Public Service Ombudsman

Our strategy
2026 to 2031

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Foreword from the Ombudsman



Improving public services and building trust between people and the state is a core mission of my Office and is at the heart of my role.

Paula Sussex CBE, Ombudsman

To do this, we must be fair and impartial so that we strengthen accountability when things go wrong. Since taking up this role, I have been listening carefully to the people and organisations that rely on us to live up to these values.

I have spoken with complainants, ministers, MPs, clinicians, senior officials, regulators and frontline teams across health and government. These conversations have grounded me in the realities that people experience, shaped my view of the current challenges faced by the public sector, and made clear the contribution my Office must make in the years ahead.

We know that public services are under increasing pressure. Through that pressure, the need for ombudsman services has risen sharply. Last year, the NHS received a record high of 256,777 written complaints. This has increased year on year and is almost 14% higher than the volume recorded in 2021 to 2022. In the same year, my Office considered more than 38,000 complaints and passed 9,700 for primary investigation: a 38% increase in primary investigations since 2021 to 2022.



256,777

Written complaints received by the NHS and more than 38,000 received by the Ombudsman

Yet trust that people's voices in these complaints will be listened to is fragile. Only one in four people believe their complaint will make a difference, and younger people, disabled people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds are even less confident. That loss of trust matters. Public services only function well when people believe that their voices count.

We have a critical role to play in rebuilding that trust. We see a wide range of views and experiences from people who use public services and have insights into where things have gone wrong in organisations and systems. We have a duty to use this information to improve and prevent the same issues happening again. At this organisation, I have found colleagues who are deeply committed to fairness and who want their work to improve lives and make lasting change. Already our investigations are robust, our expertise is strong and our purpose

is clear. We are now in a position to make a deliberate shift towards greater systemic and preventative impact, alongside continued delivery of individual redress.

We are also in a position to use technology to generate more consistent, meaningful insight. Partnership with other bodies in the justice, regulatory and assurance space is essential to achieving this. And as an Ombudsman accountable to Parliament, our relationship with individual MPs and parliamentary committees is one of our most important levers for change. When Parliament understands what we are seeing in complaints, it can use this to strengthen accountability across the Government and the NHS.

Every complaint brings an opportunity to learn. The cost of not learning is significant. Statutory inquiries exceeded £130 million last year, and the NHS spent billions of pounds addressing harm that could and should have been prevented. Complaints give us early warning of where things are going wrong. We must use that insight to prevent failings, not just respond to them.

This strategy reflects what I have learned so far. It considers the complex environment in which we are working, and the pressures on our service as well as the services provided by the public sector. But it is also the beginning of a new chapter in our story that is designed to tackle the challenges we face. We will continue to deliver fair outcomes for individuals and will also take a more active role in system improvement. This means identifying risks earlier, supporting organisations to address underlying causes, and strengthening accountability with the help of Parliament and others across public services.

We will also modernise our service, so that people have access to clearer information, receive faster decisions and experience a genuinely person-centred process.

Crucially, we will create a clear, recognisable identity within the justice landscape, so that people know we provide individual redress and drive improvements across public services. A change to our name is part of achieving that clarity of purpose. It is not a goal in itself, but a way to make sure people can find us, understand what we do and trust in our ability to shape the future of public services. We will use our profile to promote a culture of accountability, transparency and continuous improvement.

Public services are under real pressure. By listening carefully, working in genuine partnership and acting on what we learn, we can all help to build a system that is more responsive to the people it serves.



£130 million

Spent on statutory inquiries last year

Our values



Our vision

We deliver fair and impartial justice for individuals and drive improvements in public services for everyone. In five years, we will be an established and influential voice in public service improvement, working in partnership to set standards and drive system-level change in the NHS, government departments and other public bodies.

Introduction

Our role

Our role is to independently investigate complaints about the NHS in England, UK government departments and other public organisations. Our service is free to use, fair and impartial, and open to everyone.

We provide a final, independent check when people believe a public service has let them down, treated them unfairly or failed to put things right. By doing this, we help make sure public services are accountable, champion higher standards, and help to inspire a better relationship between citizens and the state.

We are here to put things right for individuals and to help prevent others from experiencing the same issues.



