

**UK Central Government Complaint Standards**

Organisational assessment tool

**April 2024**

# Introduction

1.1 This organisational assessment tool (see appendix A) is one of a number of supportive tools and guidance modules designed to help UK central Government (UKCG) organisations embed the [UKCG Complaint Standards](https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/organisations-we-investigate/uk-central-government-complaint-standards) in practice.

1.2 UKCG organisations operate across a diverse range of services and environments. This often means different interactions and relationships with their service users. Although these differences exist, responding to and learning from complaints is a common goal for every organisation.

1.3 The Complaint Standards seek to find a common approach to complaint handling across the UK Government sector that will help ensure a consistent experience for service users, while balancing that with the specific needs of each organisation. It is therefore important to recognise that every organisation will be on a different developmental journey in how they handle complaints and embed the Complaint Standards.

1.4 To assist, we have created an organisational assessment tool. This will help organisations assess which aspects of the Complaint Standards are already in place and working well, and which aspects will be new or unique. Overall, completing the assessment as a first step will help organisations identify and plan what they should focus on next to embed the Complaint Standards and continuously improve in this area.

# How to use the assessment tool

2.1 The assessment tool breaks down the core expectations in the UKCG Complaint Standards into different areas and sets them out in a series of statements. These statements describe a range of examples that an organisation would be able to demonstrate and evidence at five different stages of organisational development and maturity.

2.2 Each statement is created from the perspective of service users or organisational colleagues and describes what they would say about their experience in each key area.

# Maturity levels

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| **Maturity level** | **Description** |
| 1. None | An organisation that has not developed any approach to what is described, and so has not begun to progress in this area. |
| 2. Basic | An organisation that has begun to develop an approach to this area but is still at the very early stages of development. |
| 3. Early progress | An organisation that has begun to embed this area and is now looking at how it can continuously develop. |
| 4. Firm progress | An organisation that has developed lots of experience and has made good progress in embedding this area and is now looking at how it can become an exemplar. |
| 5. Mature | An organisation that has significant and proven development in this area and is an exemplar. The organisation is now looking at where it can make further adjustments to continuously strengthen its achievement. |

**What you should do**

2.3 You should work with colleagues from across your services and any relevant groups that represent and support your service users, such as service user groups and national or local help and advice services. Together, you can realistically assess current maturity against each key area of the Complaint Standards. This will help you get the best out of this assessment tool. You can use the form at appendix B to capture your assessment.

2.4 The statements are designed to help you approach your assessment from the perspective of your service users and colleagues: what would they say about your organisation in each area? You can use existing feedback or data to look at this in more detail. It is important to think about multiple perspectives and not rely on limited or individual assessments.

2.5 It is important to remember that this is not about assessing your performance. It is about being honest and reflective about what works well in your organisation at the moment and what requires development, then identifying priority areas to work on. Your organisation’s self-assessment will remain confidential and act as a guide or prompt for conversations about organisational development.

2.6 All organisations will have areas where they are already at a high level of maturity in relation to the Complaint Standards, and areas where more development is needed.

2.7 At the end of each section, reflect on what your assessment tells you. Does your assessment indicate that your organisation is already working at an acceptable standard? What areas of continuous improvement are there? What action should be taken? What should be an area of priority?

2.8 Once you have completed your ‘as is’ assessment, you should pause and use this information to discuss where you think your organisation can get to in the short, medium and longer term, in line with your planning processes. This should be discussed with colleagues from across your organisation. The Ombudsman’s Liaison Team will be happy to assist with those discussions (liaisonmanagers@ombudsman.org.uk).

2.9 These conversations will give you and your colleagues time and space to reflect on where your organisation is doing well and consider how you can continuously develop and over what timeframes. For example, you may score your organisation at the ‘early progress’ level on demonstrating openness, accountability, and freedom to raise concerns. Yet this may be an area of considerable importance to your organisation and you would like to do more to reach the ‘firm progress’ level in the next 12 months. This will help your organisation plan what needs to be done to reach that level over that timeframe.

