



# UK Central Government Complaint Standards



Consultation: What people  
said about the Standards  
October 2022

# The Complaint Standards



All **government organisations** must have a **policy** that says what they will do when someone makes a **complaint**.



**Government organisations** look after services like benefits, transport, passports, health and jobs.



A **policy** is a list of rules. It tells staff what they must do.



A **complaint** is when you tell an organisation you are not happy about something that has happened.



The **Complaint Standards** are about the important things an organisation should put in their policy.



All government organisations must have policies that follow the Complaint Standards.



This means all government organisations will handle complaints in a similar way.



The Standards can be changed a bit so that they work for each organisation.



## What we did

We asked people what they thought of the Complaint Standards. To ask people we used:



- a survey
- an Easy Read survey



- online meetings.



**167 people took part:**

- 77 members of the public
- 69 government staff
- 13 people from the **third sector**.



**Third sector** means charities, voluntary groups and **advocacy** organisations.



**Advocacy** is when someone helps you to sort out the problems that you need support with.



They support you to speak up for yourself or speak up to other people for you.

## What people told us



**9 in 10** people support what the Complaint Standards are trying to do.



**9 in 10** people said the **Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman** should tell people if organisations are meeting the Standards.



The **Ombudsman** looks into complaints about the NHS in England and UK government organisations.

They do this fairly, without taking sides.



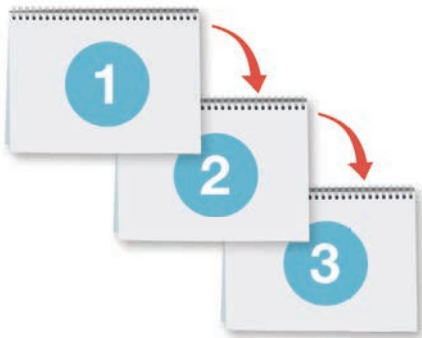
**7 in 10** people said the Ombudsman should be allowed to make sure organisations follow the Standards.

# The 4 main things people told us after they looked at the Standards:



## 1. Using the Standards

People asked for more information about how to deal with complaints. Things like:



- write an example **complaints procedure** that follows the Standards.

A **procedure** sets out the things that should happen when a person complains.

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- say how long it should take to get an organisation to sort out a complaint



- say what should happen if an organisation cannot sort out a complaint in time



- make a **diagram** that clearly shows what should happen when someone complains.

A **diagram** is a picture with words that shows how something works.



- if lots of people have the same problem, let them complain together if they want to.



## 2. Leadership

The Standards should:



- be clear about what senior leaders should do. They are important for making the Standards work well



- say who **senior leaders** are, and what they must do



Senior leaders should make sure staff want to learn to make services better.



This means things like:

- organisations learn from complaints and put things right



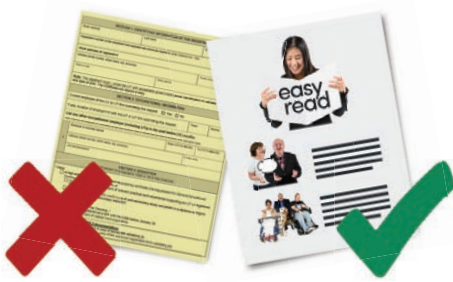
- organisations welcome complaints



- all staff get the time, training and support they need to deal with complaints properly

### 3. Communication

People said:



- there are too many words in the Complaint Standards. Make the language simpler. Use diagrams and plain English



- use real-life examples to make things clearer. For example, list the different ways people can complain



- help organisations to be open and honest when things go wrong



- explain what these words mean:
- protected time
- key parties
- regular updates
- where appropriate
- colleague with no prior involvement.

## 4. The Ombudsman

People told us that the Ombudsman should:



- give guidance, support and training about the Complaint Standards



- make sure that organisations are doing a good job of handling complaints.



We will check they are doing a good job by:

- collecting information about complaints



- writing reports every year.



Most people said the Ombudsman should be able to make sure organisations follow the Complaint Standards.

The Ombudsman would then be a **Complaint Standards Authority.**

**Good things about this:**

- every organisation would have to follow the Standards





- complaints will be handled better and in a similar way



- if complaints are not handled well, the Ombudsman could make the organisation sort it out.



### Bad things about this:

- it would need more people as it would be more work



- organisations who want to deal with complaints in their own way won't be able to



Parliamentary  
and Health Service  
Ombudsman



- the Ombudsman cannot become a Complaint Standards Authority quickly.

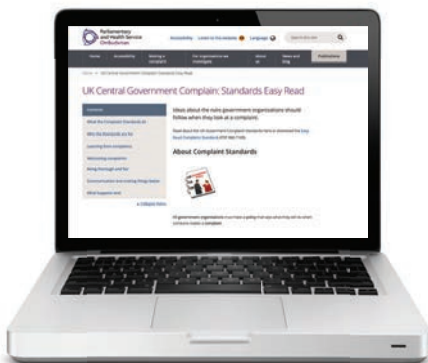


The law would need to change. This takes time.

We can still make changes while we wait for this to happen.



For more information about the Standards read the Easy Read guide.



Click on the blue words and it will take you to the Easy Read Standards.

[www.ombudsman.org.uk/uk-central-government-complaint-standards-easy-read](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/uk-central-government-complaint-standards-easy-read)