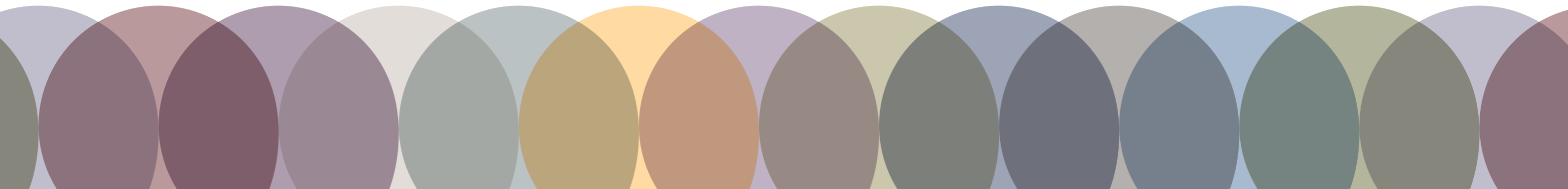


Complaints about UK government
departments and agencies and
other UK public organisations
2016-17



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Foreword from the Ombudsman and Chair

Parliament set up the office of the Ombudsman 50 years ago to provide remedies for individual citizens who have suffered injustice at the hands of the state. Half a century later, I firmly believe that the role of the Ombudsman, which I was privileged to take up in April this year, remains as important as ever.

The role that public services play in the lives of citizens are just as significant as they were in 1967 and when things go wrong, despite the quantum leaps in technology are arguably even more complex to navigate. We need an impartial, authoritative Ombudsman service that, as a last resort, can achieve justice when public services fail, and that can help drive wider improvements in public services by sharing the learning from its casework.

I am pleased to publish this annual review of our casework about government departments, their agencies and other UK public organisations in 2016-17. We handled almost 7,000 complaints about central government last year and completed a total of 524 investigations into 655 organisations. In 34% of our investigations we found in favour of the complainant and upheld the complaint.

The number of complaints we deal with is clearly very small when compared to the vast number of interactions central government has with its citizens and to the thousands of complaints that public services resolve successfully themselves every year. But, as this report and some of the short historic case summaries from the last 50 years that we have included show, when things go wrong, the impact on people can be very serious.

The purpose of this report is to shine a light on where public services have fallen short and to share our insight into how central government handles complaints and delivers public services. We want this insight to help organisations consider how they can use complaints data to improve their complaint handling and service delivery. We also want it to assist Parliament in holding public services to account for improvements in this area.

However, we do not only want to criticise public services when things have gone wrong. We

want to be constructive and encouraging and balance our criticism with examples of good practice, so that frontline staff can take pride when things go well or when we find that they have put things right in response to a complaint. Highlighting good practice that we see also enables frontline staff elsewhere to replicate this in their own organisations. Sitting at the apex of the complaints system and making final, impartial decisions on the complaints that come to us puts us in a unique position to do this.

Across the public sector, dedicated frontline staff are committed to resolving often sensitive or complex complaints and putting things right for citizens. We know that some would welcome greater support from the Ombudsman and from senior staff in their own organisations to support the challenges they face. I would like our office to do more to provide that support. We have recently published for consultation our draft objectives for a new 3-year strategic plan and I am clear that we must do more in this area as part of the final plan we publish.

This report also includes a summary of research we have carried out to better understand the extent to which Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) engage with complaints data to harness insight and organisational learning. Our research found that NEDs are more likely to use complaints data in organisations that provide public services directly, rather than through delivery agencies, and on a large scale. We also found that many NEDs have to balance a wide range of competing priorities and pressures; and that senior operational colleagues and executive boards may better be placed therefore to provide leadership on complaints, given their greater focus on the day-to-day performance of their organisation.

I hope this report and some of the examples of good practice and innovation we have identified serve as an encouragement for colleagues at all levels across government to value complaints and to use the insight harnessed from complaints to identify and inform improvements to complaint handling and service delivery in their organisations.

Rob Behrens CBE
Ombudsman and Chair
Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Introduction

Our role

We make final decisions on complaints that have not been resolved by the NHS in England and UK government departments, and some other UK public organisations. We do this independently and impartially.

The purpose of this report

This report sets out our insight into the complaint handling by UK government departments, agencies and other UK public organisations in 2016-17. We share this insight to help UK public organisations consider how they handle complaints and deliver public services and to assist Parliament and its select committees in holding public services to account for improvements in public service delivery and complaint handling.

Our process

As the last port of call in the complaint process, we are the final opportunity for people to get a decision on their complaint. Over the last few years and during the period covered in this report, we have used a three-step process for dealing with complaints, although not all complaints that come to us go through our whole process. Where we can, we will seek to resolve complaints earlier in the process and provide complainants with answers sooner, without the need for an investigation.

First step (intake): We conduct initial checks and gather some basic information about the person and their case, in order to work out whether the complaint is one we are able to look at. If it is not ready for us to investigate, we will signpost members of the public back to the organisation or to a relevant advocacy group.

Second step (assessment): Here we look in more depth at what has happened and decide whether we could or should investigate. There are some cases that we cannot look at, for example there is normally a time limit of a year on complaints, and we also need to consider whether legal action is more appropriate.

Third step (investigation): If after an assessment we decide that it is appropriate, we then begin a formal investigation. When we complete an investigation, we can fully uphold, partly uphold or not uphold the complaint. If we fully or partly uphold the complaint, we can make recommendations.

Our statistics

There are many different factors that influence the number of complaints we receive about an organisation, such as the specific function of the organisation, the nature of the services it provides and the extent to which it has direct interaction with the public. It is also important to recognise that where we see a considerable number of complaints about some departments, these numbers have to be seen in the context of the vast number of interactions that these departments typically have with their customers every year. Our report should therefore not be seen as trying to rank departments on the number of complaints that we receive about them; its purpose is to help organisations consider how they handle complaints and deliver public services.

It is also important to note that we introduced a new casework management system and a new methodology for recording the complaints that we receive in 2016-17. In the early stages of an enquiry, this only collects data on a 'lead body' not all the bodies that may be involved in a complaint, which will only be retained on our systems if a case passes the assessment stage. As a result, some key statistics, including the number of enquiries we received about specific bodies and the number of complaints that we assessed about them, cannot be compared year on year.

Complaints about UK government departments and agencies and other UK public organisations

Our casework in 2016-17

We dealt with **6,909 complaints¹** from members of the public



We fully or partly upheld **221 complaints (34%)** in 2016-17, compared to **276 complaints (37%)** in 2015-16.

Just **four** government departments and their agencies accounted for **73%** of the investigations we completed in 2016-17: **the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Home Office and HM Revenue & Customs.**

50 years ago...
The **Sachsenhausen** investigation in 1967 demonstrated powerfully the new Ombudsman's ability to hold government to account for injustice suffered by individual citizens at the hands of the state. The Ombudsman found that some former British servicemen held within the Sachsenhausen concentration camp by the Nazis during the Second World War had been unfairly treated by the Foreign Office when it rejected their application for compensation - a decision it reversed following the Ombudsman's report.

¹Please note that these figures are headline figures from our Annual Report 2016-17 and different from the totals provided on p. 48-49 in Annex B.


We assessed **1,451 complaints¹**



We completed a total of **524** investigations into **655** organisations in **2016-17**, compared to **676** investigations into **748** organisations in **2015-16**.

Reasons for upheld complaints

In 1 in 4 upheld investigations there were failures in decision making.



In 1 in 5 upheld investigations members of the public wanted a proper apology or action to put things right.



In 1 in 6 upheld investigations poor communication was a key factor.



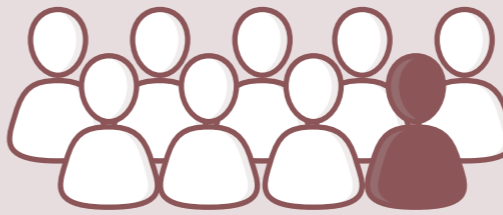
In 1 in 6 upheld investigations the organisation had made a wrong assessment.



In 1 in 8 upheld investigations delays were a key factor.



In 1 in 9 upheld investigations the organisation had arrived at an unsound conclusion or had used the wrong guidance.



42 years ago...
In 1975 the Ombudsman published an investigation into the collapse of the Court Line travel group which had left tens of thousands of holiday makers stranded abroad or unable to go on holiday. The investigation found that people who had booked holidays with Court Line on the assurances made by the Government on the continued viability of their holiday operations had been misled. As a result of the Ombudsman's report, new schemes were introduced to protect holidaymakers from similar failings in the future. In those early years, the report was also important because it furthered the reputation of the Ombudsman as being independent.

39 years ago...
In 1978 the Ombudsman strongly criticised the Government for failing to upgrade certain war disability pensions. In response, the Government introduced new, far-reaching guidance that set out the responsibilities of officials across government when dealing with changes to people's benefits and pensions.

Overview of complaints about UK government departments and agencies and other UK public organisations

In 2016-17, we handled 6,909 complaints from members of the public about government departments, their agencies and other UK public organisations, up from 6,174 complaints in 2015-16. We assessed 1,451 complaints to establish whether we could or should investigate them, a fall compared to 1,673 assessments in the previous year. The number of complaints that we formally investigated also fell year-on-year: we completed a total of 524 investigations into 655 organisations in 2016-17, compared to 676 investigations into 748 organisations in 2015-16¹.

In the context of our overall casework, only around 12% of our investigations last year were about UK government departments, their agencies and other UK public organisations, compared to 88% about the NHS in England. This marks a decrease compared to the previous year, when just under 18% of our investigations were about UK government departments, their agencies and other UK public organisations, and just over 82% were about the NHS. In absolute terms, the number of investigations we completed about UK government departments, their agencies and other UK public organisations fell from 676 in 2015-16 to 524 in 2016-17.

In contrast, the number of completed investigations about the NHS in England increased from 3,185 to 3,715 over the same period.

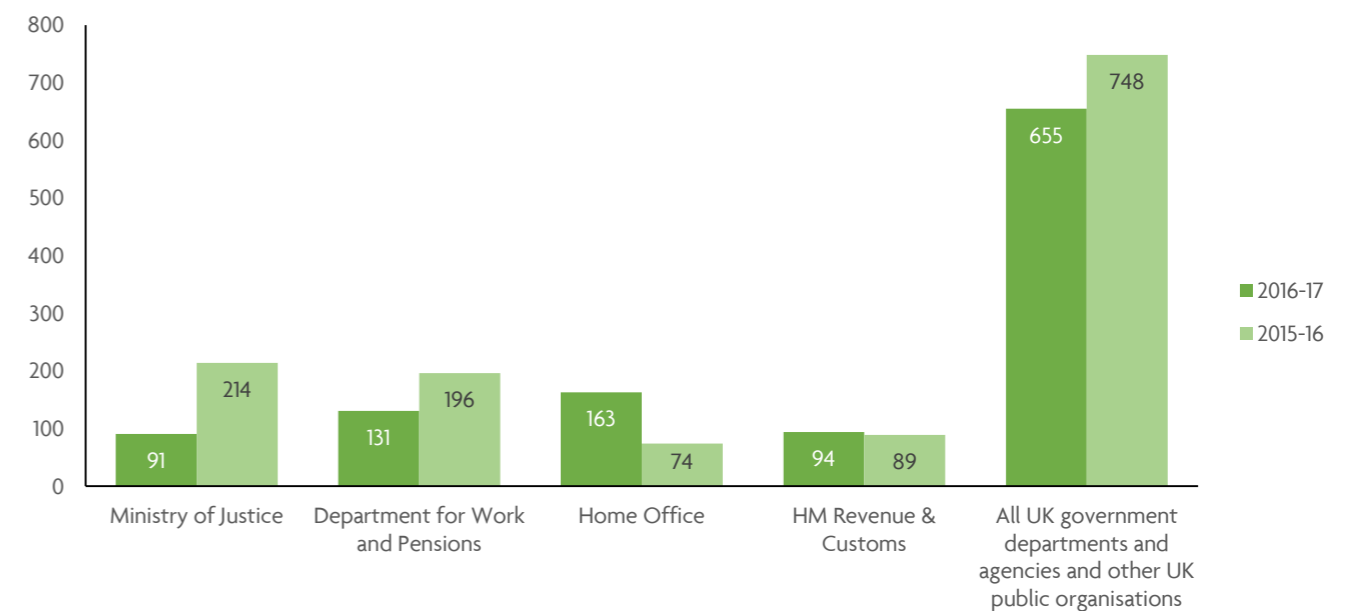
Departments that generate most complaints

As in previous years, just four government departments and their agencies accounted for almost three quarters of the investigations (73%) that we completed in 2016-17: the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Home Office and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

These departments all deliver public services on a very large scale either directly through the benefit, immigration and tax systems, or in the case of the Ministry of Justice, indirectly through agencies that deal directly with the public, such as HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) or the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (Cafcass).

In 2016-17, we handled 6,909 complaints from members of the public...

