. • Distils complex problems into manageable parts. • Gathers and assimilates information efficiently. • Engages with internal expert advisers where relevant. • Draws reasonable conclusions from complicated or incomplete data in making an initial assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks at problems and evidence with a critical eye. • Probes to identify the key issues, separating opinion from fact at the intake stage. • Actively listens and clarifies understanding. • Identifies knowledge gaps and seeks to address them, where appropriate. • Checks the meaning and source of information, where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers problems in their wider organisational and external contexts. • Identifies and reports trends across data and experiences. • Understands when to escalate issues or seek input. • Recognises the validity, relevance and limitations of different types of evidence. • Detects and guards against risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors progress against plans and objectives. • Identifies and learns from mistakes. • Measures and evaluates the success of a decision or approach. • Seeks feedback and acts upon it in a timely manner. • Considers how others within or outside The Dispute Service might benefit from learnings.
Adjudicative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carries out a systematic and detailed investigation of the evidence and law. • Distils complex information into manageable parts. • Understands and assimilates information efficiently. • Draws reasonable conclusions from complicated or incomplete data in making decisions. • Applies sound and comprehensive reasoning to reach logical decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks at problems and evidence with a critical eye. • Probes to identify the key issues, separating opinion from fact at the investigation and decision-making stages. • Identifies knowledge gaps and seeks to address them by requesting further evidence. • Checks the meaning and source of information where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers ‘the bigger picture’, looking at problems in wider organisational and external contexts. • Identifies and reports trends across data and experiences. • Understands when to escalate issues or seek input. • Recognises the validity, relevance and limitations of different types of evidence. • Detects and guards against risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors progress against plans and objectives. • Identifies and learns from mistakes. • Measures and evaluates the success of a decision or approach. • Seeks feedback and acts upon it in a timely manner. • Considers how others within or outside The Dispute Service might benefit from learnings.

Core Competency 2

IMPACTFUL

An effective caseworker uses their communication skills to influence a diverse range of people, building consensus and understanding.

	CLEAR	PERSUASIVE	AUTHORITATIVE
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses plain language that is easy to understand. • Communicates complex issues in a concise and straightforward manner. • Drafts documents in Plain English. • Provides explanations before misunderstandings occur. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusts communication tone and style to suit the audience. Presents information in a way that is evidence-based and convincing. • Strikes a sound balance between directness and diplomacy. • Communicates using appropriate methods and timing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates using appropriate methods and timing. • Quickly builds credibility. • Displays confidence in own ability and decisions. • Interacts confidently with others and appropriately articulates points of view. • Makes robust decisions, as appropriate for role level and case stage.
Adjudicative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses clear and plain language that is easy to understand for a consumer audience. • Avoids jargon where possible. Communicates complex issues in a concise and straightforward manner. • Drafts well-structured, comprehensible decisions in plain english. • Provides explanations before misunderstandings occur. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusts communication tone and style to suit the audience. • Presents information in a way that is evidence-based and convincing. • Strikes a sound balance between directness and diplomacy. • Communicates using appropriate language and tone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly builds credibility. • Displays confidence in own ability and decision-making. • Clearly explains the rationale for decisions or actions. • Interacts confidently with others and appropriately articulates points of view. • Makes robust decisions.

Core Competency 3

CONSTRUCTIVE

An effective caseworker successfully navigates changing and sometimes challenging environments to respond dynamically to service users' needs and achieve personal and organisational goals.

	FLEXIBLE	PRAGMATIC	PROACTIVE	RESILIENT
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusts priorities to reflect the demands of customers, both internal and external. • Shows awareness of how an approach impacts on others and adapts accordingly. • Embraces change and seeks opportunities to learn from it. • Responds nimbly to changing work practices and situations. • Is willing to take on new tasks or roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches sustainable initial assessments, taking into account their practical implications. • Provides usable results and outputs. • Undertakes initial assessments of appropriate depth relative to all the circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes initiative in achieving and improving outcomes. • Takes ownership of intake tasks. Thinks ahead and prepares for the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows tenacity in pursuing goals and managing workload. • Accepts that situations are sometimes uncertain and continues to strive for excellence despite this. • Knows when to ask for help and support. • Deals calmly with conflict and meets the challenges of difficult/complex complaints.
Adjudicative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carries out a systematic and detailed investigation of the evidence and law. • Distils complex information into manageable parts. • Understands and assimilates information efficiently. • Draws reasonable conclusions from complicated or incomplete data in making decisions. • Applies sound and comprehensive reasoning to reach logical decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks at problems and evidence with a critical eye. • Probes to identify the key issues, separating opinion from fact at the investigation and decision-making stages. • Identifies knowledge gaps and seeks to address them by requesting further evidence. • Checks the meaning and source of information where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers 'the bigger picture', looking at problems in wider organisational and external contexts. • Identifies and reports trends across data and experiences. • Understands when to escalate issues or seek input. • Recognises the validity, relevance and limitations of different types of evidence. • Detects and guards against risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors progress against plans and objectives. • Identifies and learns from mistakes. • Measures and evaluates the success of a decision or approach. • Seeks feedback and acts upon it in a timely manner. • Considers how others within or outside The Dispute Service might benefit from learnings.

