

Tips on making a complaint about UK government services

Why should I complain?

We use public services like DVLA, the tax office and Jobcentre Plus every day without any trouble at all. But sometimes things can go wrong. If you are unhappy about your experience of a UK government department or some other public organisation, you have a right to complain.

Complaining can get things put right for you and can also help organisations get better at what they do.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when:

- you are not happy with an organisation's service or something it did or didn't do, and
- you want the organisation to answer your concerns and put things right.

About us

We are the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. We make final decisions on complaints that have not been resolved by UK government departments or some other UK public organisations. Before bringing a complaint to us, you should complain to the organisation you are unhappy with.

Here are some tips to help you do this.

Top tips

1. Make your complaint clear

Work out what you want to say, including:

- what happened
- who was involved
- when it happened
- where it happened
- how it has affected you or someone else.

2. Decide what you hope to achieve

Be prepared to tell the organisation what you would like it to do to put things right. This could be to apologise or to take action to prevent the same mistake happening again.

3. Complain as soon as you can

You should complain as soon as possible, while events are still fresh in your mind.

If you can speak to the people involved first, they may be able to sort out your complaint quickly. Ask about their complaints procedure.

4. Contact the organisation you want to complain about

You may be able to complain by talking to someone or you might need to put your complaint in writing. Ask if there is a form to fill in, and when you can expect to hear back.

5. Ask for help

If you need help putting your complaint together, speak to the Citizens Advice Bureau. You can find your local branch at www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

You can also contact us on 0345 015 4033 for details of other groups that may be able to help you.

6. Keep to the point

Keep your complaint clear and short, so your main points stand out. State clearly what you want to achieve from your complaint.

7. Include your contact details

Tell the organisation how you would like it to contact you and include a reference number if you have one.

8. Keep a note of anyone involved in your complaint

Write down the names and positions of the people involved in, and dealing with, your complaint. Also keep copies of any letters or emails you get, as you may need to refer to them in the future.

9. Contact us

If you have reached the end of the organisation's complaints process and are still unhappy, you can bring your complaint to us. You will need to contact a Member of Parliament (MP) so that they can do this on your behalf.

You can find MPs' contact details at www.parliament.uk or call us.

For more information on making a complaint or to make a complaint visit:

www.ombudsman.org.uk or call 0345 015 4033

For other languages or formats please contact us:
publications@ombudsman.org.uk