Number of completed investigations



Department	Number of investigations completed				
	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13
Ministry of Justice	91	214	348	116	38
Department for Work and Pensions	131	196	201	83	16
Home Office	163	74	158	60	20
HM Revenue & Customs	94	89	138	55	11
All UK government departments and agencies and other UK public organisations	655	748	981	460	105

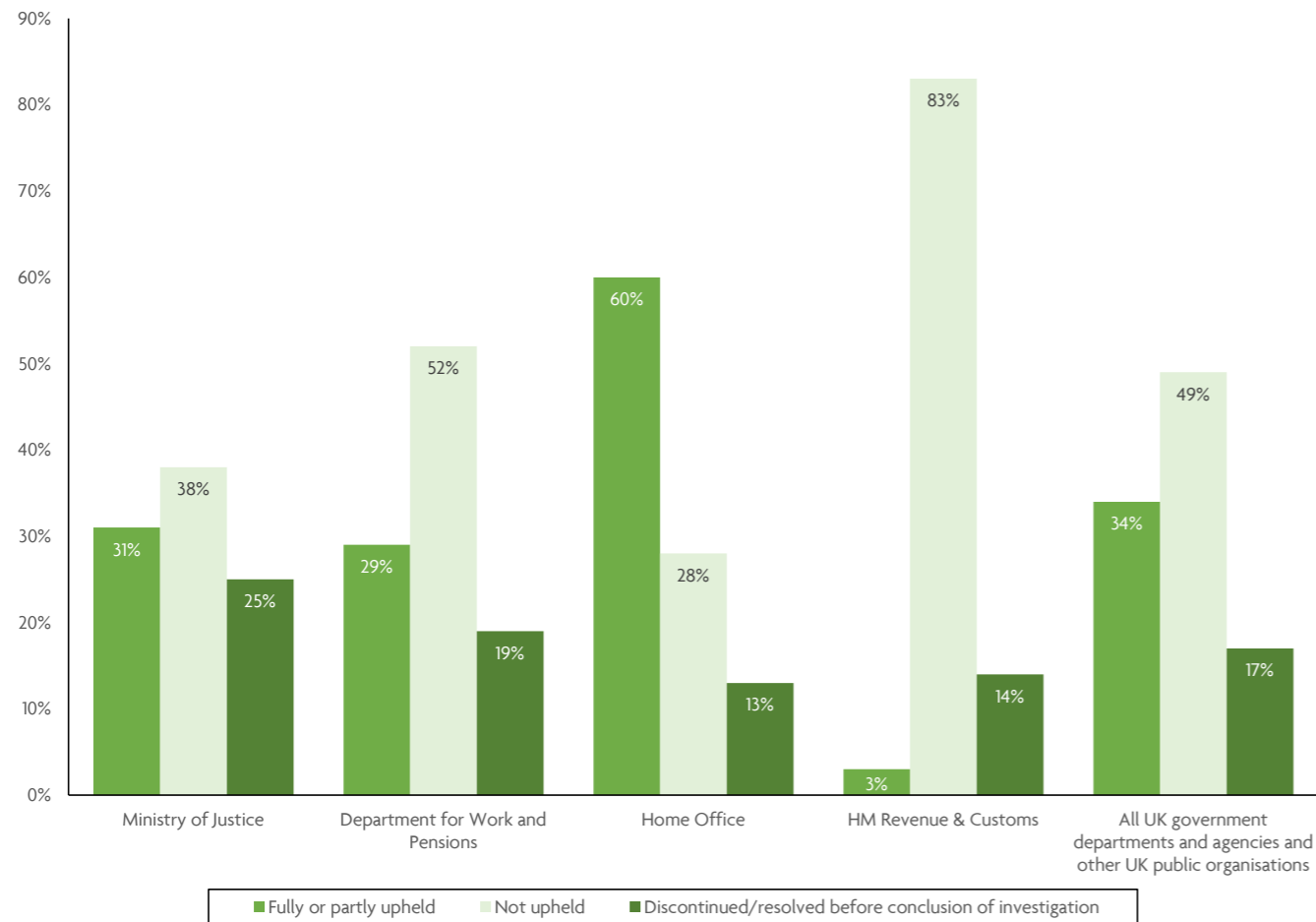
¹We use two different measures to record our investigations. Firstly, we record the number of complaints we have investigated in terms of complaints made by individual complainants. In 2016-17, these were our headline figures of 6,174 complaints handled, 1,451 complaints assessed and 524 investigations completed about government departments, their agencies and other UK public organisations. Secondly, we record the number of organisations that we investigated in these complaints to reflect the fact that some complaints relate to more than one organisation or business area. For example, if a single complaint from an individual relates to two separate organisations or business areas in a department, we count this information twice in order to get an accurate picture of what the complaint is about. In 2016-17, this was the figure of 655 organisations that we investigated.

Outcomes of our investigations

Overall, we either fully or partly upheld 34% of the complaints that we investigated about UK government departments, their agencies and

other UK public organisations in 2016-17. This is broadly consistent with recent years, when in 2015-16 we upheld 37% of complaints and in 2015-16, when the uphold rate was 33%.

Outcomes of investigations in 2016-17

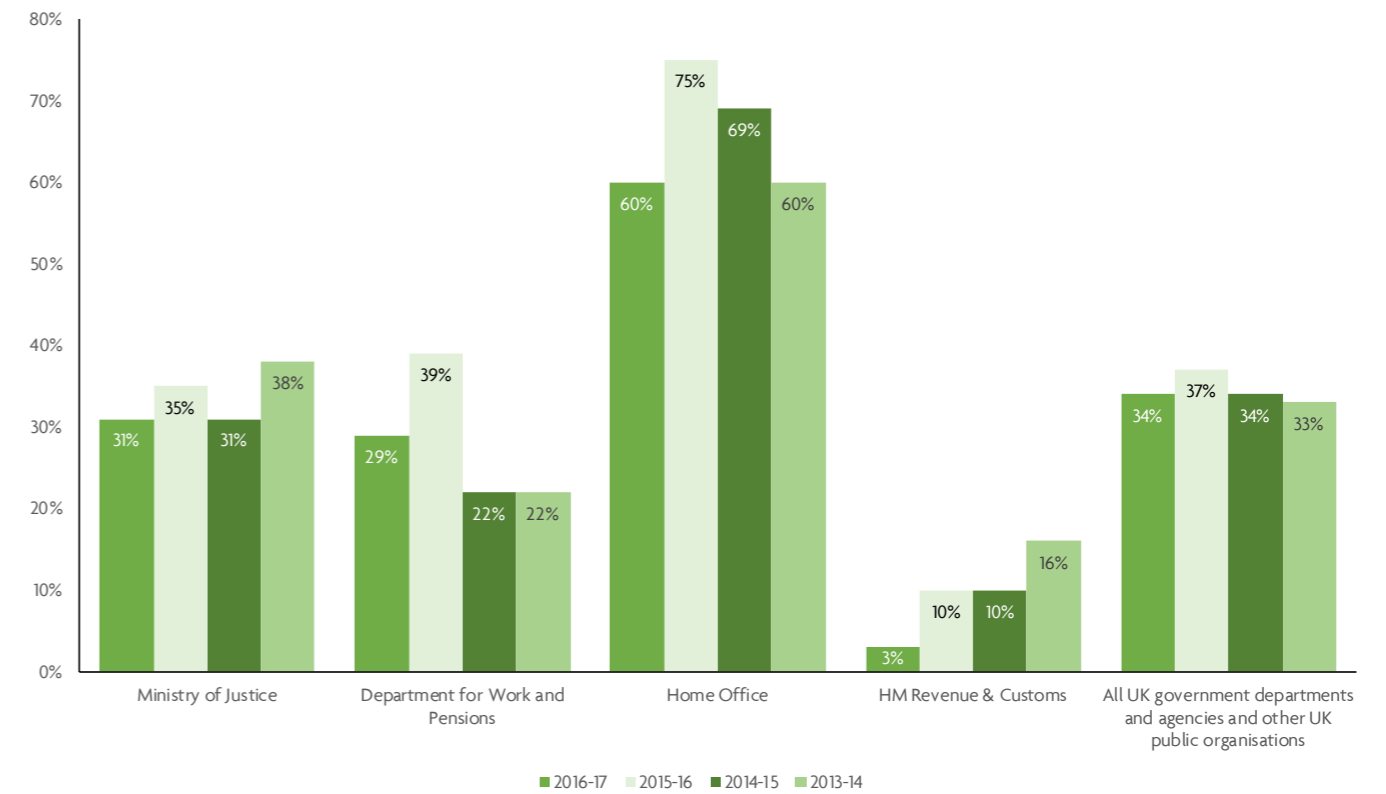


A closer look at the departments we investigate most shows that there is considerable variation in their uphold rates. While we only upheld 3% of our investigations of HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), our uphold rate for the Home Office stood at 60% in 2016-17. This variation can also be seen for different agencies within departments. For example, we upheld 31% of our investigations of the Ministry of Justice, but our uphold rate for the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (Cafcass), an agency of the department, was 50% and our uphold rate for HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS), another agency, was 44%. In

contrast, our uphold rate for the Prison and Probation Ombudsman, also part of the Ministry of Justice, was only 7%.

A factor that influences our uphold rate for both HMRC and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is that at both departments complaints go through an independent, second tier (the Adjudicator's Office for HMRC and the Independent Case Examiner for DWP) before they come to us. So we expect to uphold fewer complaints about HMRC and DWP, as these complaints will have been re-examined already at this second stage before they are escalated to us.

Changes in uphold rate



Reasons for complaints

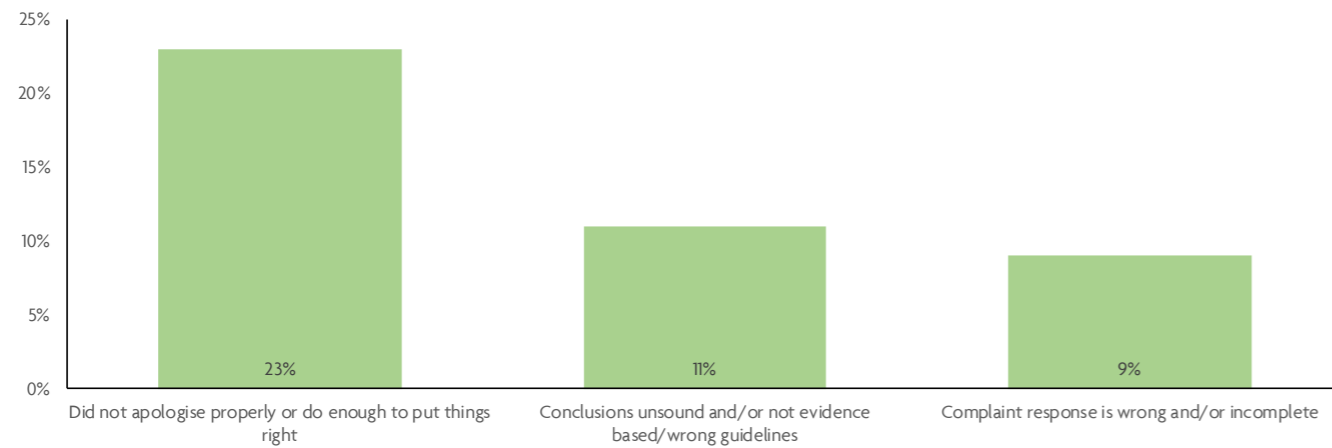
Our casework shows that there remains more that government organisations can do to deliver good complaint handling. Last year, almost one in four people (23%) escalated complaints to us because they did not feel that the organisation in question had done enough to put things right, such as giving a proper and genuine apology, acknowledging mistakes or providing sufficient

financial remedy. Other important reasons for bringing complaints to us last year were concerns that the organisation had arrived at an unsound conclusion, had used the wrong guidance or had given a response that was not evidence based (seen in 11% of our upheld complaints) and that the response to the complaint had been wrong or incomplete (seen in 9% of our upheld complaints).

28 years ago...

In 1989, the Ombudsman published a report about the Barlow Clowes group of companies which had gone into liquidation in the previous year, resulting in losses of an estimated £190m for around 19,000 investors. The report found that a lack of supervision by the Department of Trade and Industry had allowed the group to continue operating when it should have been closed down. While the Government at the time disagreed with the Ombudsman's assessment of what could be expected of a regulatory system and what liabilities a regulator should assume, the Government did agree to compensate investors, as recommended by the Ombudsman.

Most common concerns about handling complaints that were raised in the complaints we upheld about government departments, agencies and other UK public organisations, 2016-17



These figures suggest that organisations can do more to resolve complaints and improve their responses, so that complainants do not feel that they need to escalate their concerns to us.