Prevent others from experiencing the same issues

We use evidence from complaints to identify the underlying causes of failings in public services and help to deliver lasting change.

Our insight into people's reasons for complaining shapes how we work and our emphasis on driving public service improvements for everyone. **Our complaints research** found that 93% of people who come to us want to make sure failures are rectified and 91% want to protect others in future.

Through our Public Value Model and systemic investigations, we prioritise complaints that will have the greatest impact and potential to improve services for many people. We do this by identifying underlying patterns, themes, recurrent issues and multi-agency failures in complaints. We aim to reduce the risk of things going wrong, improve complaint handling, and ultimately reduce the need for people to complain at all.

To make sure our recommendations lead to real change, we share learning from our work with NHS and government bodies, report to Parliament, and support parliamentary committees to scrutinise public services.

We are independent of the Government and the NHS and, as a parliamentary body, we are accountable to Parliament. Our work is scrutinised by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee.



Improve services by identifying recurrent issues

We are open about what we do and do not do.



Recommend actions such as apologies and service changes

We carefully consider every complaint we receive, but we do not investigate every case in detail. We make impartial, evidence-based judgements about whether an investigation is justified. If we find an organisation has followed the correct guidance and procedures, we will not investigate further.

There are also legal limits on what we can investigate, including which organisations fall within our remit and the requirement for people to have first complained to the organisation before coming to us.

When we identify failings, working with the organisation under investigation, we can recommend actions such as apologies and service changes to prevent repeat mistakes. When we are not best placed to help, we advise complainants of their options, rights and where they can get support.

We are shifting our approach to deliver greater systemic impact that benefits people who use public services.



Prioritise the most serious and systemic issues

We are currently experiencing unprecedented and sustained demand for our service. With finite resources, we must make choices about how we use our capacity to maximise the public value from our service.

We will continue to prioritise the most serious individual injustices, as well as groups of cases that reveal recurring, systemic or emerging risks across public services.

By undertaking a smaller proportion of more detailed investigations and prioritising the most serious and systemic issues, we aim to address root causes, prevent wider harm and reduce complaints over time. This focus on systemic improvement is essential to the long-term sustainability of our service. It enables us to protect individuals who experience the most severe injustice, while strengthening public services for people who rely on them.

This shift in our approach will be realised within a framework that addresses key themes across a large proportion of the cases we receive. Focusing on these themes means we will have impact on the following areas:

Design:
public services are designed around the people who use them.



Example: Our 2017 report into eating disorder services, **'Ignoring the alarms',** found that failings across multiple NHS organisations had led to an avoidable death. Our wider casework and engagement helped us uncover serious failings across the system that required urgent improvements to training, standards, service transitions and commissioning. While some issues remain, organisations have made sustainable improvements. For example, early intervention services have been expanded to support children and young people, and the General Medical Council has done work to address gaps around eating disorders in medical training.

Communication:
public services communicate openly, empathetically and effectively.



Example: In 2024, we published **a report about the processes and communication around do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions**. We engaged with ministers and co-hosted a roundtable with the Department of Health and Social Care and sector stakeholders. This highlighted the importance of DNACPR conversations in advance care planning and the need for greater public awareness of the issue. Since then, there have been positive developments in line with our recommendations. This includes updated guidance from the Care Quality Commission and e-learning training developed by the Resuscitation Council.

Learning from complaints:
public services actively learn from complaints and failings to drive continuous improvement.



Example: In 2024, we published **our spotlight report on the Windrush Compensation Scheme** and shared stories of the Windrush generation and their families who had been affected. This revealed that people had been wrongly denied the money they were owed and evidence had not always been properly reviewed. Our work helped to secure compensation for individuals and make changes to the eligibility criteria of the Home Office's Compensation Scheme so that systemic problems with the way it was run did not affect more people.

Complaint handling:
public services provide a fair, accessible and effective complaints process.



Example: Between 2023 and 2024, we received a small number of complaints that HMRC had paid income tax repayments to third-party agents who were not authorised to act for individuals. When we engaged with HMRC, it had already taken steps to resolve the complaints, including consulting with the public and changing legislation to prevent more people from being affected. Quicker resolution was made possible because HMRC had followed the latest guidance and had effective internal governance and collaboration processes.