2.10 At the end of your assessment, you will have a better understanding of areas of strength and development and what you would like to focus on or prioritise during a certain period. This can be used to set up realistic and achievable action plans to develop your organisation. It can also help you continuously strengthen your approach to learning from complaints.

# Where to go if you need help or more information

3.1 You will find all available Complaint Standards materials on the [Ombudsman’s website](https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/gcs).

3.2 If you need help or have any questions or feedback on this document, or any of the UK Central Government Complaint Standards materials, please contact the Ombudsman’s Liaison Team [liaisonmanagers@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:liaisonmanagers@ombudsman.org.uk). You can also contact the Liaison Team if you would like any help to embed the Standards in your organisation.

Appendix A

# UKCGS Complaint Standards: Organisational assessment tool

| **Promoting a learning culture** | | | | | |
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| **How all colleagues in your organisation promote and demonstrate a culture that openly welcomes complaints and is accountable when things go wrong.** | | | | | |
| Overall scope of assessment | | The assessment should cover:   * what colleagues and service users say about the organisation being open to receiving complaints * whether colleagues feel comfortable about being open and honest when mistakes occur * whether colleagues believe senior leaders take an active role in learning from complaints. | | | |
|  | **None** | **Basic** | **Early progress** | **Firm progress** | **Mature** |
| **Openness, accountability and freedom to raise concerns** | Colleagues never speak up if they think things have gone wrong.  Colleagues get no (or limited) training in handling complaints. | Colleagues say they have a basic awareness of the organisation’s complaints process and will signpost to it if asked.  Colleagues say they are asked to identify and raise concerns but say that this is seldom encouraged or seen in practice. | Colleagues are trained in complaint handling, speaking up and delivering the Civil Service Code (if applicable).  Managers get detailed training in encouraging their teams to raise concerns and how to act on them.  Senior leaders promote openness and transparency with all colleagues. | Relevant colleagues receive advanced training in complaint handling and operating in an open and accountable organisation, linked to the Civil Service Code and the Nolan Principles (if applicable).  Colleagues say the organisation welcomes feedback, is open and accountable, and learns when things go wrong.  Senior leaders are trained to encourage and act on colleagues’ concerns and have processes to do this.  The organisation can give some examples of openly using colleagues’ feedback on what went wrong during complaint investigations. | All new colleagues receive detailed training in complaint handling (relevant to their role), speaking up and how the organisation promotes a learning culture.  All colleagues undergo training on the Civil Service Code and the Nolan Principles (if applicable) and how they are practically applied to their service.  All colleagues say the organisation operates a learning culture. They say senior leaders regularly demonstrate an openness to learning.  Colleagues regularly identify and report to senior leadership on learning from complaints and are authorised to act on it. This includes feedback from colleagues about the impact any actions will have on service delivery.  Senior leaders regularly and visibly encourage all colleagues to speak up and demonstrate how this feedback is used to improve services. |
| **Supporting colleagues to learn from complaints** | Colleagues say they are not supported to learn from complaints. | Colleagues periodically receive general information about complaints learning relevant to them/their service area. | Colleagues are routinely involved in complaints that affect them/their role.  Some learning recommendations are made to support performance development. | Colleagues are always engaged in complaints that affect them/their role.  Colleagues are encouraged to reflect on all relevant feedback and what learning can be taken from it. This learning is turned into activity. | Colleagues are proactively engaged in individual and wider learning activities arising from complaints. Learning is fed into personal development activity and into wider improvement activities.  Colleagues are engaged in regular learning meetings to discuss complaint themes alongside their own experiences of service delivery. These meetings focus on the service user’s experience. |