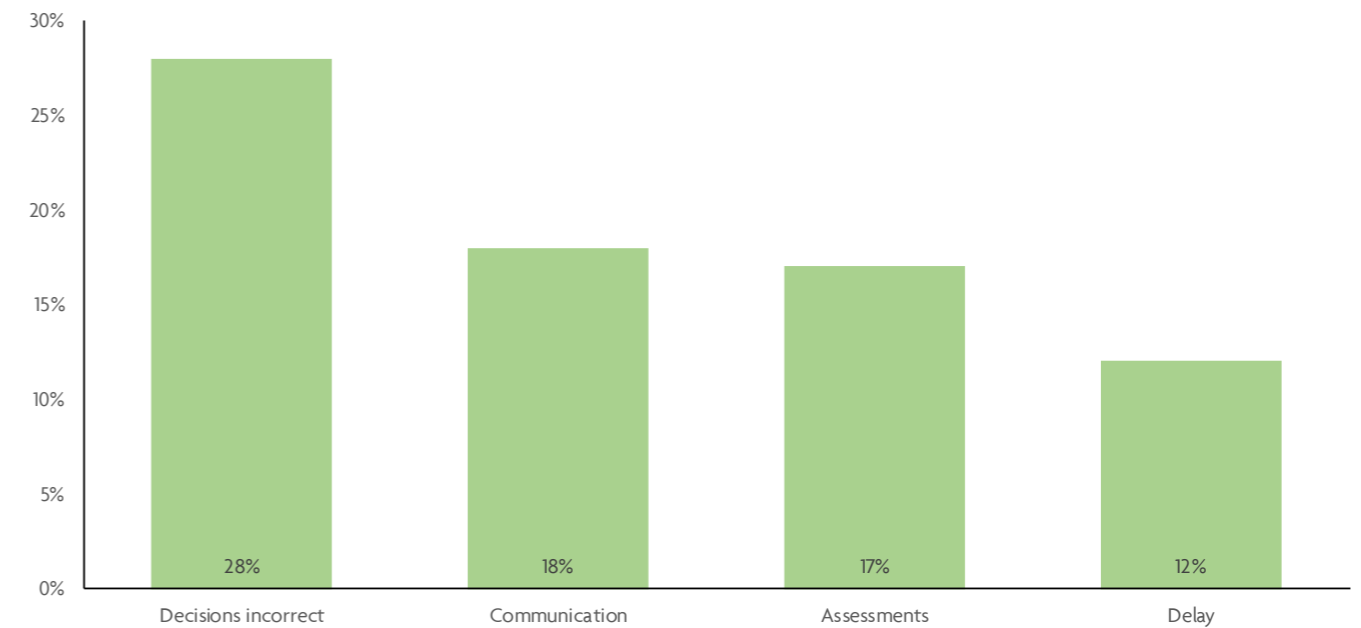
In particular, organisations should make sure that they:

- meet the requirements of any relevant complaints policies, including the *Ombudsman's Principles* and *My expectations for raising concerns and complaints*;
- clearly set out the issues raised in the complaint and what the complainant wants to achieve by complaining, how they have investigated these issues and what evidence they have considered;
- explain if something has gone wrong by
 - including an explanation of what happened (with reference to the evidence), and
 - an explanation of what should have happened, referring to any relevant regulations, standards, policies or guidance applicable to the case and whether they were met;
- set out clearly their view about the service provided and their reasons for every decision they have reached, in language that the complainant can understand;
- explain any shortfall that may have occurred between what happened and what should have happened and the impact this shortfall may have had;
- include, in situations where failings have been found that have caused an injustice or hardship, a suitable apology and offer of redress (including financial redress where appropriate), including explanations of what lessons have been learnt and how the organisation will put matters right for other service users;
- include, where appropriate, an offer to involve the complainant in the changes that will be made as a result of their complaint and a commitment to keep the complainant updated on action taken; and
- direct the complainant to the next stage of the complaints process or the Ombudsman, should they remain dissatisfied.

17 years ago...

In 2000, the Ombudsman published a report about misleading official information that had been given concerning the Inherited State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) and the entitlements that widows and widowers would receive. The Ombudsman's report resulted in the Government delaying and phasing in of new inheritance provisions to the benefit of those who had complained and many others who were equally affected.

Most common concerns about service that were raised in the complaints we upheld about UK government departments, their agencies and other UK public organisations, 2016-17



Our casework also shows which particular aspects of public services give rise to complaints. In 2016-17 the main reason why people complained to us about services provided by central government was that they thought the organisation had made an incorrect decision, including where it made a discretionary decision. These cases accounted for more than a quarter (28%) of the complaints we upheld in 2016-17. Complaints that we investigate in this area are often cases where the organisation concerned failed to take into account fully people's personal circumstances before making a decision that had a significant impact on their lives. This includes decisions on benefits, people's ability to drive, access to their children or their ability to travel or reside in the UK. We also see complaints about organisations making mistakes and providing poor responses when reconsidering their decisions after having identified themselves errors in earlier decisions.

Other important factors giving rise to complaints in 2016-17 were poor communication (18% of upheld complaints) and concerns about assessments, for example in relation to benefits (17% of upheld complaints), and delays (12% of upheld complaints).



Spotlight on good practice – Whitehall’s work to improve complaint handling and learning from complaints

There is work underway across Whitehall to encourage organisations and their staff to engage with complaints and to harness the learning from complaints to improve the services they deliver to the public.

We welcome this work and the leadership that a number of departments have shown in this area. Edward Troup, Executive Chair and Permanent Secretary of HM Revenue & Customs, in his role as the Government’s Complaints Champion, has encouraged public services to develop complaints ambitions for their organisations and to share good practice in managing complaints, including through the Cross Government Complaints Forum (CGCF).

The CGCF meets three times a year and provides a platform for complaints managers from across Whitehall to share experience and good practice. The CGCF has developed a set of complaints standards to help organisations identify their strengths and any areas for improvement in relation to dealing with and learning from complaints. We believe that the CGCF has been an effective platform for sharing experience and showcasing innovation. We support its work and would encourage public services to engage with it.

Given our unique insight as final adjudicator on complaints, many organisations have asked us to do more to share positive examples of where organisations have handled complaints well, have put things right for complainants or have been innovative in dealing with or learning from complaints.

For this report, we have asked organisations we investigate to share with us examples of work they have undertaken to better understand and improve the customer experience of complaining and to improve complaint handling and learning from complaints. We would like to share these examples to encourage other organisations to

be ambitious and innovative in their engagement with complaints.

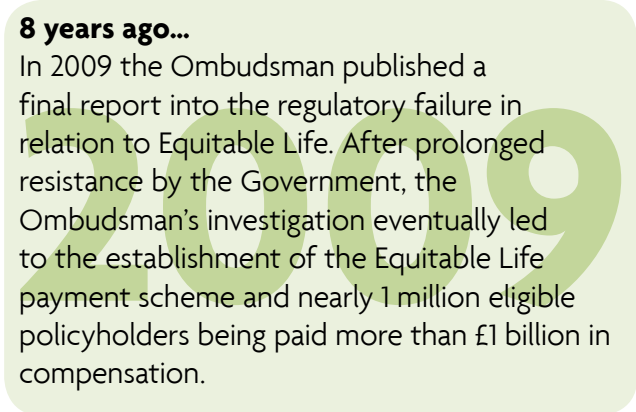
We would not expect the changes that these organisations have made to have been reflected in the complaints that we looked at in 2016-17. This is because of our role as the final tier and the time it takes for complaints to be escalated to us.



The CGCF meets three times a year and provides a platform for complaints managers from across Whitehall to share experience and good practice.



8 years ago...



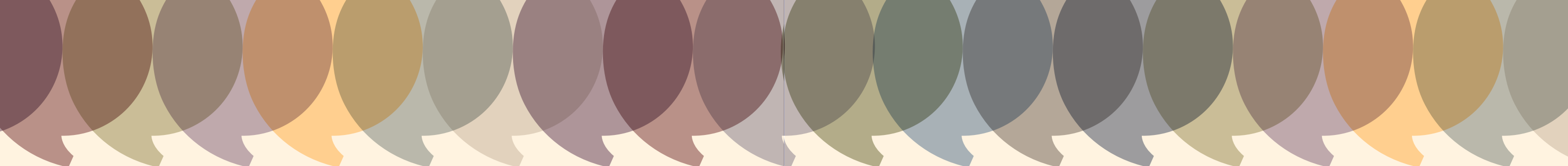
In 2009 the Ombudsman published a final report into the regulatory failure in relation to Equitable Life. After prolonged resistance by the Government, the Ombudsman’s investigation eventually led to the establishment of the Equitable Life payment scheme and nearly 1 million eligible policyholders being paid more than £1 billion in compensation.

HM Courts & Tribunal Service pilots a new analysis tool to generate greater insight and learning from complaints

HM Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS) has worked with academics in the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) to develop a new complaints analysis tool based on a concept initially developed by the university. HMCTS found that while complaints were recorded across its network of offices and there was an organisation-wide commitment to learn from mistakes, recording of complaints was not consistent and extracting learning from local, regional and national complaints information and sharing it across the organisation was challenging. HMCTS also wanted to encourage more analysis of complaints in local offices.

In 2016-17, a sample of anonymised complaints was coded using the LSE tool. This tool allows complaints to be recorded and analysed according to their severity, i.e. the impact the failings that gave rise to the complaint had on the complainant. The tool makes it easier to identify specific types of failings and at what stage of delivery of a public service they occurred. Initial findings, during the development phase suggest that HMCTS staff found it straightforward

to record complaints using this new tool and that there was a high level of consistency in the way they recorded the data. It is the intention that the tool can be used to produce insight reports on where and when problems have arisen in the delivery of HMCTS services. It can produce new insight on the impact of service failings (hotspots) and on issues that could not be identified using previous analytical tools (blindspots). As a next step, HMCTS is in the process of replacing its current customer feedback database, and the new way of coding complaints will be incorporated into the new system. Once it has been rolled out nationally, it is anticipated that using the new system will improve consistency in recording complaints across the organisation. It is also anticipated that it will facilitate analysis and help to generate insight using the complaints data, thereby improving HMCTS’s understanding of the consequences of complaints. This will make it easier for HMCTS to identify and address hotspots and blindspots in its service delivery and improve its response to complaints and its ability to put things right for customers.



HM Revenue & Customs promotes wider organisational listening to improve understanding of the factors leading to complaints and organisational responses to complaints

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) told us that they take issues customers raise very seriously and value the time customers have taken to get in touch with them. They said that responding promptly, accurately and empathetically to a customer making a complaint is fundamental to how they work. As well as the clear business benefits of a continuous improvement approach, many customers also want HMRC to correct underlying problems so that they do not affect other customers. HMRC say that they are committed to learning from what customers tell them, not just from complaints but from other forms of feedback too, where it is clear that customers are dissatisfied with the service they have received.

HMRC told us that while they are resolving more complaints successfully at the first point of contact, they are not complacent. They understand that the number of formal complaints they receive can be the tip of the iceberg; and that other customers may experience similar

problems but do not always make a complaint. HMRC say that their approach has been to make complaining to HMRC easier, by adding an online form for customers who prefer not to write or call them. But they say that they are going beyond learning just from the formal complaints they receive: they are drawing together the different sources of feedback such as their online surveys and social media. This provides them with broader insight which can help to identify where they need to improve. While it is early days, HMRC believe that the new approach is helping them to identify the warning signs that problems are occurring, and improving their speed of response to put things right. Seeing the common issues across multiple sources of contact also helps them to identify the trends more quickly. They can then ensure that coherent action is taken to address the problem and provide clear responses to customers, however they choose to get in touch with HMRC.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office links different sources of feedback to generate better insight into the customer experience

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) told us that in 2017 they initiated a review of their complaints process to consider what they could do better in line with the Ombudsman's *Principles of Good Complaints Handling*. Resulting changes included linking the complaints they receive to their customer satisfaction surveys, conducting a thematic analysis and collecting together the lessons learned by drawing on feedback received by their global network of embassies and consular offices. The FCO say that they have used this review to further strengthen their performance in dealing with complaints including through an improved two stage process which involves closer collaboration with all involved in the complaint handling. This ensures they provide more tailored responses for their customers and produce more comprehensive investigations where necessary. The analysis confirmed that their consular network had been routinely identifying and acting on lessons learned, including through improvements to guidance, training and processes. The FCO believes ongoing analysis will allow them to identify any trends that emerge and act to address those.

The FCO also shares and develops good practice through participation at the Cross Government Complaints Forum and they are introducing a lessons learned exercise for compliments to enable them to highlight good practice. They continue to work with their learning and development team to promote good case handling as a preventative measure, and have refreshed complaints handling guidance within core training modules so that all staff have the knowledge and skills to deal with complaints efficiently and effectively. As part of FCO Consular Directorate's ongoing customer insight work, they carry out key drivers analysis which allows them to understand the main reasons for customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and they share these findings with frontline staff as part of their cycle of continuous improvement. The FCO say that the Consular Directorate continues to see a gradual decline in the numbers of complaints received which they believe may be attributed to some combination of these measures.



Department for Work and Pensions revises process for complaints about staff

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) told us that they had taken seriously the criticism in the Independent Case Examiner's (ICE) Annual Report for 2015-16 about how they handled complaints against staff. Specifically, the ICE said that it was receiving cases where complainants were unhappy because not all of the evidence available had been considered, where their complaints were investigated but not properly documented, or where they were not told of the outcome of their complaint. In response to this,

DWP have changed the process for investigating such complaints, by assigning such investigations to an Appointed Investigation Officer who is independent and has not had any previous involvement in the complaint. An Accountable Officer (of a senior grade) will also oversee the investigation and ensure appropriate action is taken in response to any findings, with the overall aim of improving the quality of the internal investigations of complaints about staff.


Home Office revises complaint handling in its Immigration Directorates

The Home Office has told us that it has introduced more senior oversight and sign-off for their complaint responses at their Central Correspondence Team, which handles complaints about UK Visas and Immigration and non-Detention Estate Immigration Enforcement, to ensure that they are of the appropriate quality. At the same time, it has introduced new guidance for responses to complaints, systematic quality assurance and better case recording. The Home Office has also reviewed the online information available to the public about the complaints process, and further work is in progress to make more information available on certain types of service complaints, so that their process is more transparent and accessible.

UK Border Force has told us that they have streamlined their complaints process to provide a more efficient approach to workflow management focussing on case ownership, the cessation of paper files and more effective use

of the Complaints Management System. This has enabled Border Force to better align resources to demand and drive up performance to meet service standards.