Our vision



We deliver fair and impartial justice for individuals and drive improvements in public services for everyone. In five years, we will be an established and influential voice in public service improvement, working in partnership to set standards and drive system-level change in the NHS, government departments and other public bodies.

Our aims and objectives



Impact

To drive meaningful improvements and system-level changes in public services

1. We will focus on common, recurrent and systemic themes, highlighting underlying causes and emerging risks.

2. We will turn complaints data, user experience and wider evidence into high-quality insight, making it open and accessible to others.

3. We will track compliance and implementation of our recommendations and work with partners to make sure our findings lead to measurable improvements across public services.



User experience

To provide an accessible, timely and person-centred complaints process

1. We will transform how people access and experience our service, using digital tools and AI-enabled pathways to make it clearer, faster and more transparent at every stage.
2. We will provide clear, responsive advice that helps people understand their options, access the most appropriate support and resolve issues early wherever possible.
3. We will collect and analyse real-time feedback and user insight to continuously improve the design and delivery of our service, better meet people's needs and model a culture of learning.



Awareness

To be a recognised and influential voice in improving public services

1. We will maximise our role as a parliamentary body to support scrutiny and inform public debate.
2. We will reach, support and share the experiences of underrepresented complainants, working with partners and using targeted communication channels.
3. We will create a clear, recognisable identity within the justice landscape, so that people know we provide individual redress and drive improvements in public services.

Helping us to deliver our strategy



Products

We will strengthen the tools and products we use to deliver our work, including:

1. online accounts that let people track the progress of their complaints
2. AI-enabled tools, including a digitised Public Value Model, to help process cases more quickly, and robustly spot patterns and themes in our casework
3. better data systems and dashboards to manage information and share insight
4. evidence-based reports and policy submissions that inform debate and decision-making
5. accessible communications such as news stories, blogs, podcasts and social media
6. outreach and engagement activities to connect with the people and organisations we serve.



Partnerships

We will deepen our partnerships with other organisations through:

1. sharing data and knowledge responsibly
2. co-producing reports, recommendations and standards for good public service
3. joint research and thought leadership
4. co-hosting events and discussions that shape debate
5. contributing to public inquiries, reviews and investigations.



Capabilities

We will build our skills and capabilities in key areas, including:

1. data analysis and insight generation
2. user research and service design
3. systems thinking and systemic investigations
4. collaborative, multidisciplinary ways of working
5. monitoring compliance and implementation
6. measuring our impact
7. public affairs and influencing policy and practice.

Delivering our aims

Impact



Our aim is to drive meaningful improvements and system-level changes in public services.

Why?

Our casework shows that the same mistakes often recur over many years, across different places and public services. The scale and cost of public inquiries show that learning from failings is not consistently happening. This reactive approach risks further harm and weakens public trust and confidence.

This is why impact sits at the heart of our strategy. We will help shift public services towards a preventative, learning-driven model by intervening earlier, preventing repeated failings and supporting sustainable improvement. Focusing on prevention allows us to address the underlying causes of complaints and reduce escalation to our service.

Our data is one of our biggest strengths, and the breadth of our remit gives us an unparalleled, countrywide, cross-sector view of what is happening in public services and systems. Complaints provide rich insight into weaknesses in service design, communication, complaint handling and organisational learning. By strengthening how we collect, analyse and share data, we can identify systemic risks earlier, draw transferable lessons and set clearer expectations of good public service. Our aim is to foster a culture where complaints are valued tools for improvement and prevention, not just signals that something has gone wrong.

Our work does not end when we identify an issue. We will strengthen how we monitor and support implementation of our recommendations to help make sure learning is embedded and improvements are sustained. This is how services become safer, fairer and more reliable, and how confidence in our independence and effectiveness is reinforced.



We will help shift public services towards a preventative, learning-driven model by intervening earlier, preventing repeated failings and supporting sustainable improvement

Using complaints to improve services for everyone

This diagram shows how we will use individual complaints to make wider system changes that have impact.