| **Demonstrating a learning culture** | Colleagues have no knowledge or experience of what a learning culture is. | Colleagues have basic awareness/training in how their organisation acts as a learning organisation at entry-level/induction. | Colleagues receive training on how the organisation uses learning from complaints to improve. This training details how it applies to their role.  Training is provided at entry-level, with refresher training at regular intervals in their career. | Organisation-wide activity on embedding a learning culture is in progress, with demonstrable activities in place to act on learning.  Colleagues have developmental objectives that support the organisation to embed a learning culture approach within their role and within the organisation more generally. | All colleagues say the organisation is committed to being a learning organisation and can give examples of how this is done.  Colleagues say the organisation operates a learning culture in practice at all levels and regularly provides examples of how it has learnt.  Senior leaders demonstrate that they are committed to operating a learning culture through activities in their governance process and leadership style. |
| **Visibility of senior leaders** | Senior leaders have little or no involvement with complaints.  Colleagues say senior leaders often have a defensive response to complaints. | Senior leaders have limited involvement in complaints, often only getting involved if the issue is high-risk. | Senior leaders have regular involvement in individual complaints and oversight of qualitative insight arising from complaints. | Senior leaders are actively involved in identifying learning from complaints and making sure these are acted on. | Senior leaders are regularly and visibly engaged in complaints. They are responsible for making sure individual and thematic improvement actions based on learning are taken forward and completed.  Senior leaders routinely see data and feedback to monitor the impact of learning activity. They use this to make sure learning is embedded and that it addresses the issues raised. |
| **Listening and responding to complaints** | Service users have no confidence the organisation welcomes complaints or uses them as an opportunity to improve.  Service users say that the organisation is defensive/unwilling to learn from complaints. | Service users have limited confidence that the organisation listens and responds to complaints.  Basic complaints data is captured (number of complaints and action taken). | Service users can see examples of where the organisation has listened and used complaints to learn and improve.  Service users feel learning has had some impact on services.  Some feedback from service users on their experience of the complaints process is captured and reported. | Service users feel the organisation proactively responds to complaints and regularly demonstrates how it has used learning to improve services.  Detailed feedback is captured from service users and colleagues about their complaint experience. This is measured against relevant KPIs (for example, customer charters, values or promises) and reported to senior leaders. | Service users have regular interaction with the organisation about learning activity arising from complaints.  Service users have strong assurance the organisation always acts on complaints insight to improve.  Detailed feedback reporting processes are in place, based on relevant customer KPIs (for example, customer charters, values or promises). These include qualitative feedback from service users and colleagues – often via focus groups or interviews.  All results are shared with colleagues via workshops and are also published. |
| **Embedding a quality improvement culture** | The organisation has no effective oversight of complaints and other forms of feedback.  No data on complaints and improvements made, based on feedback, is shared with colleagues or published. | The organisation provides basic complaints data to senior leaders periodically.  Some data is shared with colleagues but is not published.  Limited activity is taken on quality improvement tasks based on feedback. | Regular reporting on complaints data (including learning insight) is given to senior leaders, alongside other feedback data.  Senior leaders use this data to set improvement actions where needed.  Reporting is shared with colleagues and basic data is given annually in a report. | Complaints, legal claims and other relevant data are regularly reported on at senior level, alongside service user experience feedback, via a standing improvement item.  This includes reporting on progress against improvement activity based on feedback.  The organisation demonstrates how this process leads to quality improvement activity. | Data on feedback, complaints, claims and service user experience is delivered as a quality report to senior leaders. This is often done via a quality committee (or similar) governance structure.  Actions arising from insight are added to the quality improvement (QI) programme of activity.  Senior leaders take individual responsibility for QI activity and report to the board (or equivalent) on progress.  Complaints, claims and service user experience teams sit under one QI directorate/division (where appropriate). |