Core Competency 4

APPROACHABLE

An effective caseworker creates an open and reassuring culture to earn the trust of others and generate confidence in the case-handling process.

	INCLUSIVE	EMPATHETIC	ENGAGING	AUTHENTIC
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treats others with courtesy, dignity and respect at all times. • Recognises diversity and difference. • Adopts an open and appropriate communication style. • Works to make the service accessible to all. • Contributes to a positive organisational culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees things from other people's perspectives, recognising and accounting for the barriers they might face. • Shows sensitivity, discretion and tolerance towards others. • Quickly builds trust and rapport. • Delivers difficult messages with tact and sensitivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches situations with enthusiasm, conviction and positivity. • Presents information on process in a way that fosters genuine understanding. • Uses relevant illustrations and comparisons to explain complex concepts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts with integrity, openness and honesty. • Leads by example. • Is sincere and candid in interactions with others. • Sets high personal standards.
Adjudicative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treats others with courtesy, dignity and respect at all times. • Recognises diversity and difference. • Adopts an open and appropriate communication style. Works to make the service accessible to all. Contributes to a positive organisational culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees things from other people's perspectives, recognising and accounting for the barriers they might face. • Shows sensitivity, discretion, and tolerance towards others. • Quickly builds trust and rapport. • Delivers difficult messages with tact and sensitivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches situations with enthusiasm, conviction and positivity. • Presents decisions in a way that fosters genuine understanding. • Uses relevant illustrations and comparisons to explain complex concepts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts with integrity, openness and honesty. • Leads by example. • Is sincere and candid in interactions with others. • Sets high personal standards.

Core Competency 5

OPEN-MINDED

An effective caseworker approaches problems and new ideas without prejudgement to generate fair solutions that maximise the potential of available resources.

	PROGRESSIVE	COLLABORATIVE	RESOURCEFUL	IMPARTIAL
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embraces innovation and looks for ways to get the most from new approaches. Identifies and suggests improvements to ways of working. Keeps abreast of relevant professional developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops strong working relationships and networks. Seeks input and insights from others. Works effectively in a team. Delivers timely and constructive feedback to others. Shares knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops options and considers alternatives. Weighs costs and benefits of possible approaches, taking into account the interests of all parties, to maximise the effectiveness of the process. Manages limited resources efficiently to achieve results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts with neutrality and objectivity. Is aware of how decisions are affected by unconscious bias. Is able to make difficult or unpopular decisions at the intake stages when necessary.
Adjudicative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embraces innovation and looks for ways to get the most from new approaches. Identifies and suggests improvements to ways of working. Keeps abreast of relevant professional developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops strong working relationships and networks. Seeks input and insights from others. Works effectively in a team. Delivers timely and constructive feedback to others. Share's knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops options and considers alternatives. Weighs costs and benefits of possible approaches, taking into account the interests of all parties, to maximise the effectiveness of the process. Manages limited resources efficiently to achieve results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts with neutrality and objectivity. Is aware of how decisions are affected by unconscious bias and openly interrogates decision-making processes to minimise its impact. Can make difficult or unpopular decisions when necessary.

Core Competency 6

PROFESSIONAL

An effective caseworker strives for excellence in all their individual and team endeavours to meet other people's expectations and deliver a high-quality service.

	ORGANISED	RESPONSIVE	FOCUSED	ETHICAL
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans and prioritises workload effectively. Follows relevant systems, processes and policies. Keeps complete and clear records of all interactions. Successfully manages interconnected processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers on promises and meets agreed deadlines. Responds to others in a timely manner. Demonstrates focus on impartiality. Operates at pace. Revisits plans when circumstances change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets objectives and has direction. Pursues personal and organisational goals with energy and determination. Shows commitment to and pride in high quality service delivery. Strives for continuous improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upholds The Dispute Service's values. Acts in accordance with fundamental principles such as fairness, equality and respect for individual rights. Pursues justice in both outcomes and processes at the intake stages.
Adjudicative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans and prioritises workload effectively. Follows relevant systems, processes and policies. Keeps complete and clear records of decisions. Successfully manages interconnected processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers on promises and meets agreed deadlines. Responds to others in a timely manner. Demonstrates focus on impartiality. Operates at pace. Revisits plans when circumstances change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets objectives and has direction. Pursues personal and organisational goals with energy and determination. Shows commitment to and pride in high quality service delivery. Strives for continuous improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upholds The Dispute Service's values. Acts in accordance with fundamental principles such as fairness, equality and respect for individual rights. Pursues justice in both outcomes and processes.



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