Individual complaint

When we receive a complaint, we consider whether it represents a bigger issue:

- **Do we have other complaints like this?**
- **Does it represent a common or recurrent theme?**
- **Are complaints like this increasing?**
- **Are there multiple agencies involved?**

We look at the wider context around the complaint or group of complaints:

- **Is this issue localised or occurring nationally?**
- **Does it reflect challenges like increasing demand or workforce pressures?**
- **What is political and public debate saying on this issue?**
- **What does wider evidence and intelligence tell us?**

Emerging issue





Systemic investigation

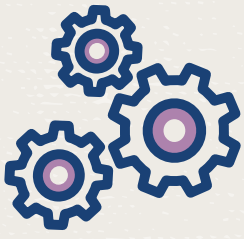
If we think an emerging issue is systemic, we will consider whether to:

- **group and prioritise complaints that represent wider, underlying, multi-agency issues**
- **trace the barriers, uncertainty and distress that individuals have experienced to understand how factors like policy, guidance and legislation may have contributed to this.**

As we conduct our systemic investigations, we will engage with service users, organisations and wider stakeholders to:

- **understand lived experience**
- **share data and insights**
- **make recommendations for service improvement**
- **inform policymaking and parliamentary scrutiny.**

Strategic opportunity





Measuring impact

We aim to have impact at local, regional and national levels to help improve services for as many people as possible.

We will track the impact of our recommendations, engagement and policy work and use our impact measurement framework to monitor where we have contributed to or directly influenced change in public services.

Objective 1: We will focus on common, recurrent and systemic themes, highlighting underlying causes and emerging risks.

Outcomes

- **Our insight provides a clear, evidence-based understanding of underlying causes, recurring failings and emerging risks across public services and systems.**
- **Systemic risks and patterns of failure are identified earlier and more consistently, supporting more informed scrutiny and decision-making.**

How?

We will strengthen our investigative and analytical capabilities to identify systemic, recurrent and multi-agency issues to tackle the underlying causes of complaints at scale. This includes expanding large-scale investigations, embedding new methodologies and building multidisciplinary expertise to spot emerging trends and risks.

Learning from these investigations will shape our policy, public affairs, engagement and communications, while partnerships will allow us to share intelligence, map system risks and coordinate action for maximum impact.

Objective 2: We will turn complaints data, user experience and wider evidence into high-quality insight, making it open and accessible to others.

Outcomes

- **Our evidence actively shapes scrutiny, public policy, decision-making and debate.**
- **Our insight is continually strengthened through collaboration and shared intelligence, giving us a deeper understanding of emerging risks and system pressures.**

How?

We will strengthen our insight and evidence base by investing in advanced data tools and staff expertise, conducting and commissioning research to understand the drivers of demand and anticipate future pressures. We will also use artificial intelligence (AI) responsibly to identify emerging themes, risks and opportunities. We will make sure AI is explainable, auditable and bias-checked with appropriate human oversight and clear governance.

We will build strategic research partnerships with academics and sector leaders to develop a richer, system-wide understanding of public service failings. We will also publish more of our decisions and data to improve transparency, learning and demonstrable impact.

Objective 3: We will track compliance and implementation of our recommendations and work with partners to make sure our findings lead to measurable improvements across public services.

Outcomes

- **Public bodies act on our recommendations, embedding learning and strengthening understanding of what good public service design, communication, complaint handling and learning from complaints looks like.**
- **Our recommendations lead to sustained improvements over time, with fewer repeated failings and increased trust in public services and our own public value.**

How?

We will build on the success of our NHS and Government Complaint Standards by producing practical guidance, toolkits and training. These will be designed to help organisations deliver excellent user experiences, prevent harm and embed continuous learning. We will also work in partnership with regulators, public bodies and experts to co-produce recommendations, reports and engagement events. We will use our independent insight to inform public inquiries and parliamentary scrutiny.

We will maximise and develop relationships across all levels of the organisations we investigate – from frontline teams to senior leaders, service designers, trainers and patient safety specialists – so that accountability for learning from complaints is shared. Over the coming years, this will involve building our capability and capacity to advise on areas such as governance, assurance and workforce training.

Our work will link insights to national oversight and improvement programmes, monitor progress against the Complaint Standards, and direct our engagement where the risk of repeat failings is greatest. We will also measure our own impact, focusing resources where they can make the greatest difference and providing transparent evidence of sustained improvement.

User experience



Our aim is to provide an accessible, timely and person-centred complaints process.

Why?