| **Welcoming complaints in a positive way** | | | | | |
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| **How your organisation encourages service users to speak up if things go wrong or do not go as expected. This includes how your organisation demonstrates that it welcomes (and acts on) complaints and how easy it is to make a complaint.** | | | | | |
| Overall scope of assessment | | Assessment should cover what service users say about:   * whether your organisation is responsive to hearing from them if things have gone wrong or not gone as expected * whether they felt their complaint was welcomed, taken seriously, and acted on.   It should also cover:   * what colleagues say about whether they are encouraged to signpost service users to the complaints process * whether they are supported/trained to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. | | | |
|  | **None** | **Basic** | **Early progress** | **Firm progress** | **Mature** |
| **Advertising the complaints process and welcoming complaints** | No visible complaints process.  Service users say they do not know how to raise a complaint or had to go out of their way to find out.  The organisation does not reassure users that future services will not be affected if they make a complaint.  Service users say the organisation does not welcome complaints or make it easy to complain. | There is basic signposting to the complaints process, but it is not very visible across the organisation’s communication channels.  The language used to advertise the complaints process is confusing and/or complex.  Service users say they have some awareness of how to complain to the organisation.  There is limited service user confidence that their ongoing services will not be affected if they complain. | Signposting to the complaints process is given in all communications (and in all premises). Details of the process are given.  The language that advertises the complaint process is easy to understand and is welcoming.  Frontline colleagues are encouraged to remind service users about the complaints process.  Service users say they have a good awareness of how to complain and a basic understanding of what will happen if they do.  There is some user confidence that the organisation welcomes complaints.  There is some user confidence that ongoing services will not be affected if they complain. | There is visible and easy-to-navigate information on how to complain, with details of the process across all channels, including websites.    The organisation regularly reminds service users that it welcomes complaints.  Colleagues have a good knowledge of the complaints process.  Service users say they have a very good awareness of how to complain and a good understanding of what will happen if they do.  Service users are confident that the organisation welcomes complaints.  Service users are confident that ongoing services will not be affected if they complain. | Details of how to complain and the complaints process are visible and available in multiple formats/versions.  Colleagues are trained to proactively advise service users about how they can give feedback and help them make a complaint if needed.  Senior leaders actively promote the complaints process and welcome feedback from service users.  Service users say they have an excellent awareness of how to complain.  Service users are extremely confident that the organisation positively welcomes complaints, and that their ongoing service will not be affected. |
| **Accessibility** | The organisation offers very limited and inflexible routes to making a complaint.  The organisation has unclear or complex routes to complaining that are hard for service users to navigate.  No details are given on how to get help, advice and support to make a complaint or for any independent help or advice services that may be available.  The organisation does not actively consider requests for reasonable adjustments.  Service users say it is very difficult to make a complaint in a way that suits them. | The organisation only accepts complaints through a limited number of channels.  The organisation gives only limited/basic information about how to get help, advice and support to make a complaint and/or about any independent help or advice services.  Some service users are happy that they could make their complaint easily and in a way that suited them. | The organisation enables service users to make complaints through a range of channels.  The organisation provides information on how to get help, advice and support to make a complaint and/or on any independent support or advice services at the beginning of the complaints process.  Service users have a good level of satisfaction that they can make a complaint easily and in a way that suits them. | Service users can access a wide range of channels to make complaints based on the most common needs.  Online channels for receiving complaints are in place and are easy to use.  The organisation makes sure colleagues have up-to-date information on what help, advice and support (including any independent support or advice services) is available for services users when making a complaint, and regularly signpost service users to it.  There are above-average levels of service user satisfaction that they can make a complaint easily and in a way that suits them. | There is no ‘wrong way’ of making a complaint. The organisation will accommodate specific needs wherever possible at all stages of the process.  Online channels for receiving complaints are well established. Colleagues are trained to respond promptly to online feedback.  Colleagues provide tailored information on local and national independent support or advice services.  The organisation regularly engages with local (or national) support or advice organisations and collaborates with them to continuously improve the accessibility of their complaints process.  Service users are highly satisfied that they can make a complaint easily and in a way that suits them. |
| **Supporting colleagues complained about** | Colleagues are unaware of complaints made about them and are not involved.  Colleagues who are complained about say they are given no support or information.  Colleagues who are complained about say they never know what the outcome is. | Colleagues are asked for their views at key stages during the complaint handling process.  Colleagues say that they sometimes receive feedback from complaints made about them (or their area of work). | Colleagues are made aware of complaints that involve them at the beginning of the process and are asked for their views.  Some colleagues say they have a good level of engagement in complaints made about them or their area of work.  Some colleagues say they feel supported to engage with – and learn from – complaints made about them or their area of work. | Colleagues are engaged in the complaint process from the outset, supported to reflect on issues raised and involved in finding resolution.  Colleagues are given information on where they can get help and support throughout process.  Colleagues are satisfied they will receive support when a complaint is made about them.  Colleagues say they were fully supported to engage with – and learn from – complaints made about them. | Colleagues are always involved throughout the complaint handling process. They help to find a resolution to issues and to identify any learning.  Colleagues are always given an opportunity to input into emerging/initial views and final responses.  Colleagues routinely get access to internal resources for help and support during the complaint process, and to reflect on learning/insight.  Colleagues say the organisation fully engages them in complaints and supports them to be open and reflective at all times. |
| **Timescales** | No internal or external timeframes are in place. | Some internal KPIs on handling complaints are given to colleagues.  The organisation publishes basic KPIs on handling complaints on its website but does not publish data on performance. | The organisation provides detailed KPIs on handling complaints on its website, alongside periodic data on performance. | The organisation describes high-level KPIs to each incoming complainant and publishes performance data on website.  Colleagues are trained to plan and assess on a case-by-case basis how long it will take to look into and investigate issues. They share the estimated timescale with all key parties. | The organisation provides detailed KPIs for key stages in its complaints process. It captures detailed data on how it is performing.  The organisation regularly publishes data on waiting times, performance against KPIs and similar data on its website and through its annual reporting process.  Colleagues always provide tailored timeframes on each complaint, considering the complexity of the issues and the work involved. They keep all key parties updated on progress throughout the complaint handling process.  Colleagues always let parties know if the matter may take longer or can be resolved earlier. |

