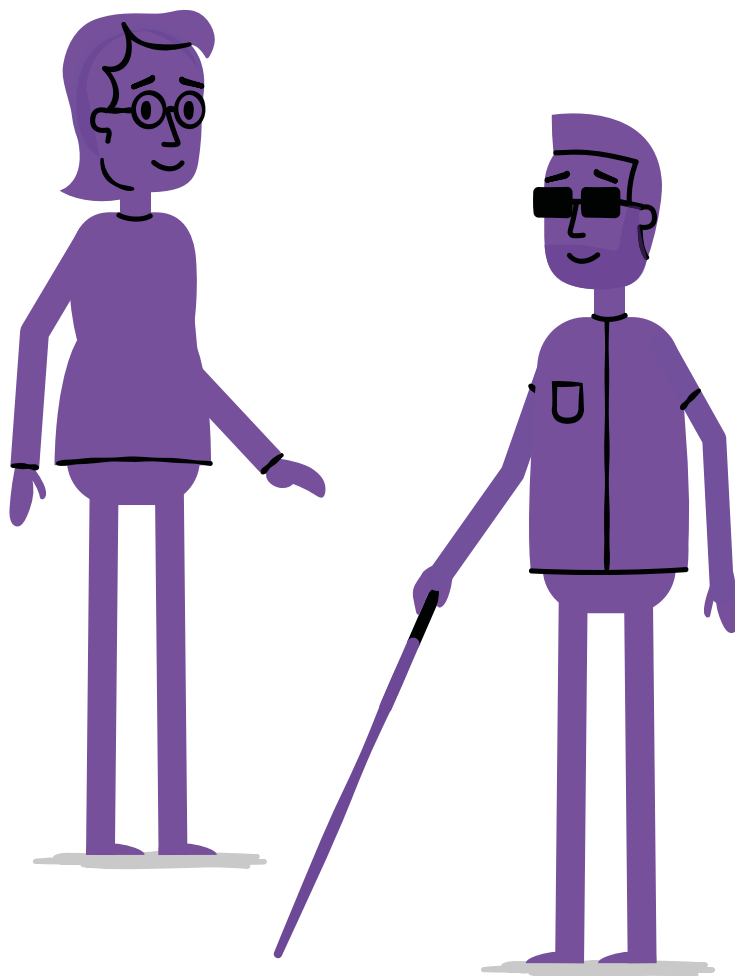
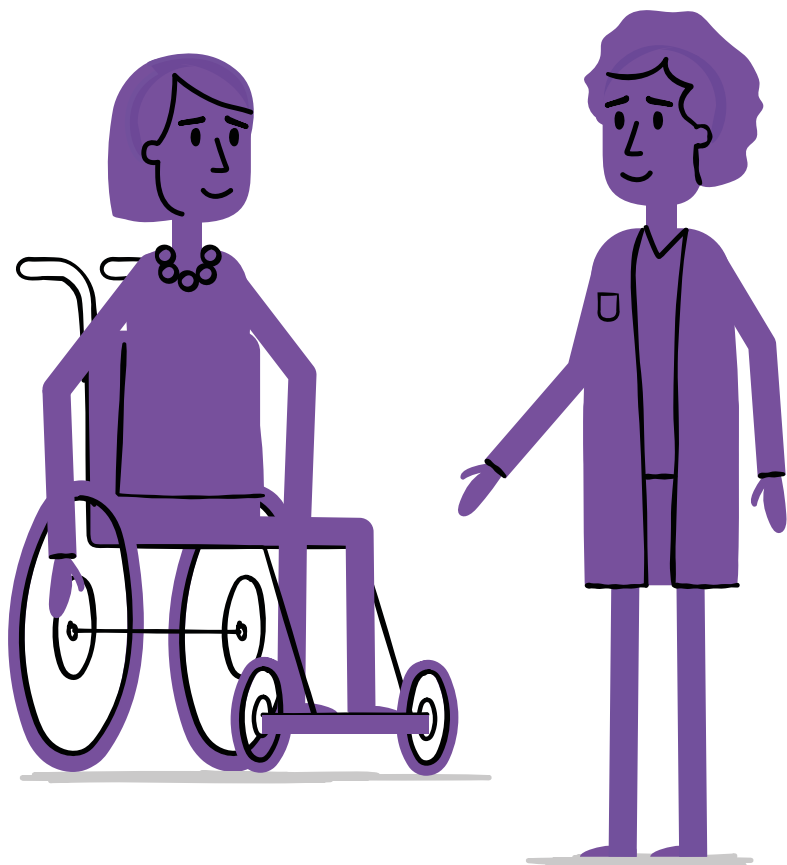


Help, support and advice for people who complain



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Welcome to this guide

This guide is one of the Good Complaint Handling series. These are designed to help you meet the expectations in the [UK Central Government \(UKCG\) Complaint Standards](#).