People come to us after something has gone wrong, often at a time of distress, so making the user experience the best it can be is key to this strategy.

Our process needs to be easy to understand and navigate. A clear, efficient and timely process helps complainants feel respected, enables organisations to engage constructively, and allows our staff to focus on meaningful, person-centred interactions.



Effective communication sits at the heart of this approach. Early, responsive guidance helps people understand their rights, navigate complex systems and resolve issues before they deepen. Clear, empathetic communication ensures people feel heard and supported, even when decisions are difficult. These principles not only improve individual experiences but are also a core part of our aim to encourage openness and early resolution across all public services.

Using feedback helps us to demonstrate our commitment to fairness and accountability

Modelling the high standards we expect of others means being open to feedback, willing to learn and transparent about how we improve. Feedback is not just a process; it is a statement of values. Using feedback helps us to demonstrate our commitment to fairness and accountability. Showing how people's experiences inform our decisions and lead to meaningful change is essential to building public trust and fostering a culture of openness and learning across the public sector.

Objective 1: We will transform how people access and experience our service, using digital tools and AI-enabled pathways to make it clearer, faster and more transparent at every stage.

Outcomes

- **People know what to expect from our process, and can easily understand, access and use our service, whatever their circumstances.**
- **Our caseworkers deliver a streamlined, person-centred service, improving effectiveness, trust and staff morale.**

How?

We will apply user-centred design across all channels to simplify processes and improve efficiency. Everyone should know what to expect from our service, be able to understand our process and be able to access our service regardless of circumstances or capacity.

We will introduce new online accounts that will allow people to make complaints, and organisations we investigate to engage with us more easily. Through their accounts, complainants and organisations can share evidence securely and stay informed on the progress of a case. The accounts will include information about the decisions we have made and why. This will help us to manage evidence more efficiently and gather better feedback on people's experience of our service. We will continue to offer accessible, non-digital ways to contact us, including our phone line, and we will maximise the alternative formats we have developed in recent years, including Easy Read and British Sign Language (BSL) options.

We will also modernise our casework systems so that digital tools and AI streamline time-consuming tasks. These tools will help caseworkers to collate information, search guidance and spend more time on talking to the people who use our service.

Our website will be easier to navigate, guidance will be clear, and the steps people need to take will be straightforward.

Objective 2: We will provide clear, responsive advice that helps people understand their options, access the most appropriate support and resolve issues early wherever possible.

Outcomes

- **People understand their options and have the information and tools to resolve issues earlier.**

How?

We will improve how we signpost people to appropriate support, including to other organisations or routes to redress, so they can continue their journey with confidence when we are not the right organisation to resolve their concern.

We will communicate clearly and transparently and explain our decisions, including when we cannot investigate. We will continue to pursue and promote opportunities for early resolution, helping people to get the right outcome without going through an investigation.

We will develop staff skills in clear communication and supporting people in vulnerable situations, drawing on user research to make sure our guidance is accessible and tailored to people's needs.

Objective 3: We will collect and analyse real-time feedback and user insight to continuously improve the design and delivery of our service, better meet people's needs, and model a culture of learning.

Outcomes

- **We identify and use robust and reliable insight to inform the future design and delivery of our service, evidencing how people's feedback has led to improvements.**

How?

Insight from user surveys and wider research will continuously shape improvements, making sure our service meets the needs of complainants and organisations alike, while giving staff confidence and the capacity to deliver high-quality casework and person-centred support.

The online account for complainants will capture insight at key points in the user journey to understand people's experience of our service and how easy it is to use. We will make sure that feedback and lessons learned from our quality assurance processes and our engagement with our Public Engagement Advisory Group help to continuously improve day-to-day operations.

We will publish insights on our website to support transparency and accountability.

Awareness

Our aim is to be a recognised and influential voice in improving public services.

Why?

We see the consequences of system failures at their sharpest point. Our investigations reveal where public services fall short and the impact this has on people's lives. This allows us to identify early warning signs before issues escalate into widespread harm, national scandals or public inquiries. This insight has greatest value when it is visible, understood and acted on beyond individual cases.

As a parliamentary body accountable to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, we are uniquely placed to support democratic scrutiny and help shape public debate. We provide MPs and committees with timely, independent evidence grounded in lived experience. This offers an early and authoritative route to learning and strengthening accountability.