| **Being thorough and fair** | | | | | |
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| **How your organisation makes sure colleagues are properly trained and resourced to take a thorough, proportionate and balanced look into complaints. This includes making sure service users who make complaints and colleagues who are complained about are meaningfully involved and engaged throughout, that service users know they have been listened to and taken seriously, and that your organisation is committed to giving a fair, open and accountable response.** | | | | | |
| Overall scope of assessment | | The assessment should cover what service users and colleagues say about how thorough and fair the investigation into the complaint was, and how engaged people felt during the process. | | | |
|  | **None** | **Basic** | **Early progress** | **Firm progress** | **Maturity** |
| **Training and support for colleagues involved in complaint handling** | The organisation does not provide complaint handling training.  Colleagues say that they are not given any dedicated time to handle complaints. | The organisation provides colleagues with basic training in complaint handling. | Colleagues are given introductory training in investigative techniques, including resolution skills and effective communication.  Colleagues say they get recognition of the extra time needed to handle complaints. | Relevant colleagues get comprehensive training in complaint handling and periodic refresher training. There is also training on other procedures for resolving complaints.  Colleagues say they get sufficient time to handle complaints. | Colleagues have regular access to advanced, developmental training in dispute resolution and mediation skills. The organisation supports specialist complaints colleagues to achieve accredited/certified learning in this area.  Colleagues dedicated to complaint handling say they have the appropriate time and resources to investigate complaints. |
| **Complaints process** | The organisation does not have a complaints procedure. Complaints are dealt with ad-hoc. | The organisation has a basic complaints procedure that outlines the stages and broad requirements.  The complaints procedure is available on request. | The organisation has a complaints procedure that clearly defines roles and what is required at each stage.  The complaints procedure is published on the organisation’s website. | The organisation has a detailed complaints procedure coupled with guidance and behavioural competencies. It explains what is expected at each stage.  The procedure clearly aligns with UKCG Complaint Standards and/or relevant customer charters/values and promises.  Service users who complain are signposted to the procedure at beginning of the complaint. It is available on the organisation's website and in other formats. | The organisation has a comprehensive complaints procedure, aligned with relevant behaviours. It defines the key user-led outcomes for colleagues at each stage.  The organisation’s complaints procedure is designed to be flexible to meet different needs and adapt to the complexity of the issues raised.  Each expected outcome is defined and measurable. It aligns with UKCG Complaint Standards and/or their service’s customer charter/values and promises.  The complaints procedure is readily available in multiple formats and online. |
| **Meaningful engagement** | There is no engagement with the service user who has complained beyond acknowledgement and occasional updates.  Service users who complained and colleagues complained about say they were not involved in the complaint investigation and were not updated. | Colleagues engage with the service user to understand their complaint. They provide periodic updates on progress.  Service users who raise complaints and colleagues who have been complained about say they were not kept fully up to date during investigation. | Colleagues take time to listen to service users to understand the issues and plan how they will address those.  Colleagues engage meaningfully with the service user who has complained and with colleagues who have been complained about throughout the entire process.  Service users who complained and colleagues who have been complained about say they were kept updated on progress during the investigation. | Colleagues agree the scope of the complaint investigation with key parties and explain how they will look into the issues.  At key points in the investigation, colleagues share information and give opportunities to key parties to comment. Colleagues are open and transparent and take all comments into account.  Service users who complained and colleagues who have been complained about say they were involved at key points in the investigation. | Colleagues make sure they have a comprehensive understanding of the complaint issues and create a detailed investigation plan, sharing key points with the parties.  Colleagues share emerging views on relevant cases as a matter of course. They engage with all key parties to seek their input. Colleagues make sure all comments are considered before a final response is issued.  Service users who complained and colleagues who have been complained about say that they were meaningfully involved and engaged throughout the investigation. |
| **Strategic oversight and multi-service area or organisational complaints** | The organisation has no engagement between its service areas and with other associated organisations when dealing with complaints.  The organisation fails to communicate or collaborate with its associated organisations (where this is applicable) to make sure they are handling complaints consistently. | There is some contact between service areas and with other associated organisations, but individual complaint responses have limited reference to other service areas or associated organisations.  The organisation provides basic guidance and expectations to associated organisations (where this is applicable) to make sure they are aware of what is expected when dealing with complaints. | The organisation collaborates with others linked to the complaint issues to co-ordinate a response to the complaint.  The organisation has periodic meetings with associated organisations to review their complaints procedure and insight/learning from complaints they have received. | The organisation makes sure it identifies and engages meaningfully with all service areas involved in a complaint and with other relevant organisations. Together, they decide the best approach to the investigation.  The organisations involved agree who will take the lead in providing a response and agree how to best answer the issues raised.  Investigation plans incorporate activity in each service area and associated organisation to make sure they investigate all of the complaint issues.  The organisation has regular meetings with associated organisations to work and act on learning arising from complaints and service users’ experience. | The organisation proactively engages with all relevant service areas and other organisations to agree who will lead in providing a single/co-ordinated response to the complaint whenever possible.  The organisation agrees a co-ordinated plan and approach to multi-service area/organisational investigations and engages all the parties in this.  When acting as lead organisation, it engages with all other organisations to provide a single response that incorporates the outcome/findings from all others, whenever possible.  The organisation has a collaborative and meaningful relationship with all associated organisations (where applicable). They make sure they are fully involved and engaged in handling complaints, learning from insight and taking action to improve. The organisation captures this in its reporting on complaints. |