In addition, a programme of work has been commissioned to help improve the quality of investigations and reports, which includes providing more ownership of complaints by operational areas and changing sign off procedures to match the severity of cases to ensure that the speed of complaint handling is better balanced against this. The ultimate aim has been to ensure that investigations are fair and thorough, that the issues in complaints are identified correctly; that responses to complaints are of a good quality and quality assurance is being conducted effectively; and that Border Force has mechanisms in place to learn lessons from complaints.



Leasehold Advisory Services introduces appointment system to reduce waiting times

The Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE) told us that a common issue their customers faced were unacceptably long telephone queues of up to an hour before they could get through to a LEASE adviser. While the queues did not usually cause customers to make a formal complaint about LEASE, they were a key source of frustration with the service provided by LEASE. In response to this, LEASE took the simple step of introducing a new

appointment based telephone service to resolve this issue during 2016-17. As a result, customers have gone from waiting an average of 48 minutes in April 2016 to just over 4 minutes in September 2017, a 92% improvement. Over the same period, the score that customers give in telephone surveys in relation to waiting times has increased from 2.9 out of 5 before the appointment system was introduced to 3.8, a 31% improvement.

The role of Non-Executive Directors in improving complaint handling and learning from complaints

Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) bring wide-ranging external experience and perspective to help their organisation achieve its strategic objectives. These objectives differ across each organisation. In central government, for example, they are usually driven by a combination of factors, including the priorities of the Secretary of State and the demands of any significant statutory obligations they must continue to meet within their financial settlement from HM Treasury.

For a number of years we have encouraged departmental boards, including their NEDs, to look at three areas to help them determine the customers' experience of the service they provide. These are:

1. The outcomes of complaints and whether there are any trends that need to be acted on.
2. The learning that can be harnessed from complaints and whether this has led to service improvements.
3. People's experience of complaining, including how the organisation performs against relevant service standards and what customers, the Ombudsman and others are saying about the public's experience of making a complaint.

In late 2016, we commissioned ICM Unlimited to interview the NEDs of government departments and arms-length bodies to understand the extent to which boards are using complaints data, the appetite to increase the use of complaints data and the barriers preventing NEDs from driving improvements in complaints handling within departments.

All departmental NEDs and many from arms-length bodies were offered the opportunity to take part in the research. Unfortunately, however, the participation rate was low (with 14 interviews conducted in total, 7 of which were with NEDs), with the pressure created by significant priorities

including Brexit and the re-organisation of government departments. While the findings of the research should therefore be treated with caution, some common themes did emerge that are worth considering.

What the research told us

In departments with a relatively small role in direct service delivery, or with strong priorities in other areas, the research showed that NEDs may have little regular engagement with any complaints data.

The research also indicated, however, that where a department has a high degree of direct engagement with members of the public, NEDs are more likely to see complaints data as a crucial area to track and measure at board level.

They are also likely to be aware of our office and those interviewed shared their thoughts on how we could better support their work. These included taking a more collaborative approach to sharing best practice and providing specific recommendations on how complaints handling could be improved. These are areas that we are considering as we develop our new strategic plan, which is due to be published next year.

Conversely, the research indicated that in organisations less focussed on direct provision of public services, NEDs are unlikely to be the most effective advocates of using complaints data to identify and inform service improvement. Where the public facing functions of a department are carried out by an arms-length body, it may be seen as duplication for the departmental board to consider the same information as the board of the arms-length body.

It was also noted that departmental boards meet infrequently and have many high impact priorities to consider, leading to limited capacity. Interviewees also highlighted that they have limited time and resource to devote to their role. As such, in departments where the existing

priorities do not focus on customer experience, NEDs may not be well placed to champion complaints data.

In these instances, the findings suggest that other audiences are more appropriate:

- **Executive boards** are responsible for the day-to-day running and performance of the organisation so could be well placed to integrate complaints into their overall customer focus.
- **Senior operational staff** are often highly engaged with complaints data and keen to apply learning from complaints to the wider organisation. The level of knowledge of complaints data and enthusiasm for its use amongst this group was of note.

Our view remains that organisations delivering services to the public should always seek to

harness the customer experience to identify service improvements. Complaints information is a core part of this. We are therefore encouraged that the research shows the boards of public organisations delivering significant services to the public are looking at complaints. While boards should, as a matter of best practice, consider complaints data, we also recognise the capacity of boards and NEDs in organisations without this front line focus is more limited in this respect given the wide range of other priorities and pressures they are trying to balance.

As indicated, we will also factor the findings from this research into our thinking as we develop our new strategic plan, including how we can best support public organisations, their boards and NEDs in their use of complaints information and share learning with them to inform improvements to their organisation's complaint handling.

Insight into selected government departments

Home Office

163 completed investigations in 2016-17, up from 74 in 2015-16.

We fully or partly upheld 60% of our investigations, down from 75% in 2015-16.

2016-17: 22 fully upheld and 75 partly upheld complaints.

2015-16: 11 fully upheld and 44 partly upheld complaints.

Drop in uphold rate across all immigration directorates and HM Passport Office.

In 4% of the investigations we did not uphold we found that the failures that gave rise to the complaint had already been put right by the organisation.

Concerns about decisions and delays were the key issues in complaints we upheld about the Home Office.

In 2016-17 we completed 163 investigations into the Home Office, more than double the number of investigations (74) we completed in 2015-16. This is in contrast to the overall drop in our investigations of central government in 2016-17.

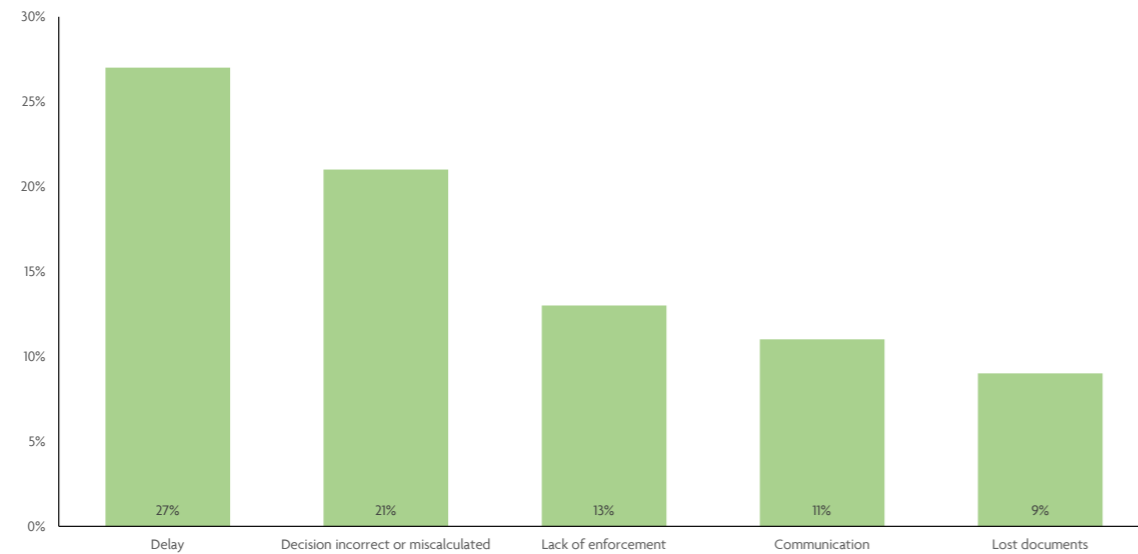
Over the same period, our uphold rate dropped from 75% in 2015-16 to 60% in 2016-17. This drop occurred across all three immigration directorates of the Home Office: the UK Border Force, UK Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration. The uphold rate also fell at HM Passport Service. Together these organisations and business areas accounted for 95% of all the investigations we completed in relation to the Home Office.

There is no single reason why there has been a drop in our uphold rate, although individual factors, such as the fact that we no longer see significant numbers of old, long-standing immigration complaints, which pushed up our uphold rate in previous years, will have played a part.

The key issues why people complained to us about the Home Office last year were delays (27% of all upheld investigations) and concerns about the way the Home Office made decisions (21%). Complaints in relation to decisions were not necessarily about the substance of the decisions themselves – we often see complaints where the Home Office recognised that it had made the wrong decision, but then failed to fully understand the often significant impact their error had on the complainant and subsequently did not do enough to put things right.

We also saw a number of complaints last year (13%) relating to how the Home Office dealt with concerns about marriage fraud. Complainants contacted us because they were concerned that the Home Office had not taken sufficient actions against their partners who they alleged had used deception to enter the UK. Our investigations of these cases found delays and other aspects of maladministration in the actions of the Home Office. We also identified problems in the way that Immigration Enforcement and UKVI communicated with each other in relation to progressing consideration of these allegations. We recognised, however, that the Home Office was developing its response in this area of work. We made recommendations in our investigations that were accepted about codifying their processes and ensuring evidence is properly maintained.

Most common concerns about service that were raised in the complaints we upheld about the Home Office, 2016-17



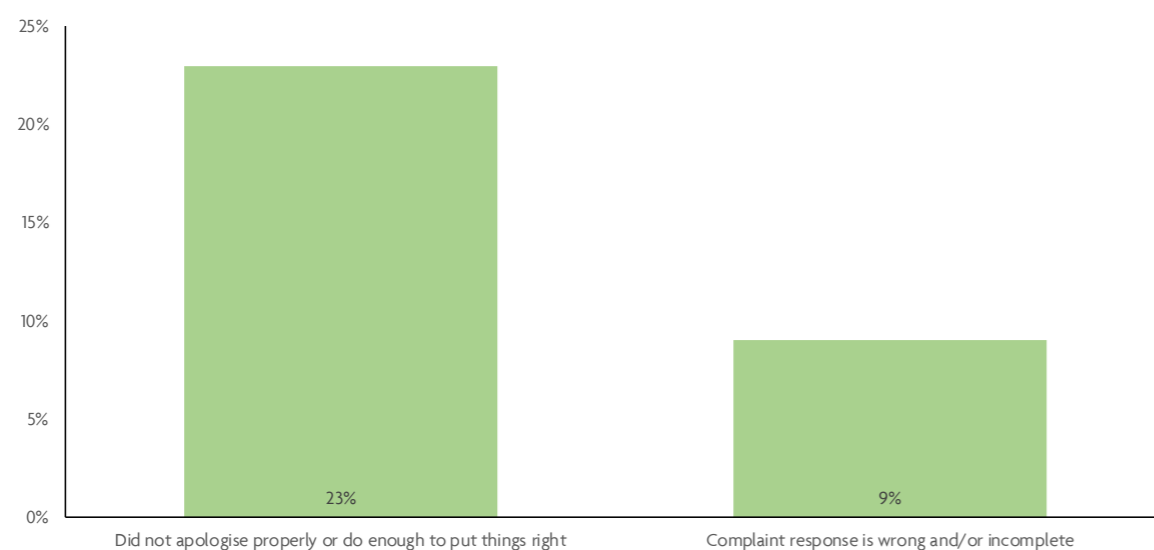
Our casework about the Home Office also shows that, although we see a very small percentage of the total number of the cases the department and its agencies handle, they can still do more to avoid complaints being escalated to us.

Looking at the way the Home Office handles complaints, the main reason why people escalated their complaints to us in 2016-17 was that complainants did not feel that the Home Office had done enough to put things right or apologise properly. This was the key factor in almost one in four (23%) of the investigations we upheld. In 9%

of the investigations we upheld the main reason for the complaint to us was that the response to the complaint had been wrong or incomplete.

These figures suggest that while the Home Office correctly identified failings in many complaints, it then did not put things right sufficiently for complainants. The department should aim to understand fully the experience of complainants, in particular the significant impact any mistakes may have had on them, to ensure that the appropriate redress, including financial redress where appropriate, is provided.

Most common concerns about handling complaints that were raised in the complaints we upheld about the Home Office, 2016-17



Case Study

UK Visas and Immigration's incorrect advice led to a series of injustices including an order to leave the UK

In April and May of 2014, Mrs T sought advice from UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) on whether her leave to remain in the UK would be affected if her husband, who is a British citizen, accepted a job offer overseas. Mrs T was assured that there would be no effect on her immigration status, provided they could prove their relationship was subsisting.

Having obtained this advice, Mrs T's husband accepted the job in June 2014. Mrs T remained and continued to work in the UK. In December of that year, Mrs T visited her husband overseas for Christmas and New Year. At the end of that visit Mrs T and her husband spent a few days together on holiday in the Middle East.

Mrs T returned to the UK from the Middle East on 3 January 2015 but was detained at Gatwick Airport by Border Force. She was held for 12 hours whilst Border Force examined her status, which included interviews and searches of Mrs T's baggage. Border Force concluded that as Mrs T was not entering the UK to live with her husband, and as he was not physically present in the UK, there had been a change to her circumstances since she had been granted her last leave to remain in the UK. Border Force cancelled Mrs T's leave to remain in the UK and served her with a removal decision which said she had to leave the UK on 17 January 2015 and return to the Middle

East. They also told her that she would no longer be entitled to work in the UK, unless she lodged an appeal against their decision and engaged a solicitor to help her resolve the matter. Border Force allowed Mrs T into the UK temporarily pending her appealing against the decision.