Awareness of our service and confidence to complain vary across different groups. Factors such as age, ethnicity, disability, income and geography all influence whether people know about us, feel able to raise concerns and believe they will be heard. To promote fairness, we will use data, digital tools and partnerships to understand who uses our service, reach underrepresented groups and identify emerging risks earlier. This insight will support public services to learn from a full and inclusive range of experiences.

Public awareness of what an ombudsman does remains partial. Our research shows that our current name contributes to this confusion, as 'Parliamentary' is not widely understood and does not reflect the breadth of our remit. Although most of our complaints relate to the NHS in England, our remit also spans more than 300 government departments and public bodies. Establishing a clearer and more recognisable identity will improve access to justice and strengthen trust in our independence and purpose.



To promote fairness, we will use data, digital tools and partnerships to understand who uses our service and reach underrepresented groups

To help us make the changes we want to see in public services, we will take a strategic, evidence-led approach to communications and engagement. This will ensure we are contributing to policymaking, debate and scrutiny in the most effective way possible. The diagram shows our approach for doing this.



Objective 1: We will maximise our role as a parliamentary body to support scrutiny and inform public debate.

Outcomes

- **MPs understand our UK-wide remit and their role in supporting constituents' access to justice, and engage with us actively on cases and policy issues.**
- **Our expertise is actively sought out by Parliament and others to inform scrutiny and shape public debate.**

How?

We will leverage our independence, investigative expertise and frontline insight to be an authoritative voice that fosters a culture of openness, scrutiny and continuous improvement across public services.

We will deepen engagement with MPs and parliamentary committees through briefings, evidence submissions, drop-in events, regional visits and case-specific discussions, helping them guide constituents effectively.

At the same time, we will build strong strategic partnerships with thought leaders, policymakers, regulators and other key organisations. This will ensure our findings, recommendations and insights influence national policy, operational frameworks and long-term service reform.

We will use communication channels strategically to highlight emerging themes, share complainants' stories and reinforce the value of acting early. We will also make sure we deliver purposeful, coordinated messaging to progress key recommendations and policy positions, positioning ourselves as a trusted partner in resolving issues before they grow into systemic issues.

Objective 2: We will reach, support and share the experiences of underrepresented complainants, working with partners and using targeted communication channels.

Outcomes

- [x] **People from underrepresented groups can access our service and see their experiences reflected in our work.**

How?

We will use emerging digital tools to improve our casework data, identify patterns and disparities in our cases, and pinpoint communities who may not be as aware of or able to access our service. We will also develop a digital service that is supported by advocacy and advice organisations and collates the stories and experiences of people who may face barriers to accessing justice.

Our strategic communications will help us to inform, influence and work with NHS trusts, advocates, community groups, advisory services and MPs. We will enhance our guidance and support for advocacy and advice organisations to increase the accessibility and relevance of our service.

By sharing our insights through different communication channels, we will raise awareness of emerging issues that may affect specific communities or regions and promote improvements that better reflect the needs of a diverse population. This will help to build trust and a greater understanding of the lived experience of people who may find it challenging to access justice.

Objective 3: We will create a clear, recognisable identity within the justice landscape, so that people know we provide individual redress and drive improvements in public services.

Outcomes

- **We are widely known as the main point of contact for complaints about the NHS in England and UK government departments.**
- **We are a well-established and influential presence within the wider justice landscape, demonstrably strengthening accountability and access to justice.**

How?

In 2026, we will transition to a new name, the Public Service Ombudsman, and introduce a clear and consistent identity across all our channels that is recognisable and inclusive. We will be more visible by actively engaging with the public, community groups and those they represent to explain our name, reinforce understanding of our role, and help people understand when and how we can support them.

We will enhance our website and online accounts so information about our remit and processes is clear, accessible and easy to navigate. We will also deepen our relationships with MPs, their staff and partner organisations so they understand the independence of our role and can confidently guide their constituents to us.

We will use feedback from surveys, digital analytics and stakeholder insight to understand if we are recognisable, and we will refine our communications and engagement as needed to strengthen recognition and trust.

Measuring our impact

Improving public services and building trust and accountability are central to our strategy. To do this, we will need to monitor our progress to make sure our activities have the greatest impact. We also want to be transparent and accountable for the work we are doing.



