

## Case study

# The Motor Ombudsman: Making reasonable adjustments for a customer's accessibility needs

Ms L wanted to make a complaint to a business. Initially, Ms L did not highlight that she had any accessibility needs but, as her complaint escalated, she made the business aware that she could only communicate by phone and that if someone interrupted her whilst speaking, it would trigger certain mental and physical conditions. The business made some reasonable adjustments to allow Ms L to communicate with them but, eventually, the relationship degraded and resulted in Ms L causing physical harm to herself in a phone call due to being interrupted by the business' representative. After this point, communication was restricted and when Ms L tried to take things further, she was repeatedly told she had to put things in writing. Ms L became more frustrated and referred her complaint to The Motor Ombudsman.

The Motor Ombudsman considered the complaint within the provisions of their Code of Practice, which states that businesses must have in place an accessible arrangement for the handling of complaints taking into account the Equality Act 2010. The Motor Ombudsman found that the business had made some reasonable adjustments – for example, escalating the complaint further than their usual process would allow and providing Ms L with a single contact to ensure consistency. However, the business should not have asked Ms L to write to them when she had already told them she was unable to do so and the reasons why. Additionally, the business had failed to respect Ms L's reasonable request not to be interrupted and, in doing so, had caused her serious distress. The Motor Ombudsman found that the Code had been breached. The Motor Ombudsman made several recommendations to ensure staff were adequately prepared in handling these situations in future.