

Complaining about us

We welcome your comments

We welcome complaints as an important aid to continually improving our service and we are committed to living out the standards that we expect of others in the handling of complaints.

In considering complaints about us we aim to apply our Principles of Good Administration, which are:

- getting it right
- being customer focused
- being open and accountable
- acting fairly and proportionately
- putting things right
- seeking continuous improvement

How to complain about us

Who can complain?

Anyone who comes into contact with our service and is unhappy or dissatisfied can complain. For example, you may wish to complain about our decision on your case, about our service or about our decision on your Freedom of Information or Data Protection request.

Who do I complain to?

There are a variety of ways in which you can complain. You can:

- contact the member of staff with whom you have already had contact;
- contact that member of staff's manager (the [Helpline on 020 7217 4076](tel:02072174076) will be able to give you that information);
- write to the Deputy Ombudsman;
- call our dedicated 'complaints about PHSO' helpline on 020 7217 4076; or
- e-mail us at complaintsaboutphso@ombudsman.org.uk.

Is there a time limit for complaining?

We will do all we can to look into your complaint. However, under our records management policy, we destroy certain papers after a given period of time (usually 14 months after the conclusion of your case) and it may be that we are unable to investigate your complaint because of the lack of documentary evidence.

What happens to my complaint?

Once you have made a complaint to this Office, we aim to send you an acknowledgement within 5 working days. That acknowledgement will provide an indication as to who will be responsible for responding to you. That person will be either the Ombudsman or one of her appointees.

We will give serious consideration to the issues you raise. Where we identify mistakes in our earlier decision making or service we will acknowledge those mistakes and offer appropriate remedy.

We expect to respond to the majority of complaints within 16 weeks of the complaint arriving with us. The time taken to respond will vary depending on the urgency and complexity of the complaint. We will assess your complaint about us when it arrives and identify whether, exceptionally, it merits priority.

If we are unable to respond within 16 weeks because, for example, the matters you raise require more detailed work, we will let you know.

What if I still disagree?

Once the Ombudsman or one of her appointees has considered your complaint and sent you a response, their decision is final. We will acknowledge any further correspondence from you but, unless it raises new issues that we consider significant, we will not send further replies.

Can I appeal against the Ombudsman's decisions?

The Ombudsman's decisions can be the subject of judicial review proceedings and you may wish to seek legal advice on that matter. Applications for judicial review have to be made promptly (usually within three months of the decision).

If you remain dissatisfied with our decision on a freedom of information or data protection response, you can complain to the Information Commissioner. Further information can be found at www.ico.gov.uk.

To whom do I send comments, compliments and suggestions?

If you would like to send us a compliment, make a comment or suggest an idea about improving our service please contact the person who is handling your case. Alternatively you can e-mail complaintsaboutphso@ombudsman.org.uk or contact our special **Helpline** on **020 7217 4076**.