In 3 years

we will review this strategy

How?

Each year, we will publish our business plan and annual report. We will also review our strategy after three years. We have developed a new way to measure our impact by reviewing progress against our activities and assessing the difference they have made. This ensures that we are undertaking the right work to help us meet our aims and objectives and deliver the outcomes we want to see.

The table on the next page provides an example of the type of data and evidence we will use to assess and monitor the objectives set out in the strategy. These measures will help us to review our approach based on insight and evidence so that we can understand what works, see if we are making a difference and adjust our approach where needed. By working in this way, we will be able to demonstrate where we have contributed to, helped improve, or directly improved public services over time.

	 Impact	 User experience	 Awareness
Objectives	**We will turn complaints data, user experience and wider evidence into high-quality insight, making it open and accessible to others.**	**We will transform how people access and experience our service, using digital tools and AI-enabled pathways to make it clearer, faster and more transparent at every stage.**	**We will reach, support and share the experiences of underrepresented complainants, working with partners and using targeted communication channels.**
Outcomes we will deliver internally	Stronger and more compelling policy reports, submissions and communications.	A streamlined, accessible digital service and person-centred support.	A digital service that is supported by advocacy and advice organisations, and collates the stories and experiences of people who may face barriers to accessing justice.
How we will measure this	The extent to which stakeholders and the media engage with and act on our reports and recommendations.	The reduction in average case handling times.	The amount of data and insight we gather on the experiences of those who are underrepresented in our casework.
Outcomes we will contribute to externally	Stakeholders and partners actively use our evidence to shape debate and make improvements to public services.	People understand, access and use our service with ease, regardless of their circumstances, capacity or prior knowledge.	Our service reaches underrepresented groups, reflects their experiences and drives system improvements for a diverse range of people.
How we will measure this	By gathering case studies and qualitative evidence that demonstrate our role in driving positive systemic change.	By tracking responses to our surveys with service users.	By tracking our engagement with and from the groups we want to reach, how well our complaints represent the population, and where organisations have made changes.

Investing to deliver

The strategy sets out our plan of action to achieve our overall aims over the next five years. We have set out a five-year strategy because the changes we want to make are deep, structural and long-term.

We will continue to resolve individual complaints, but strengthening our **impact**, enhancing **user experience** and building **awareness** are not just about doing more of what we do already.

To achieve our aims to manage the demand on our service and maximise our public value, we need to make shifts in the way we work and use technology. We also need to build the right skills to deliver our activities. A five-year horizon enables us to build robust foundations and scale improvements via three core enablers: **our capabilities, our products** and **our partnerships.**

Over the coming years, we will plan, invest in and sequence change intelligently. We will test new ways of working while remaining responsive to emerging risks and public needs. We will sequence work so that our core casework remains stable while we build the capabilities, data tools and partnerships needed to expand our systemic impact.



Each year we will produce a business plan that sets out the activities we will deliver and prioritise that year

To make sure we have detailed and transparent information about our activities, each year we will produce a business plan that sets out the activities we will deliver and prioritise that year. Our annual report will explain what we have achieved.

The strategy is designed to be resilient to shifts in political context or public expectations. It is also flexible, so we can adapt our approach based on wider changes and internal monitoring of our impact and progress. If any major changes happen, we will review the strategy. To provide further assurance, we will review the strategy after three years as standard.

The next section provides detailed information about the activity and outputs we will prioritise to achieve our vision.

Our activities and outputs

Impact

To drive meaningful improvements and system-level changes in public services



Capabilities

Advanced data and analytical expertise to combine internal and external data, use AI responsibly, and generate deeper insights.

Stronger systemic investigation capability, including new methodologies and multidisciplinary teams to understand underlying causes of failings in complex systems.

Improved compliance monitoring and a new impact measurement framework so we can track implementation, measure change and focus our efforts.

Collaborative, multidisciplinary ways of working that bring together casework, policy, communications and engagement to turn insight into action.

Enhanced public affairs and influencing skills to make sure our evidence shapes scrutiny, debate and decision-making.

Products

Influential, evidence-based reports, recommendations and submissions designed to shape policy, improve services and strengthen accountability.