However, despite being told that she would be able to resume working in the UK if she lodged an appeal, Border Force's acknowledgement letter to Mrs T's appeal stated she was not entitled to work. Mrs T complained through her local MP to the Home Office about incorrect advice she had received regarding her status and her treatment by Border Force. The restriction on Mrs T to work was lifted in February 2015 and she immediately returned to work. However, the restriction was later put back on Mrs T erroneously in May 2015 and despite Mrs T and her MP trying at length to get this decision corrected, it was not until September 2015 that Border Force lifted it. As a result of these restrictions, Mrs T was unable to work for over five months during 2015.

In December 2015, HM Courts and Tribunals Service decided Mrs T's appeal in her favour. Although her immigration status was now restored and she was back at work, Mrs T still had not had been able to resolve her complaint to the Home Office from January 2015.



Our investigation found failings in how both Border Force and UKVI had dealt with Mrs T and her complaint. We concluded that these failings had resulted in significant injustice for Mrs T. To put things right for her, we made a number of recommendations to UKVI and Border Force which both organisations accepted. UKVI wrote to Mrs T to apologise for providing her with incorrect advice when she made enquiries about the impact of her husband taking a job overseas would have on her immigration status and for

the delay in resolving her complaint. They paid her £1,600 in respect of her solicitor's fees for the appeal she was compelled to make and £500 in recognition of the distress and inconvenience she experienced as a result of their errors when dealing with her case throughout. Border Force compensated Mrs T for her lost earnings during the time she was unable to work and other costs and paid an additional £100 in recognition of the distress and inconvenience she suffered.

Ministry of Justice

91 completed investigations in 2016-17, down from 214 in 2015-16 and a peak of 347 investigations in 2014-15.

We fully or partly upheld 31% of our investigations, down from 35% in 2015-16.

2016-17: 8 fully upheld and 25 partly upheld complaints.

2015-16: 19 fully upheld and 59 partly upheld complaints.

We upheld 44% of complaints about HMCTS, 50% of complaints about Cafcass, 50% about the Legal Aid Agency and only 7% about the PPO.

In 29% of the investigations we did not uphold, we found that the failings had already been put right.

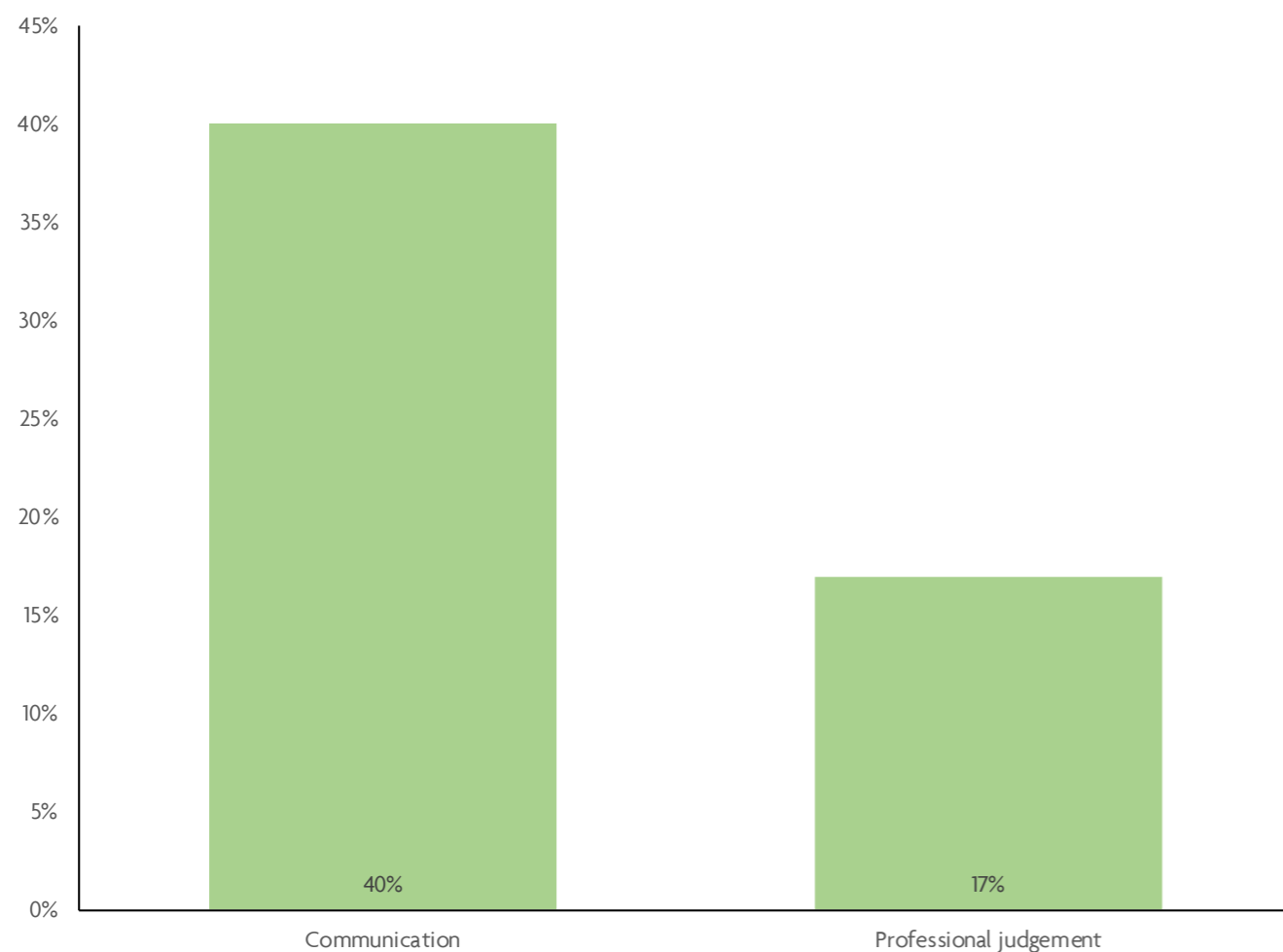
Poor communication was the key issue in the investigations that we upheld about the Ministry of Justice and its agencies.

The number of complaints we investigated in relation to the Ministry of Justice and its agencies more than halved between 2015-16 and 2016-17, falling from 214 to 91, reflecting the overall reduction in the number of our investigations of central government.

The most common issue raised in complaints we investigated about the Ministry of Justice and its agencies was poor communication, accounting for 40% of all our upheld investigations. As complaints that we handled about Cafcass show, poor communication can have a serious impact on complainants' wellbeing and family lives. Complaints about Cafcass accounted for more than a third (35%) of all our investigations of the Ministry of Justice. Many of these cases were about child custody issues; poor communication in this area frequently led to serious distress or financial loss for complainants, because important court hearings were missed and people were left being unable to access their children and with unnecessary costs for legal representation. We also saw concerns about the professional judgment of Family Court Advisors in 17% of the complaints we upheld about the Ministry of Justice. Our casework shows that it is important for those handling complaints to understand fully the human impact when things go wrong and to use this understanding to inform how they respond to complaints.

Our case study reflects this: it shows the importance of understanding fully the injustice suffered by complainants, so that a sufficient remedy can be provided, including financial compensation where necessary. It also highlights how organisations can draw wider lessons from a single complaint that can help to improve service delivery for the public.

Most common concerns about service that were raised in the complaints we upheld about the Ministry of Justice, 2016-17



Looking at the complaints about the Ministry of Justice and its agencies that we did not uphold, in almost a third (29%) we concluded that the department or its agencies had identified failings correctly and had put things right for the complainant. This suggests that it may have been possible for the department and its agencies to avoid escalation to us by providing a clearer and fuller response to the complaint, as set out on page 12 of this report.

The Ministry of Justice have told us that they have established an internal complaints forum to help share good practice across the organisation. We welcome the setting up of such a platform which we have seen being used effectively in other departments to share learning from complaints. We hope that the insight from our report will assist the forum in its work.

Case Study

Oversight by HM Courts & Tribunal Service leads to man being unnecessarily pursued by debt collecting agency

Mr T, via his representative Mrs T, complained about the service provided by HM Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS). Mr T said he paid off a fine in 2014 following a number of instalments, but was harassed by HMCTS and an enforcement agency acting on behalf of HMCTS for further payments until 2016. In that same year deductions were made from his Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to repay the fine, despite it having been paid off in full. Mr and Mrs T tried to resolve the issue on numerous occasions, including by complaining to HMCTS. When they escalated their complaint to us, they explained that they had experienced stress for two years as a result of HMCTS's errors which resulted in a visit from bailiffs, threatening letters and unlawful deductions from Mr T's benefit.

We upheld the complaint. We concluded that HMCTS failed to update Mr T's account correctly in June 2014 when he paid off the fine and that subsequently several opportunities were missed to resolve the issue. This included HMCTS failing to consider properly the notes on Mr T's account before wrongly carrying out a DWP check in February 2016 which led to the deductions from Mr T's ESA.

In response to Mr and Mrs T's complaint, HMCTS accepted that a series of errors were made and acknowledged the distress this caused. HMCTS offered a payment of £150 and later raised this to £450, in recognition of the delays and errors

Mr and Mrs T experienced and the distress and inconvenience this caused.

We concluded that this did not go far enough to put things right. We found that if HMCTS had correctly updated Mr T's account in June 2014 and followed the right course of action then, Mr and Mrs T would not have had to start their stressful engagement with HMCTS, the enforcement agency and later DWP or make a complaint to resolve the issue. We also concluded that HMCTS should take further learning from the case with regard to record keeping and communication with enforcement agencies.

We recommended that HMCTS apologise to Mr and Mrs T for the poor handling of their case and the distress, inconvenience and anxiety this caused over a two year period; and that they pay £750 in recognition of their failures to put things right, especially a failure to call off the enforcement action and cancel the benefit deduction order once they became aware of their error. We also recommended that HMCTS explain what they would do to improve their record keeping and to encourage staff to consider more carefully people's accounts before taking enforcement action. HMCTS accepted our recommendations and used this case in area management meetings to improve their customer service, especially with regard to reading account notes before making decisions.

Department for Work and Pensions

Completed 131 investigations in 2016-17, down from 196 in 2015-16.

We fully or partly upheld 29% of our investigations, down from 39% in 2015-16.

2016-17: 16 fully upheld and 22 partly upheld complaints.

2015-16: 25 fully upheld and 52 partly upheld complaints.

In 26% of the investigations we did not uphold we found that the failings had already been put right.

Many complaints are resolved by the Independent Case Examiner (ICE) before they come to us.

Concerns about assessments and decisions made by DWP, unsound conclusions and a failure to apologise properly and put things right were the key issues in the complaints we upheld about DWP.

DWP and ICE continued to demonstrate leadership in encouraging learning from complaints across Whitehall, including by chairing the Cross Government Complaints Forum in 2016-17.

The number of investigations we completed about DWP dropped from 196 in 2015-16 to 131 in 2016-17, reflecting the overall reduction in the number of investigations we completed about central government. Our uphold rate also dropped, from 39% in 2015-16 to 29% in 2016-17.

Complaints about DWP go through an independent, second tier, the Independent Case Examiner (ICE), before they come to us, but there may be other factors that contributed to the drop in our uphold rate from 39% to 29%, including an increase in the number of investigations that we discontinued, from just 5 such cases in 2015-16 to 25 cases in 2016-17. Reasons for discontinuing an investigation include, for example, complainants asking us to withdraw their complaints or complainants not responding to us, making it impossible for us to continue our investigation.