| **Giving fair and accountable responses** | | | | | |
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| **How your organisation makes sure colleagues give a fair, open and balanced response to complaints and takes accountability when things have gone wrong or services have had an unfair impact. This includes putting things right for individuals and supporting colleagues to use complaints to aid their development and continuously improve services.** | | | | | |
| Overall scope of assessment | | Assessment should cover what service users and colleagues say about the quality of complaint responses and whether they reflect an open and accountable approach to when things have not gone as they should have. This includes how your organisation acts to put things right and how it uses learning from complaints to support and develop colleagues. The assessment must also cover how your organisation uses learning more widely to make system-wide improvements to its service. | | | |
|  | **None** | **Basic** | **Early progress** | **Firm progress** | **Mature** |
| **Quality of complaint responses** | Responses lack detail or depth.  Responses fail to take individual views into account.  Service users say the response to their complaint did not adequately address the issues and their views were not considered. | Responses provide a basic explanation of what happened.  Responses refer to accounts from the service user who raised the complaint and others.  Overall, service users are satisfied that their response covered the issues. | Responses set out what happened and what should have happened.  Responses broadly consider evidence/information given by service users raising complaints and colleagues who have been complained about.  Colleagues sometimes share initial views on a complaint to seek comments before issuing a final response.  Colleagues sometimes use face-to-face meetings to discuss initial views and responses.  Service users and colleagues say they felt the response covered the issues and took their views into account. | Responses give a clear, balanced and empathetic account of what happened and what should have happened, based on relevant evidence.  Responses specifically refer to evidence provided by the service user raising the complaint and colleagues who have been complained about. They clearly set out how the organisation has used that evidence in coming to a view.  Colleagues share initial views on complex complaints, using face-to-face meetings where appropriate and take any comments received into account in their final response.  There is a good level of service user and colleague satisfaction that the response was thorough, objective, and fair. People say they felt involved in the process. | All responses are clear and objectively based on evidence. They refer to relevant legislation, standards, policies, procedures and guidance. Responses show empathy and use human factors analysis wherever needed.  Responses objectively describe accounts of what happened from the service user raising the complaint and colleagues who have been complained about. They clearly demonstrate how these accounts have been considered in coming to a decision.  Colleagues regularly share initial views on most complaints, using face-to-face meetings where needed.  Final responses always include comments from all parties involved. They demonstrate how these have been considered before reaching a final view.  Service users and colleagues are highly satisfied that the response was objective, fair and thorough. All parties agree they were fully engaged in the process. |
| **Openness and accountability** | Reponses are defensive and give inadequate explanations or remedy.  The organisation fails to take any accountability for any failings, errors or impact. | Responses give broad acknowledgement when things have gone wrong.  Responses demonstrate that the organisation takes some accountability. | Responses provide detailed acknowledgement of where things went wrong and include some consideration of the impact this had.  Responses demonstrate that the organisation takes overall accountability for what happens if things go wrong. | Responses give an open, detailed assessment of where things have gone wrong and the impact this has caused. They give a detailed account of the impact on the individuals concerned.  Responses demonstrate that the organisation takes clear accountability for what happened and recognises the impact this may have had. | Responses actively demonstrate transparency and openness. They take full accountability when things have gone wrong.  Responses also acknowledge any unintended impact of services, even when the service was provided correctly.  Responses provide first-hand accounts of impact on the service user, colleagues and any other relevant parties. |