The guide sets out the different types of support that are available for people who want to make a complaint. It explains:

- when and how to signpost people to those services
- the value of those services.

Read this guide alongside the [UKCG Model Complaint Handling Procedure](#). You can find guides to related topics on our [website](#).

What standards and regulations are relevant to this guide

- The Complaint Standards set out expectations to help you deliver good complaint handling in your organisation.
- Relevant statutory and national guidance sets out other important requirements and guidance.

What the Complaint Standards say

Welcoming complaints in a positive way

- Organisations make sure service users know how to get advice and support when they make a complaint. This includes giving details of appropriate independent complaints support and advice providers, and other support networks.
- Organisations make sure colleagues can identify when issues raised in a complaint should be (or are being) addressed via another route at the earliest opportunity, so a co-ordinated approach can be taken. Other possible routes include appeals, reference or statutory review by a tribunal or action in a court of law or disciplinary process. Colleagues know when and how to seek guidance on such matters so they can give service users information on the relevant process and explain where they can get advice and support.

Other requirements and guidance

Government has published guidance to help you find more help for people who have raised a complaint. This includes:

- [A Modern Civil Service](#)
- [the Civil Service code](#)
- [the Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (the Nolan Principles)
- [Managing Public Money](#)
- [the Public Value Framework](#)
- [Delivering better outcomes for citizens](#)
- [Corporate governance code for central government departments: code of good practice.](#)

What you need to do

Everyone in your organisation needs to be able to tell people who wish to make a complaint where they can get help and support if they need it.

Colleagues should be aware of any help, advice or support that your organisation offers people, especially anyone from an under-represented or vulnerable group. They should be able to provide details and signpost service users to this help and advice.



Colleagues should also be familiar with, and have contact details for, any external help, advice, support or advocacy providers that can support your service users through the complaints process.



If your organisation has not already identified these sources of help and support, carry out research to identify them.



Establish a relationship with the main providers of help, advice and support for your service users, as they can be a valuable source of information about service user needs.



You should also ask them for feedback on your service and how you handle complaints.



Check that you have the right information about the help, advice and support available. Ask the organisations to give you:

- contact information that you can use to promote their service on your website and in any posters and information leaflets you have about your complaints process
- leaflets from, or links to, the help, advice and support service that you can include in your acknowledgments, so that the independence of that service is clear.



If appropriate, refer people who want to make a complaint to sources of support directly. Help people access any available support services quickly so they get help with their complaint as early in the process as possible.



Enable the early resolution of complaints by making sure that people who have raised a complaint are guided through the process and fully understand their options.

Specialist independent advice and support

People who complain may have to make difficult decisions, especially if there are other processes that may be an alternative to, or run in parallel, with a complaint. This may happen if the matter complained about involves appeal routes or legal issues.

It is important to recognise all the needs of service users who are considering making, or have made, a complaint in these contexts as they may need more specialist independent advice and support. You should tell them where they can find this.

People who are facing financial hardship may need practical advice on benefits or other financial matters as well as help with their complaint. Make sure you can give them details of where they might find help and advice.

Examples and case studies

The value of working with independent advocacy services

Case study: High Speed 2 (HS2) entered into an agreement with POhWER (an independent complaints advocacy provider) to support people who were impacted by HS2 services or who wished to make a complaint about HS2 and needed help to do this.

In one instance, two clients and their family were supported by a POhWER advocate. It was clear that the impact of HS2 construction work was causing and exacerbating existing health conditions and so an offer of temporary accommodation was made and accepted.

The client encountered some issues with the temporary accommodation, and, in discussion with their advocate, submitted a complaint. The advocate helped the client to make a clear and focused complaint that allowed HS2 to deal with the matter as quickly as possible and give a suitable remedy that was agreed by everyone. The client gave the advocate positive feedback and thanked them for their support.

Practical tools

A desk checklist with a list of organisations that can give support in specific situations or to particular groups.



You can adapt this to reflect your organisation and any charities or advice bodies that specialise in your sector.



Include contact details when you adapt the checklist.

Name of help, advice or support organisation and contact details	What it does
Age UK	Information and advice for older people: money and legal, health and wellbeing, care and support, work and learning.
Citizens Advice	Free and confidential advice online, over the phone and in person. Benefits, work, debt and money, consumer, housing, family, law and courts, immigration, health.
Law Centres Network	Offers legal advice on social welfare law: welfare rights, disability rights, immigration and asylum, housing and homelessness, employment rights, community care, discrimination, debt.
National Debtline	Provides free and independent debt advice over the phone and online.
Z2K	Supports London residents under 65 on a low income: benefits, housing, additional support.

If you would like this document in a different format, such as Daisy or large print, please contact us.

**Let's make
complaints
count!**