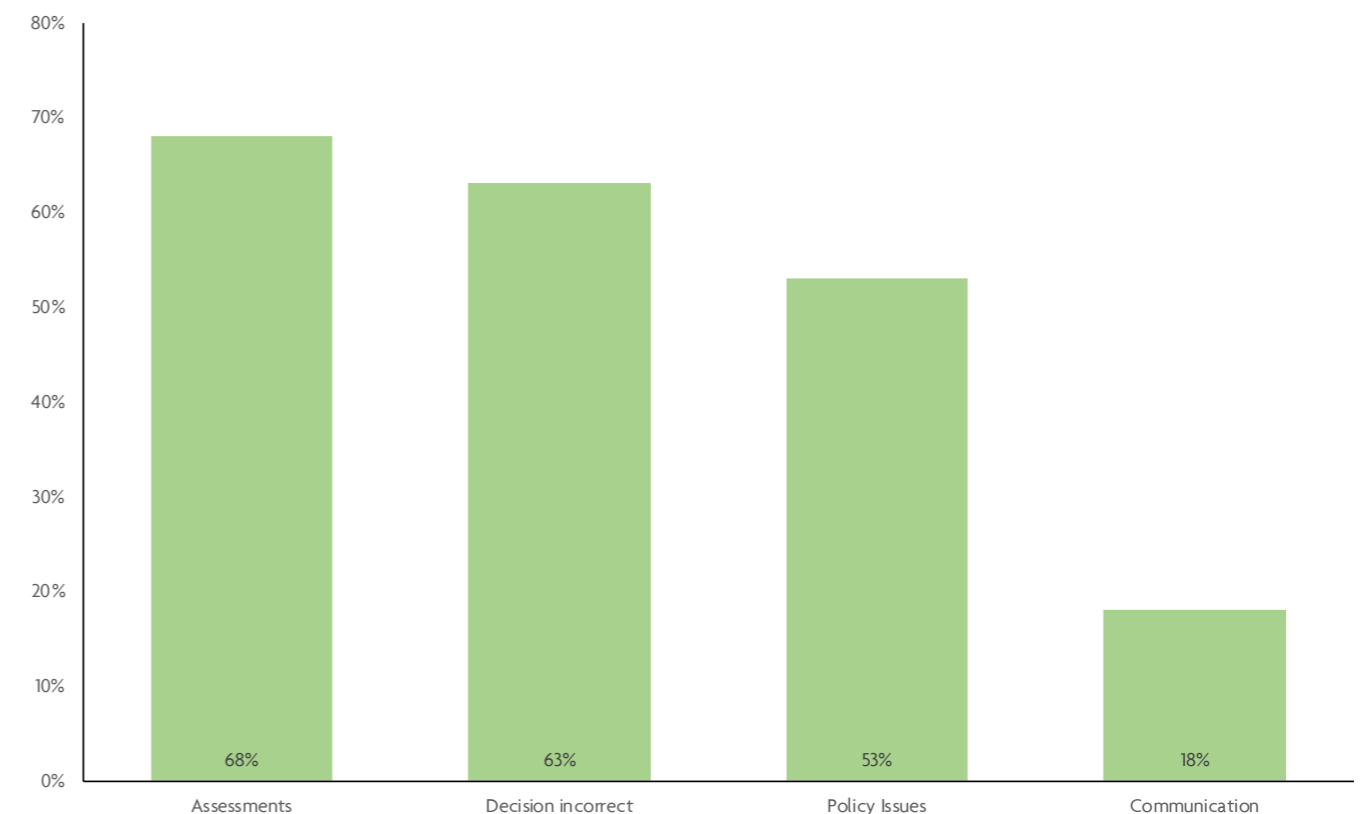
The drop in the uphold rate may also have been influenced by a change in the way we record complaints where an independent second tier, such as ICE, is involved. Before 2016-17, we recorded complaints about a business area of DWP as complaints about ICE by default; we only added the business area where the original complaint had arisen to our record if we found failings in the way the complaint had been handled by ICE. In 2016-17 we changed this approach, so that we now record a complaint as being about the relevant business area; we only add ICE to the complaints record if complainants specifically include the second tier in their complaint. We believe that this approach produces a more accurate picture of the complaints that people bring to us, as people's concerns are typically about the business area of DWP that provided a particular service, rather than about ICE.

Our comparatively low uphold rate also suggests that, as with other departments, in some cases the department or ICE could avoid a complaint being escalated to us. In more than a quarter of the investigations of DWP that we did not uphold (26%), we found that the department and/or ICE had identified failings correctly and had put these right for the complainant. The complainant remained dissatisfied, however, and took their complaint to us. In these cases the department or ICE, having provided an appropriate remedy, may have been able to prevent escalation to us by providing a clearer and fuller response to the complaint, as set out on page 12 of this report.

Our casework shows that where we do uphold complaints about DWP, the most commonly cited reasons for complaints in 2016-17 were assessments (68%), incorrect decisions (63%) and policy issues (53%). All three themes relate to

investigations we upheld in relation to benefits and support programmes administered by the department. Communication was also an issue of concern, accounting for almost one in five (18%) complaints we upheld about DWP.

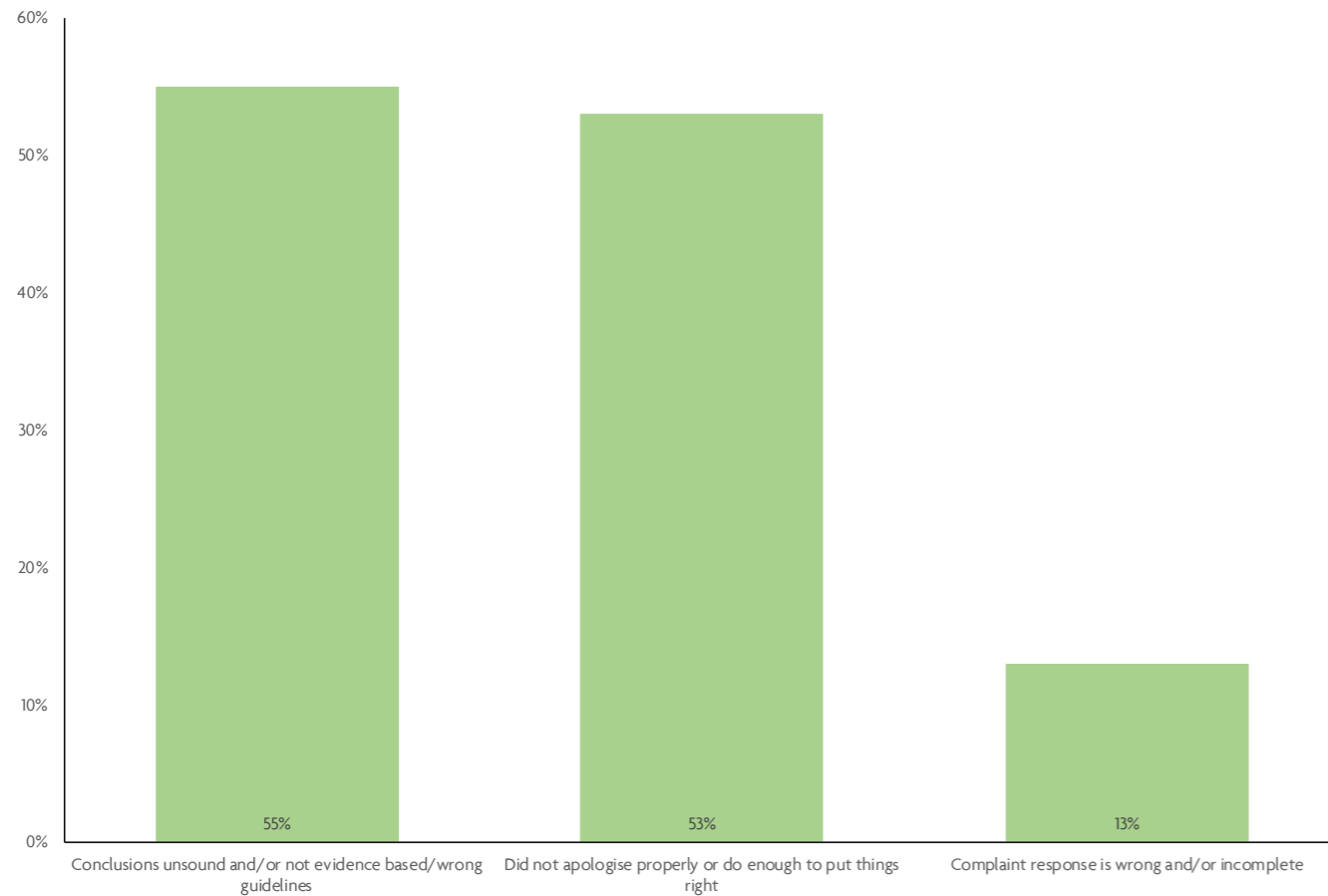
Most common concerns about service that were raised in the complaints we upheld about the Department for Work and Pensions, 2016-17



In terms of complaint handling, in more than half the complaints we upheld (55%) the key concern was that DWP had reached unsound or not evidence-based conclusions or used the wrong guidelines. Another key concern was that DWP had not apologised properly for mistakes or done

enough to put things right for the complainant (53% of all upheld complaints). Getting a wrong or incomplete response to their complaint was a reason in 13% of the complaints about DWP that we upheld.

Most common concerns about handling complaints that were raised in the complaints we upheld about the Department for Work and Pensions, 2016-17



Our case study shows how a failure to put things right can prolong a stressful situation for complainants. It is important for organisations to understand fully where they may have made

mistakes and the impact that this may have had on people, acknowledge this impact and ensure that they provide an appropriate remedy and put things right for complainants.

Case Study

Error by The Pension Service contributes towards overpayment of pension credit, causing stress and concern

Ms R complained to us that she was being asked to repay a pension credit overpayment of nearly £10,000. The overpayment accrued between July 2006 and November 2012 when she did not inform The Pension Service (TPS) that her entitlement to carer's allowance had ended in 2006, following a decision to reduce the disability living allowance of her son, for whom she was caring, to a lower rate. Her loss of entitlement to carer's allowance meant that she was no longer entitled to the carer's premium as part of her pension credit claim. Ms R complained that because her son's disability living allowance was reinstated at a middle rate at a later date, this meant that she was entitled to carer's allowance during the time in question and that the overpayment should therefore be cancelled. Ms R said that this matter had been very stressful for her and had caused her to worry about her finances.

With the support of her MP, Ms R made several complaints to DWP and the Independent Case Examiner (ICE) between May 2013 and March 2014. ICE concluded its investigation into Ms R's complaint in October 2014. ICE did not uphold her complaint, concluding that the Disability Carer's Service (DCS) had notified Ms R that she was no longer entitled to receive carer's allowance because of changes to her son's benefits and had informed her of what she needed to do if her son was awarded a qualifying benefit in the future.

ICE also concluded that the onus was on Ms R to notify TPS that she was no longer entitled to carer's allowance and that her failure to do this or make a further claim to carer's allowance once her son's disability living allowance had been reinstated meant that she was incorrectly paid a carer's premium until 2012. Ms R was unhappy with this response and asked us to look into her complaint.

Our investigation confirmed that DCS and TPS had sent the correct information to Ms R about the changes she needed to report. We considered that it was reasonable therefore for ICE to conclude that Ms R was responsible for notifying TPS that she was no longer entitled to carer's allowance, and that her failure to do this or make a further claim to carer's allowance meant that she was overpaid pension credit. Importantly, we also found, however, that TPS failed to adjust Ms R's pension credit and remove the carer's premium from her pension credit claim and notify Ms R of that decision. We concluded that if Ms R had been informed that she was no longer entitled to carer's premium, this would have prompted her to re-apply for carer's allowance in August 2006 when her son's disability living allowance was reinstated. Ms R would then have been entitled to receive carer's premium and the overpayment would not have accrued.

We upheld the complaint against TPS on the basis



that they had a responsibility to remove carer's premium from Ms R's pension credit award and notify her of that decision and they failed to do that. We also upheld the complaint about ICE on the basis that they should have recognised this failing during their investigation.

We recommended that TPS write off the pension credit overpayment of nearly £10,000 and refund Ms R the money that had already been recovered;

and that they apologise to Ms R for failing to remove carer's premium from her pension credit award. We also recommended that ICE apologise to Ms R for failing to identify that TPS did not remove carer's premium from her pension credit award or notify her of that decision and make a consolatory payment of £100 in recognition of this error. All our recommendations were accepted by the organisations concerned.

HM Revenue & Customs

Completed 94 investigations in 2016-17, up from 89 in 2015-16.

We partly upheld just 3% of our investigations, down from an already low rate of 10% in 2015-16.

2016-17: 3 partly upheld complaints.

2015-16: 2 fully upheld and 7 partly upheld complaints.

Many complaints are resolved by the Adjudicator's Office before they come to us.

In 14% of the investigations we did not uphold we found that the failings had already been put right.

Overpayments and decisions are key issues in the complaints we see about HMRC but in the vast majority of cases we find that there was no case to answer or that HMRC and/or the independent Adjudicator handled the complaint well and put things right for the complainant.

HMRC continue to demonstrate leadership in encouraging learning from complaints across Whitehall.

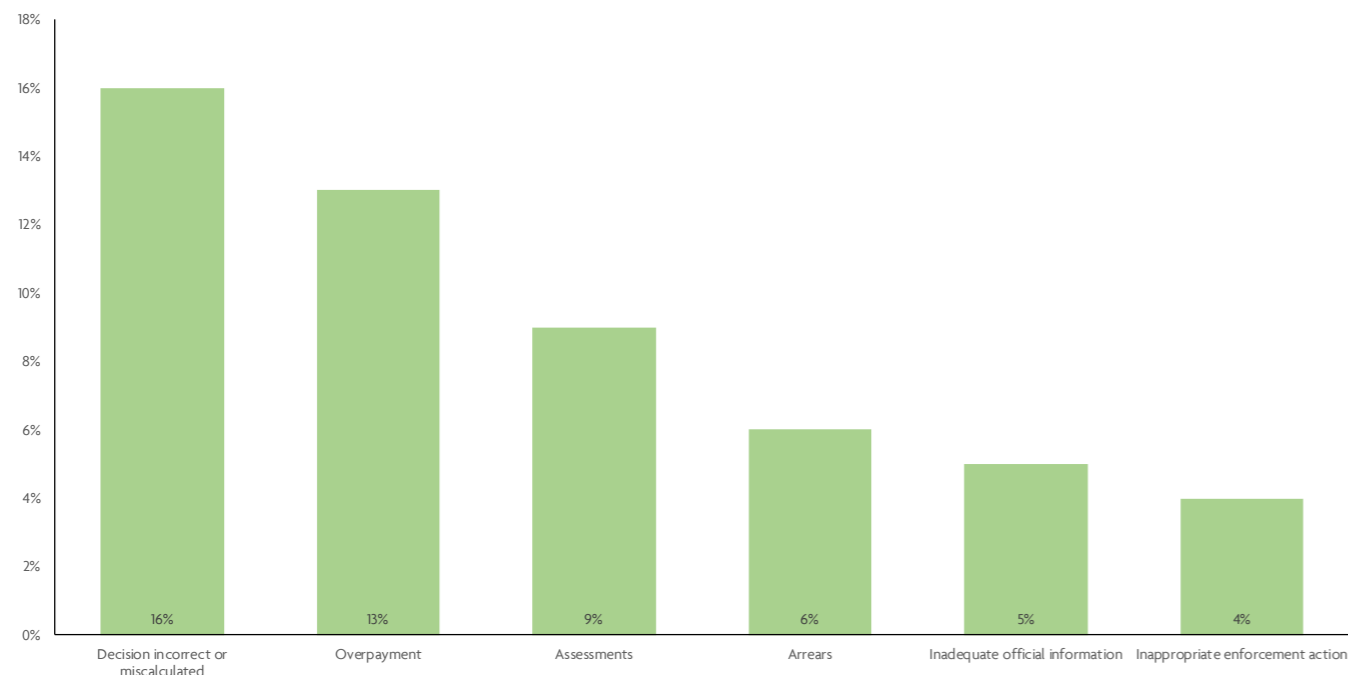
We completed 94 investigations into HMRC in 2016-17, up slightly from 89 investigations in 2015-16. We partly upheld only 3% of these investigations, a further drop from an already low uphold rate of 10% in 2015-16.