| **Quality of remedy** | Responses are defensive. They only provide a general acknowledgement or apology if something has gone wrong and caused a negative impact.  No other remedies are offered or given. | When something has gone wrong, responses give a meaningful apology about specific issues when necessary.  Service users who have complained have limited satisfaction that the organisation gave a meaningful apology and appropriate remedy.  Remedies offered are not consistent and not in line with Managing Public Money guidelines, where applicable. | Colleagues are supported to look at how best to put things right in each individual case, if and when a negative impact is identified. They do this using a range of options for remedy.  Apologies given are always specific, meaningful and sincere and fully address the identified impact.  Service users are satisfied that the organisation gave an appropriate remedy.  The organisation makes sure remedies are consistently applied to the issues and are in line with Managing Public Money guidelines, where applicable. | Colleagues proactively identify and implement ways of putting things right in each individual case, with a view to resolving cases as quickly as possible.  Meaningful apologies are given in a variety of different ways (in writing and in person) that often include individual colleagues.  The organisation makes sure colleagues provide financial remedies wherever appropriate.  Service users are very satisfied that the organisation gave them an appropriate remedy.  The organisation monitors remedy activity across all of its service areas. It makes sure this is consistent and fully addresses the issues.  The organisation can provide assurance that remedial approaches fully comply with Managing Public Money guidelines, if applicable. | Colleagues have the confidence to put things right using a wide range of remedy options with emphasis on resolving cases as a default.  Colleagues who have been complained about are routinely involved in providing meaningful apologies and remedies. They are confident and happy to do that in person where necessary.  Remedies include systemic improvement activities that clearly link to the learning arising from the complaint issues.  There is very high satisfaction among service users that the organisation has given an appropriate remedy.  The organisation makes sure oversight of remedy activity is held at senior leadership/governance level. It continuously reviews whether remedy actions are appropriate and proportionate to the issues in hand.  The organisation reports on remedy activity within publication of its complaints data.  If a systemic remedy approach is required, the organisation makes sure there is a proportionate, fair and comprehensive process in place so service users can apply for (and receive) fair and efficient remedy to address the systemic issue in question. |
| **Acting on learning** | Learning is never identified.  Service users are not satisfied the organisation has identified and acted on learning arising from their complaint. | General learning points are noted in responses and some activity is taken forward.  Some service users are satisfied that the organisation has acted on learning arising from their complaint. | Suitable learning points are identified and details of how they will be taken forward are recorded and shared in responses.  Overall, service users are satisfied the organisation has acted on learning arising from their complaint. | Individual learning points (for both the organisation and colleagues) are identified and recorded. Details of how they will be acted on are given in the response.  Action plans are drawn up internally to monitor completion of any actions.  Service users have a good level of satisfaction that the organisation has acted on learning arising from their complaint.  The organisation carries out some thematic analysis of learning to identify any systemic improvements. | In its response, the organisation provides details of all learning points and what action will be taken at multiple levels. This includes what it seeks to achieve and how it will be measured.  Developmental learning activity that has been identified for colleagues is put in place and monitored. Action plans give details of milestones for completion.  The organisation keeps the service user involved and informed of progress on learning arising from their complaint, where possible.  The organisation regularly outlines internally and externally what learning it has taken from complaints and how it is putting it into practice.  The organisation regularly carries out thematic analysis of all learning points to proactively identify and action systemic improvements.  The organisation regularly shares learning outside the organisation to help promote continuous improvement.  The organisation combines learning from other routes (such as legal claims, tribunal activity and customer experience feedback) to carry out a comprehensive review of systemic learning. |

