

**Equality and
Human Rights
Commission**

equalityhumanrights.com

The Equality and Human Rights Commission Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is committed to providing a high quality service to everyone we deal with. In order to do this we need you to give us any comments about our service, and to tell us when we get things wrong. We want to help you resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

2. We treat as a complaint any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response. We listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service.

3. What is a complaint?

3.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

3.2 Our policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service we provide
- the behaviour of our staff, and
- any action or lack of action by Commissioners or staff affecting an individual or group

3.3 Our complaints policy does not cover:

- comments about our policies or policy decisions
- dissatisfaction with our policies or decisions about individual cases or grants or requests for legal assistance
- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure, or
- anonymous complaints.

4. Persistent and/or vexatious complaints

4.1 These are becoming an increasing problem for public sector bodies, and difficulties in handling such complaints can place strain on time and resources and can be stressful for staff who have to deal with these complex and challenging issues. In order to counter this, we are in the process of introducing a policy that deals with persistent or vexatious complaints.

5. Our standards for handling complaints:

We treat all complaints seriously, whether they are made by telephone, by letter, by fax, or by email.

You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times. We would hope, too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings with our staff at all times.

We will treat your complaint in confidence within the Commission.

We will deal with your complaint promptly. We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within five working days and we will send you a full reply within 20 working days of receipt. If we cannot send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full.

We will publish information in our annual report on the numbers and categories of complaints we receive, and the percentage of complaints upheld.

We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your:

- sex or marital status: this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed)
- sexual orientation
- colour or race: this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality
- disability
- religious or political beliefs, or trade union affiliation, or
- other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties or age.

6. How to complain

6.1 You can make a complaint to the addresses in section 9 below in a number of ways:

By telephone

By email

In writing or letter

By fax

By Textphone

6.2 We have a two-stage complaints procedure. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure.

Stage 1

6.2.1 In the first instance, we will try to get your complaint resolved by the Head/ Director of the team/officer who provided you with the service.

Upon receipt of your complaint we will contact the relevant team Head/Director and ask them to deal with your complaint.

Stage 2

6.2.2 If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request a review by the Group Director of the relevant directorate. Your request should be sent to the

Knowledge Officers at the address given below, who will forward your request to the Group Director for a review.

6.3 At each stage of the procedure we will acknowledge receipt of your written complaint **within five working days** and we will send you a full reply **within 20 working days** of receipt. If we cannot send a full reply within our deadline we will tell you the reason why very quickly and let you know when we will be able to reply in full.

At each stage please send your complaint or request for review to the Knowledge Officers using the contact details given in section 9.

7 If you are not satisfied

7.1 If having followed the two stages of our complaints procedure you still remain dissatisfied, you can ask to have your complaint reviewed externally by someone who does not work for the Commission.

You should contact your Member of Parliament or Assembly Member for Wales and ask for your complaint to be referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can carry out independent investigations into complaints about government departments, agencies and some public bodies which include the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The address to contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman is:-

Milbank Tower
Milbank
London
SW1P4QP
Telephone or fax: 020 7217 4000

8 Comments

8.1 As well as learning from your complaints we are also interested in other ideas you may have on how we might do things better. We would also like you to tell us when we do things well. If you have a comment to make about our policy decisions, it will be addressed by the team concerned as rapidly as possible.

You can make your comments by telephoning or writing to any members of our staff, or you can email us. We will use your comments to help improve our service and the way we do things. However, the two-stage procedure outlined above does not apply to comments.

8.2 You can make your comments by telephoning or writing to any members of our staff, or you can e-mail us. We will use your comments to help improve our service and the way we do things.

9. Contacting us

9.1 All complaints and requests for review under our complaints procedures should be sent to one of the following addresses:

Complaints relating to England and Scotland

Attention: Knowledge Officer

Address:

3rd Floor

Lancaster House

67 Newhall Street

Birmingham

B3 1NA

Email: complaints@equalityhumanrights.com

England helpline:- 0845 604 6610

Scotland helpline:- 0845 604 5510

Fax: 0845 604 6630

Textphone: 0845 604 6620

Complaints relating to Wales

Postal address:-

Strategy and Business Planning Team

3rd Floor

Callaghan Square

Cardiff

CF10 5BT

Email: complaints@equalityhumanrights.com

Helpline: 0845 604 8810

Fax: 0845 604 8830

Text phone: 0845 604 8820

10. Formats and Languages

This policy is also available in Welsh. If you would like the policy or a response to a complaint in another language or format (such as Braille, audio CD, large print or Easy Read) please contact one of our help lines.

We also offer the Language Line translation service for callers to our helpline. The Commission will take reasonable steps to accommodate any requests you may make to enable you to read this policy or receive responses to complaints in other formats or languages.