Complaints about HMRC go through an independent, second tier, the Adjudicator's Office, before they come to us and our data suggests that most of the issues raised in complaints are resolved at this second stage. Only a relatively small number of complaints is escalated to us.

Similarly to DWP, an increase in the number of investigations that we discontinued, from 2 in 2015-16 to 11 in 2016-17, may have contributed to the drop in our uphold rate for complaints about HMRC, from 10% in 2015-16 to just 3% last year. And as with DWP, this reduction in our uphold rate may also have been influenced by the changes we made in the way we record complaints where an independent second tier, such as the Adjudicator's Office, is involved. Before 2016-17, we recorded complaints about HMRC and its agencies and business areas as complaints about the Adjudicator by default; we only added the agencies and business area where the original complaint had arisen to our record if we found failings in the way the complaint had been handled by the Adjudicator. We changed this approach last year, so that we now record a complaint as being about the relevant business area or agency; we only add the Adjudicator to the complaints record if complainants specifically include the second tier in their complaint. We believe that this approach produces a more accurate picture of the complaints that people bring to us, as people's concerns are typically about the business area or an agency of HMRC that provided a particular service, rather than about the Adjudicator as the second tier complaint handler.

With only 3 partly upheld investigations in 2016-17, there are no general lessons we can draw from the failings we saw at HMRC last year. However, looking at the significant number of complaints about HMRC that we did not uphold, we can see that in 16% of these complaints the key issue was a concern about incorrect decisions by the department. This suggests that while we concluded that HMRC made the right decision in these cases, the department may have not provided a sufficiently clear explanation to complainants, leading to the complaint being escalated to us. Providing complainants with a clear and full explanation of the department's decisions and actions, as set out on page 12 of this report, may prevent some complainants from being escalated to us.

Most common concerns about service raised in the complaints we investigated about HMRC, 2016-17



Case Study

Adjudicator puts things right

Mr M complained to us about the actions HMRC took to recover an outstanding debt from the 2006-07 tax year. He had agreed with HMRC to repay the debt in monthly instalments but the payments stopped after six months. Mr M said that HMRC failed to tell him that they were no longer receiving the payments and then refused his request to restart his instalment plan once he had become aware of the problem. When HMRC initiated court action to recover his debt, Mr M asked for a postponement following the death of his mother, but said that HMRC denied he had made such a request. He also said that even though HMRC reduced the amount of debt he owed when he asked them to, they used incorrect figures when calculating his debt and when pursuing court action and charged him penalties inappropriately.

Mr M complained to HMRC and the Adjudicator which concluded that HMRC had given him incorrect information and had failed to return his calls. HMRC apologised and paid him £130 in respect of these failings. Mr M remained unhappy with this response and complained to us about the attitude of HMRC staff, failures in their communications with him and the incorrect information he had been given. He said that the events had caused him distress and that he was looking for an apology and financial remedy.

Our investigation identified a number of failings:

HMRC should have considered Mr M's position that he had not known about the problems with his direct debt and he was incorrectly advised that HMRC was unable to re-instate his instalment plan. We also found that HMRC's communication with Mr M, especially in relation to the court action and the amount of debt that it wanted to recover, was not as clear and complete as it should have been.

We concluded, however, that these failings did not cause the injustice Mr M claimed, or an injustice that was not largely put right by the Adjudicator's response to his complaint. We found that while the failings were likely to have made Mr M's experience more stressful than it otherwise might have been, it was also likely that HMRC would have obtained a court order to get Mr M to pay his tax debt anyway, irrespective of these failings. There was also no requirement for HMRC to reduce the amount of Mr M's debt.

We concluded that the reduction in the debt he owed as well as the apology and compensation that Mr M received from HMRC following the Adjudicator's investigation were a reasonable response to the complaint. We partly upheld Mr M's complaint against HMRC and recommended that they should write to him to apologise for the distress caused by the failings we identified, but we did not uphold his complaint about the Adjudicator.

Annex A: Data consideration and caveats

Using this information

It is important to recognise that our data should not be seen as a measure to rank organisations on their performance or the quality of their service. The purpose of this report is to provide quantitative and qualitative insight into the complaints that we receive, and to help organisations and their boards consider what this data says about how they handle complaints and deliver public services. When interpreting the information contained within this report, it is important to consider the following caveats.

The number of complaints we receive about different government departments varies significantly, reflecting the very different nature of the work undertaken by them. Some parts of government, such as DWP, the Home Office or HMRC, deliver services for millions of people and as a result, we receive a considerable number of complaints about them. Other departments, such as the Cabinet Office, have a different role and more limited interaction with the public, and the number of complaints we receive about them is correspondingly small. But even where we receive considerable number of complaints, these numbers are small compared to the vast number of interactions these departments have with their customers every year.

The number of complaints we receive is also influenced by the accessibility of the complaints system; some organisations are better at explaining their complaints processes and encouraging feedback from their customers.

The level of complaints about individual departments or organisations therefore should not be looked at in isolation, as taken on its own it is not an effective measure of organisational performance. Complaints need to be seen in the context of the relevant organisation, its role and the nature of the services it delivers.

Some complaints we receive relate to more than one organisation or business area. In these cases, we count the complaint more than once. For example, if a single complaint from an individual relates to two separate organisations or business areas in a department, we count this information twice in order to get an accurate picture of what the complaint is about.

This may differ from how we report our casework in other reports, including our Annual Report, where information is reported on the basis of individual complainants. This should be considered when comparing the findings of this report to other reports we publish, including our Annual Report.

In the tables in Annex B, we group organisations and business areas under a government department where appropriate to make it easier to navigate our overview of the complaints we handled. This grouping only shows whether an individual organisation or business area falls within the overall responsibility of the secretary of state of the relevant department. It is not a comment on the status of an organisation or business area, for example, whether or not the organisation or business area has operational independence.

It is also important to note that we introduced a new casework management system and a new methodology for recording the complaints that we receive in 2016-17. As a result, some key statistics, including the number of enquiries we received and the number of complaints that we assessed, cannot be compared year on year.

Reasons for complaints

There can be many reasons for a complaint, both in relation to the service that people experienced and the way that their complaint was handled. We update from year to year our methodology for collecting data, including in relation to the way we categorise and record the reasons why people bring their complaints to us. This means that our data on the reasons for complaints does not give a complete picture of why people may complain about public services, and that readers should be cautious in comparing this year's data to data used in previous reports. In addition, a lower number of completed investigations than in previous years means that for some organisations it is not appropriate to use the tools we have to identify and analyse the underlying reasons for complaints. For example we partly upheld only 3 complaints about HM Revenue & Customs in 2016-17, so it would not be appropriate to draw general conclusions from such a small case sample.

Annex B: Complaints about UK government departments and agencies and other UK public organisations

Tables for 2016-17 and 2015-16

Complaints about government departments and agencies and other UK public organisations in 2016-17

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Cabinet Office	18	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	100.0%
Boundary Commission for England	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Cabinet Office	17	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	100.0%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	128	45	0	11	0	0	14	1	0	0.0%
Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Carillion Energy Services ⁶	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Coal Authority ⁷	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Companies House	11	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Competition and Markets Authority	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Construction Industry Training Board	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	27	11	0	5	0	0	4	1	0	0.0%
Groceries Code Adjudicator	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Independent Adjudicators for Companies House	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Independent Complaints Reviewer	2	4	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0.0%
Insolvency Service	24	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Investors in People Community Interest Company	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Land Registry	25	6	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Medical Research Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Nuclear Decommissioning Authority	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Official Receiver	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Ordnance Survey	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Science & Technology Facilities Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Skills Funding Agency	8	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
UK Intellectual Property Office	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Communities and Local Government	62	27	0	5	1	1	1	0	2	40.0%
Department for Communities and Local Government	16	8	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	50.0%
Homes and Communities Agency	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Leasehold Advisory Service	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Local Government Boundary Commission for England	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Planning Inspectorate	36	17	0	3	0	1	0	0	2	33.3%
Valuation Tribunal Service	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	162	60	0	16	0	2	13	0	2	11.8%
Arts Council of England	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.0%
British Museum	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Charity Commission ⁸	12	5	0	1	0	1	5	0	1	14.3%
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	10	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Gambling Commission	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Historic England	4	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	100.0%

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Independent Complaints Reviewer (Lottery Forum)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Information Commissioner	128	46	0	6	0	0	5	0	0	0.0%
National Heritage Memorial Fund	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The National Archives	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Sport England	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Department for Education	377	52	0	27	2	13	21	2	2	37.5%
Department for Education	34	7	0	3	0	2	0	1	2	40.0%
Education Funding Agency	4	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
National College for Teaching & Leadership	8	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	100.0%
Office of the Schools Adjudicator	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Student Loans Company Ltd	329	39	0	21	2	10	17	1	0	40.0%
The Equality and Human Rights Commission	1	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0.0%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	100	45	0	19	0	7	10	0	4	33.3%
Animal and Plant Health Agency	3	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	100.0%
Consumer Council for Water	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Drinking Water Inspectorate	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Environment Agency	44	21	0	8	0	2	4	0	0	33.3%
Natural England	20	10	0	4	0	4	5	0	2	36.4%
Rural Payments Agency	16	6	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
The Marine Management Organisation	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0.0%
Department for International Development	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	100.0%
Department for International Development	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	100.0%
Department for International Trade	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.0%
Department for International Trade	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.0%
Department for Transport	852	68	0	21	4	5	11	0	1	42.9%
Civil Aviation Authority	10	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	50.0%
Department for Transport	15	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	50.0%
Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency	757	50	0	15	3	4	4	0	1	58.3%
High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd	4	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Highways Agency	14	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Highways England	44	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Independent Complaints Assessor	2	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	3	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Office of Rail Regulation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Work and Pensions	1,673	260	0	142	16	22	68	0	25	29.0%
Capita Business Services Ltd ⁶	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division	16	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Child Support Agency	356	65	0	49	0	6	12	0	5	26.1%
Debt Management Unit	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Department for Work and Pensions	788	50	0	10	0	4	2	0	3	44.4%
Health and Safety Executive	35	10	0	4	0	0	3	0	1	0.0%
Health Assessment Advisory Service	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Independent Case Examiner	103	84	0	62	1	4	37	0	9	9.8%
Ingeus UK and Ingeus Europe Ltd ⁶	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Jobcentre Plus	243	29	0	15	14	8	11	0	7	55.0%
Medical Services ATOS Healthcare ⁶	16	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Pension Protection Fund	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Pensions Ombudsman	22	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Pension, Disability and Carers Service	71	6	0	2	1	0	3	0	0	25.0%
The Pensions Regulator	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Working Links ⁶	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department of Health	114	33	0	11	0	4	7	1	10	18.2%
Care Quality Commission	69	19	0	10	0	2	3	1	2	25.0%
Department of Health	22	1	0	0	0	1	4	0	7	8.3%
Health Education England	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Health Research Authority	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.0%
Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency	8	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	100.0%
NHS Improvement ⁹	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Public Health England	11	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Electoral Commission	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Food Standards Agency	3	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	28	8	0	3	0	2	1	0	2	40.0%
British Council	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	22	7	0	3	0	2	1	0	2	40.0%
Forestry Commission	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
HM Revenue & Customs	965	279	0	108	0	3	78	2	11	3.2%
Child Benefit Office	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
HM Revenue & Customs	806	145	0	52	0	3	27	1	4	8.6%
National Insurance Contributions and Employer Office	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Adjudicator's Office	116	121	0	51	0	0	49	1	5	0.0%
Valuation Office Agency	40	13	0	5	0	0	2	0	2	0.0%
HM Treasury	18	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0.0%
Equitable Life Payment Scheme	7	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0.0%
HM Treasury	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Royal Mint	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Home Office	1,206	332	2	134	22	75	45	1	20	59.5%
Gangmasters Licensing Authority	1	2	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	66.7%
Gwent Police (under the Victims' Code)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	100.0%
HM Passport Office	112	43	0	16	1	5	2	1	6	43.8%
Home Office	171	9	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	n/a

