

Sent by email

12 October 2022

Dear Chair,

I am pleased to write to you today to mark the launch of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's [UK Central Government \(UKCG\) Complaint Standards](#). These standards will support Government departments to apply consistent high levels of customer service in addressing complaints while learning from errors to improve future delivery of services.

The development of the UKCG Complaint Standards is the culmination of many months of close work between PHSO and Government complaint handlers. Earlier this year we launched a public consultation on the Standards and received a significant number of responses from staff working within Government, advice and advocacy workers as well as members of the public. Overall, 91% of respondents said they were supportive of what the Standards were seeking to achieve. Respondents gave us a clear steer that senior leaders have an important role to play in promoting use of the Standards and a learning culture more broadly. We are sharing the full [consultation feedback report](#) with you today.

In addition to those who responded to our consultation, I am particularly grateful to the work of the UKCG Complaint Standards working group, who have been invaluable in shaping the Standards into their current form and ensuring they are of practical relevance to complaint handling teams across Government. I would also like to thank colleagues from Cabinet Office, HM Revenue and Customs, Department for Transport and the Food Standards Agency who have agreed to be trailblazers, working closely with my team to provide active feedback on the Standards post-launch.

The new Standards should be viewed as the first step towards building a complaint handling system where the way complaints are responded to is consistent and a positive experience for all individuals involved. They are designed to provide a guide that can be adopted and adapted to suit the unique environments which exist across central Government and public bodies. Although they are PHSO led, in order to be successful, it is vital that they are owned and championed by departments. Over the coming months we will continue to develop and share a suite of resources to support departments and other public bodies to embed the Standards into practice, including a full set of guidance modules and accompanying training.

As we look beyond the launch of the UKCG Complaint Standards, the need for PHSO to be granted Complaint Standards Authority powers becomes even more important. Such powers would enable us to monitor consistency and help ensure staff and organisations receive tailored



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support to deliver the best possible service for users. This would also align PHSO's powers with the public service Ombuds in the UK's devolved nations, where these powers already exist.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months to continue to improve complaint handling in public services through the UKCG Complaint Standards. I thank you in advance for your continued support in ensuring their success.

Your sincerely,

Rob Behrens

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Ombudsman and Chair

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