Appendix B

**UKCG Complaint Standards: organisational assessment form**

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| **To: [Set out details of who assessment will be shared with]**  **Completed by:**  **Date:**  **Proposed date of next assessment:** |

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| **Promoting a learning culture** | | | | |
| **Scope of assessment** | **Rating** | **Evidence to support rating** | **Development activity** | **Training and resource needs** |
| Openness, accountability, freedom to raise concerns | Eg None, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Mature | Eg Policies, guidance, data, activity already in place | Detail action required to develop to next level and any relevant target dates | Detail training and/or resources needed to embed or develop this area |
| Supporting colleagues to learn from complaints |  |  |  |  |
| Demonstrating a learning culture |  |  |  |  |
| Visibility of senior leaders |  |  |  |  |
| Listening and responding to complaints |  |  |  |  |
| Embedding a quality improvement culture |  |  |  |  |

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| **Welcoming complaints in a positive way** | | | | |
| **Scope of assessment** | **Rating** | **Evidence to support rating** | **Development activity** | **Training and resource needs** |
| Advertising the complaints process and welcoming complaints | Eg. None, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Mature | Eg. Policies, guidance, data, activity already in place | Detail action required to develop to next level and any relevant target dates | Detail training and/or resources needed to embed or develop this area |
| Accessibility |  |  |  |  |
| Supporting colleagues who have been complained about |  |  |  |  |
| Timescales |  |  |  |  |

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| **Being thorough and fair** | | | | |
| **Scope of assessment** | **Rating** | **Evidence to support rating** | **Development activity** | **Training and resource needs** |
| Training and support for colleagues involved in complaint handling | Eg None, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Mature | Eg Policies, guidance, data, activity already in place | Detail action required to develop to next level and any relevant target dates | Detail training and/or resources needed to embed or develop this area |
| Complaint process |  |  |  |  |
| Meaningful engagement |  |  |  |  |
| Strategic oversight and multi-service area or organisational complaints |  |  |  |  |

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| **Giving fair and accountable responses** | | | | |
| **Scope of assessment** | **Rating** | **Evidence to support rating** | **Development activity** | **Training and resource needs** |
| Quality of complaint responses | Eg None, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Mature | Eg Policies, guidance, activity already in place | Action required to develop to next level and any relevant target dates | training and/or resources needed to embed or develop this area |
| Openness and accountability |  |  |  |  |
| Quality of remedy |  |  |  |  |
| Acting on learning |  |  |  |  |