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Lancashire Constabulary	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Leicestershire Constabulary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.0%
North Wales Police	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Police (under the Victims' Code)	11	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Security Industry Authority	105	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
South Yorkshire Police	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Disclosure and Barring Service	74	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
UK Border Agency	18	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.0%
UK Border Force	73	40	0	14	2	10	6	0	1	63.2%
UK Immigration Enforcement	19	13	0	13	0	8	8	0	0	50.0%
UK Visas and Immigration	619	211	1	83	18	50	26	0	11	64.8%
Law Officers	26	8	0	4	1	0	4	1	0	16.7%
Crown Prosecution Service (under the Victims' Code) - Attorney General's Office	20	6	0	3	1	0	4	0	0	20.0%
Treasury Solicitor	6	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0.0%
Ministry of Defence	29	8	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Ministry of Defence	20	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Veterans UK	9	4	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Ministry of Justice	1,159	367	3	92	13	20	35	8	15	30.8%
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service	260	111	1	30	4	12	10	1	5	50.0%
Court Funds Office	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority	21	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company Limited	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Greater Manchester Probation Trust	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
HM Courts & Tribunals Service	510	152	1	27	6	5	8	3	3	44.0%
HM Prison Service	64	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
HMP Whatton	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Legal Aid Agency	76	25	0	9	2	1	2	0	1	50.0%
Marston Group ⁵	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Ministry of Justice	38	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
National Offender Management Service	48	10	0	6	0	0	1	3	1	0.0%
National Probation Service	5	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	100.0%
Parole Board	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.0%
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman	69	36	0	11	0	1	9	1	4	6.7%
Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Office of the Public Guardian	36	12	0	7	0	1	4	0	0	20.0%
The Official Solicitor to the Supreme Court	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Unknown Probation Trust ¹⁰	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
West Yorkshire Probation Trust	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)	15	9	0	4	0	2	3	0	0	40.0%
Office of Communications (Ofcom)	10	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	50.0%
Office of Fair Trading	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM)	96	41	0	12	0	2	3	1	1	28.6%
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Supreme Court	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
UK Statistics Authority	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Office for National Statistics	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Unknown Government Department ¹¹	132	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Water Services Regulation Authority (OFWAT)	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Total	7,205	1,663	5	617	61	160	321	17	96	33.7%

¹ Government departments act as sponsors for other organisations. For example, in 2016-17 the Boundary Commission for England was sponsored by the Cabinet Office. When we receive a complaint, we record it under the name of the organisation complained about and under the name of the sponsoring government department. The table below lists complaints statistics by organisation and by sponsoring government department. The overall highlighted figures for government departments include the number of complaints for the organisations that the department sponsors. We also list separately in the table the statistics for the complaints that we receive about the government department itself.

² Because of the introduction of our new casework management system and a new recording methodology, data for the number of enquiries received and the number of complaints assessed in 2016-17 cannot be compared to data in 2015-16.

³ The number of complaints we accept for investigation in a financial year differs from the number of investigations that we complete in that same year. This is because our statistics only provide a snapshot of our casework flow at a given time. For example, we may have accepted a complaint for investigation in 2016-17 but not completed it until the following year 2017-18. Similarly, we may have completed an investigation in 2016-17 which we originally accepted for investigation in the previous year 2015-16.

⁴ These are complaints where we start an investigation but are able to resolve the complaint without having to formally complete the investigation.

⁵ These are complaints where we end the investigation for a variety of reasons, for example, because the complainant withdrew the complaint and asked us to discontinue our investigation.

⁶ These organisations are not in our jurisdiction, but their actions on behalf of government departments are.

⁷ Oversight of this organisation moved to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy when it absorbed the functions of the Department of Energy and Climate Change in July 2016.

⁸ Responsibility for the Charity Commission transferred from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in July 2016.

⁹ Any complaints about NHS Improvement recorded here relate to the work formerly carried out by Monitor. Monitor and the NHS Trust Development Authority (NHS TDA) were subsumed into NHS Improvement in April 2016 but both organisations continue as legal entities. Complaints about the work formerly carried out by NHS TDA are not recorded here, as they fall within the remit of the Health Service Ombudsman.

¹⁰ These are complaints about probation services that come to us without a MP referral or before they are ready for us to look at. In these cases we advise complainants how to take forward their complaint but do not necessarily record the specific organisation complained about.

¹¹ These are enquiries which we were unable to investigate, for example because we found that the issues complained about were outside our jurisdiction, and where we did not record the specific department complained about.

Complaints about government departments and agencies and other UK public organisations in 2015-16

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Cabinet Office	16	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Cabinet Office	16	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Charity Commission	29	13	0	8	0	1	3	1	1	16.7%
Crown Estate Office	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	442	80	0	44	1	7	24	0	1	24.2%
Adjudicator to HM Land Registry	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Certification Office for Trade Unions and Employers' Associations	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Child Protection In Sport Unit	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Companies House	13	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Competition and Markets Authority	3	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Construction Industry Training Board	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	19	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Higher Education Funding Council for England	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	100.0%
Independent Adjudicators for Companies House	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Independent Complaints Reviewer (for the Land Registry)	11	10	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	0.0%
Insolvency Service	11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Land Registry	31	5	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Medical Research Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Official Receiver	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Skills Funding Agency	12	7	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Student Loans Company Ltd	320	43	0	29	1	5	10	0	1	35.3%
Technology Strategy Board	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	100.0%
UK Intellectual Property Office	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
UK NARIC	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Communities and Local Government	64	31	0	4	0	1	4	0	0	20.0%
Department for Communities and Local Government	16	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Homes and Communities Agency	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Leasehold Advisory Service	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Local Government Boundary Commission for England	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Planning Inspectorate	40	23	0	4	0	1	4	0	0	20.0%
Valuation Tribunal Service	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	25	7	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0.0%
Arts Council of England	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
British Library Board	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
British Museum	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	12	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Gambling Commission	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Sport England	2	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Department for Education	31	15	0	11	0	0	6	0	1	0.0%
British Educational Communications and Technology Agency	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Education	19	10	0	8	0	0	4	0	1	0.0%
Education Funding Agency	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Independent Complaints Adjudication Service for Ofsted	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
National College for Teaching & Leadership	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Office of the Children's Commissioner	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Office of the Schools Adjudicator	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Equality and Human Rights Commissio	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	99	51	0	23	4	8	11	1	2	46.2%
Animal and Plant Health Agency	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Consumer Council for Water	10	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0.0%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	20	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Environment Agency	36	12	0	4	0	4	5	0	0	44.4%
Natural England	14	14	0	12	1	1	2	0	2	33.3%
Rural Payments Agency	12	9	0	4	3	3	4	0	0	60.0%
The Marine Management Organisation	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for International Development	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for International Development	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Transport	469	61	0	25	16	4	13	0	1	58.8%
Civil Aviation Authority	6	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Department for Transport	15	4	0	3	7	0	1	0	0	87.5%
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency	338	39	0	18	7	3	9	0	1	50.0%
Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency	69	6	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	100.0%
Highways Agency	6	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	100.0%
Highways England	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Independent Complaints Assessor	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Office of Rail Regulation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Office of the Traffic Commissioner	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Rail Passengers' Council	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Department for Work and Pensions	1,492	289	0	117	25	52	112	2	5	39.3%
Child Support Agency	305	15	0	8	1	6	3	0	0	70.0%
Civil Service Appeal Board	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Debt Management Unit	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Department for Work and Pensions	329	15	0	5	2	11	2	0	0	86.7%
Health and Safety Executive	40	15	0	5	0	3	4	0	0	42.9%
Health Assessment Advisory Service	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Independent Case Examiner	211	182	0	76	1	20	96	0	3	17.5%
Jobcentre Plus	397	30	0	19	21	9	4	2	1	81.1%
Medical Services ATOS Healthcare ⁶	16	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Pension Protection Fund	11	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Pensions Ombudsman	16	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Pension, Disability and Carers Service	151	6	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	75.0%
The Pensions Regulator	6	6	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	0.0%
Department of Energy and Climate Change	22	7	0	3	5	0	1	0	0	83.3%
Carillion Energy Services ⁶	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Coal Authority	5	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	100.0%
Department of Energy and Climate Change	16	6	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	66.7%
Department of Health	183	111	0	17	0	5	11	0	1	29.4%
Care Quality Commission	65	22	0	8	0	5	8	0	0	38.5%
Department of Health	34	16	0	6	0	0	1	0	1	0.0%
Health Education England	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Health Research Authority	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Public Health England	78	69	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Electoral Commission	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Food Standards Agency	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	40	11	0	6	0	1	4	0	1	16.7%
British Council	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	38	10	0	6	0	1	4	0	1	16.7%
Forestry Commission	1	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	50.0%
HM Revenue & Customs	1,030	174	0	73	2	7	78	0	2	10.1%
Child Benefit Office	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
HM Revenue & Customs	805	25	0	6	1	4	1	0	1	71.4%
National Insurance Contributions and Employer Office	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Adjudicator's Office	176	146	0	66	1	3	76	0	1	4.9%
Valuation Office Agency	33	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
HM Treasury	26	10	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	0.0%
Equitable Life Payment Scheme	10	5	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
HM Treasury	15	5	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Royal Mint	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Home Office	1,019	302	0	115	11	45	14	4	0	75.7%
Gangmasters Licensing Authority	5	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
HM Passport Office	131	26	0	9	2	3	0	3	0	62.5%
Home Office	107	9	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	33.3%

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Independent Complaints Monitor	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Police (Under Victim's Code)	13	6	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	100.0%
Security Industry Authority	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Disclosure and Barring Service	63	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
UK Border Agency	20	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
UK Border Force	75	37	0	19	1	13	3	0	0	82.4%
UK Immigration Enforcement	11	6	0	4	0	4	0	0	0	100.0%
UK Visas and Immigration	578	206	0	75	7	23	9	1	0	75.0%
Law Officers	29	20	0	6	1	0	3	0	0	25.0%
Crown Prosecution Service (Under Victim's Code) - Attorney General's Office	16	12	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	100.0%
Treasury Solicitor	13	8	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0.0%
Ministry of Defence	33	11	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Ministry of Defence	26	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Veterans UK	7	6	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Ministry of Justice	1,172	435	0	160	18	60	114	14	8	36.4%
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service	244	100	0	55	2	26	36	11	2	36.4%
Civil Justice Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority	15	5	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	50.0%
Cumbria Probation Trust	2	3	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
Devon and Cornwall Probation Trust	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company Limited	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
HM Courts & Tribunals Service	452	151	0	47	9	22	37	1	1	44.3%
HM Prison Service	45	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	100.0%
Information Commissioner	120	57	0	11	0	2	10	0	0	16.7%
Lancashire Probation Trust	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Legal Aid Agency	93	32	0	15	4	4	12	1	1	36.4%
London Probation Trust	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Marston Group	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Ministry of Justice	19	6	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	100.0%
National Offender Management Service	36	3	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	66.7%
National Probation Service	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Parole Board	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman	88	52	0	16	0	1	10	1	4	6.3%
Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The National Archives	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Office of the Public Guardian	38	17	0	7	0	1	5	0	0	16.7%
The Official Solicitor to the Supreme Court	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Unknown Probation Trust ⁷	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
West Mercia Probation Trust	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Monitor	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%

Organisation ¹	Enquiries received ²	Complaints assessed ²	Complaints resolved through intervention	Complaints accepted for investigation ³	Investigations fully upheld	Investigations partly upheld	Investigations not upheld	Investigations resolved without a finding ⁴	Investigations discontinued ⁵	Uphold rate
Northern Ireland Office	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Northern Ireland Parades Commission	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)	19	9	0	4	0	2	6	0	0	25.0%
Office of Communications (OFCOM)	10	9	0	4	0	1	2	0	0	33.3%
Office of Fair Trading	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM)	40	8	0	6	0	1	1	0	1	33.3%
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	7	7	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0.0%
The Supreme Court	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
UK Statistics Authority	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Office for National Statistics	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Unknown Government Department ⁸	79	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Water Services Regulation Authority (OFWAT)	4	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Water Services Regulation Authority (OFWAT)	4	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0%
Total	6,404	1,673	0	642	83	196	423	22	24	37.3%

¹ Government departments act as sponsors for other organisations. For example, in 2016-17 the Boundary Commission for England was sponsored by the Cabinet Office. When we receive a complaint, we record it under the name of the organisation complained about and under the name of the sponsoring government department. The table below lists complaints statistics by organisation and by sponsoring government department. The overall highlighted figures for government departments include the number of complaints for the organisations that the department sponsors. We also list separately in the table the statistics for the complaints that we receive about the government department itself.

² Because of the introduction of our new casework management system and a new recording methodology, data for the number of enquiries received and the number of complaints assessed in 2016-17 cannot be compared to data in 2015-16.

³ The number of complaints we accept for investigation in a financial year differs from the number of investigations that we complete in that same year. This is because our statistics only provide a snapshot of our casework flow at a given time. For example, we may have accepted a complaint for investigation in 2016-17 but not completed it until the following year 2017-18. Similarly, we may have completed an investigation in 2016-17 which we originally accepted for investigation in the previous year 2015-16.

⁴ These are complaints where we start an investigation but are able to resolve the complaint without having to formally complete the investigation.

⁵ These are complaints where we end the investigation for a variety of reasons, for example because the complainant withdrew the complaint and asked us to discontinue our investigation.

⁶ These organisations are not in our jurisdiction, but their actions on behalf of government departments are.

⁷ These are complaints that come to us without a MP referral or before they are ready for us to look at. In these cases we advise complainants how to take forward their complaint but do not necessarily record the specific organisation complained about.

⁸ These are enquiries which we were unable to investigate, for example because we found that the issues complained about were outside our jurisdiction, and where we did not record the specific department complained about.

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

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