Practical guidance, standards, toolkits and training to help public bodies improve service design, communication, complaint handling and learning.

Published decisions that increase transparency, learning and demonstrable impact.

Open and accessible data tools, dashboards and insight outputs that help us and our stakeholders better understand patterns, risks and performance.

Strategic communications and engagement, including blogs, media, social media and events to amplify service user voices and promote learning.

Partnerships

Data and intelligence sharing arrangements with public bodies, regulators, oversight organisations, courts and tribunals to build a system-wide understanding of risk and failure.

Research, reports and recommendations co-produced with regulators, academia, think tanks and the third sector to strengthen credibility and impact.

Joint thought leadership and engagement activity, including events and roundtables that shape national debate on public service improvement.

Collaboration with parliamentary and public inquiry processes to make sure our independent insight informs scrutiny and accountability at the highest levels.

Working in partnership to coordinate action on systemic risks, helping organisations we investigate adopt and embed improvements in practice.

User experience

To provide an accessible, timely and person-centred complaints process



Capabilities

Strong user research and service design expertise to shape our service around the needs of complainants, those who support them, and the organisations we investigate.

Skilled, empathetic communication through training in clear communication, trauma-informed practice and how to support people in vulnerable situations.

Insight-driven continuous improvement by gathering feedback at key points in the user journey, running regular research and surveys, and embedding learning into governance and decision-making.

Strong outreach and engagement capability that helps us identify and remove barriers to access and modernise our service.

Products

A simpler, more intuitive website with easy-to-find information and straightforward guidance on complex processes.

Online accounts that allow complainants and organisations to track progress and access updates easily.

AI-enabled casework tools so staff can quickly access the right information, guidance and policies, freeing up time for human interaction and personalised support.

Transparent, easy-to-understand decisions and correspondence, including clear explanations when we cannot take a complaint forward.

Effective signposting and guidance tools to help people find the right support or alternative routes to redress when we are not best placed to help.

Published insight from user feedback to show how people's experiences are shaping improvements to our service.

Partnerships

Strong engagement with MPs, advocates and legal representatives so they can help people understand their rights, know how to make an eligible complaint, and access our service at the right time.

Expanded collaboration and focus groups with service users, including our Public Engagement Advisory Group, to test, refine and improve our service.

Providing organisations we investigate and MPs with regular, meaningful insights into complaints about their services and complaints that affect their constituents, so they can monitor issues and make informed improvements.

Awareness

To be a recognised and influential voice in improving public services



Capabilities

Strong branding and design expertise to maintain a clear, consistent and inclusive identity across all channels.

Advanced audience insight and targeting capability using casework data, analysis and digital tools to understand who we are reaching and who we are not.

Skilled storytelling and multimedia capability to turn casework insight and human stories into compelling, accessible content that resonates with different audiences.

Robust evaluation and insight mechanisms to measure recognition, understanding and engagement through surveys, web analytics and media analysis, and refine our approach.

Confident public affairs and parliamentary engagement skills to communicate our role, remit and impact clearly to MPs, committees and policymakers.

Products

Clear, recognisable branding across our website, publications, correspondence and public-facing materials.

An accessible, user-friendly website and digital presence where people can easily understand our role, explore case studies and decisions, and see how complaints lead to improvement.

Compelling case stories and insight content, including blogs, media pieces, social media, podcasts and interviews, that amplify service user voices and show the impact of speaking up.

Targeted awareness materials and guidance for community groups, advocates and advice organisations to help them support people to use our service.

Briefings, evidence submissions and insight packs tailored for MPs, select committees and policymakers.

Partnerships

Active participation in administrative justice, ombudsman and regulatory networks to raise our profile, share learning and reinforce our position within the wider oversight landscape.

Closer engagement with MPs, select committees and parliamentary networks to make sure our work, insight and case evidence inform democratic scrutiny and public debate.

A stronger, more visible presence in sector conferences, forums and events where we can share insight and emerging trends and strengthen capabilities for preventative action.

Collaborative activity with thought leaders and policy influencers, such as joint events, panel discussions and roundtables, to position us as a trusted voice on public service improvement.

Partnerships with community, advocacy and advice organisations that help increase awareness of our service among underrepresented groups and support people to raise concerns.

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