

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Complaints Policy and Procedure (June 2016)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The UK Statistics Authority welcomes feedback on its work from all users and producers of official statistics and encourages all its stakeholders to comment on their experience. Complaints are considered a valuable learning tool and provide information that enables us to develop our services.
- 1.2 The Authority aims to be responsive, open, fair and efficient in the way that it handles complaints. Where appropriate, complaints will receive a full, prompt and unbiased investigation, and the complainant will be kept informed of progress and of the outcome of their complaint.
- 1.3 The Authority has established this procedure for the reporting, investigation and management of complaints received about its services. This policy and procedure has been agreed by the Authority Board, and its members and staff should all be aware of its provisions.
- 1.4 The Authority Board will receive a report, at least annually, on complaints received and the outcomes of those complaints. A summary of complaints made about the Authority will also be included each year in the Authority's Annual Report.
- 1.5 This policy and procedure will be reviewed at least annually.
- 1.6 This policy and procedure will be published on the Authority's website and updated as necessary.

2. SCOPE AND TIME LIMITS OF THIS PROCEDURE

- 2.1 This procedure covers complaints about the conduct or actions of members of the Authority or its staff in the course of the Authority's business in so far as they have affected you directly. It also covers complaints about deficiencies in the services provided by the Authority, as well as covering the way in which complaints about statistical issues have been investigated by the Authority.
- 2.2 This procedure does not cover:
- complaints of any kind about official statistics, as these are dealt with under the Authority's scrutiny and casework function (see 2.3 below);
 - complaints about the services or staff of the Office for National Statistics (ONS), as these should be taken up with ONS using the ONS's own complaints procedure (see below);
 - complaints about the services or members of the Government Statistical Service (GSS), as these should be taken up with the government department or body concerned through the National Statistician's Office (see below); and,
 - complaints about statistics, such as those produced by local authorities, health trusts and businesses, as these are outside of the Authority's statutory remit of 'official statistics', as set out in the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, particularly section 7 of the Act.

2.3 **This procedure sets out how to complain about the UK Statistics Authority.** If your complaint is about what has been said in Authority publications, published statements, or in correspondence by and with the Authority; or if your complaint is about official statistics more generally, including their quality, good practice or comprehensiveness, then you should refer the matter to the Statistics Casework team (see Useful Contacts below). Complaints made in these areas will not be dealt with under this procedure, although you can expect to have your complaint investigated, a reply sent to you setting out the Authority's views, and to be kept informed regarding the progress of investigating your complaint. If, after making such a complaint, you then wish to complain about the way that the Authority has investigated your concerns then the procedure set out below will apply.

2.5 It is important that complaints about the Statistics Authority are made as soon as possible after the event(s) which led to the complaint. As a general rule, the Authority will usually only investigate complaints that are made within six months of the event that has resulted in the complaint. This time limit may be waived in exceptional circumstances, such as, where there are good reasons why the complaint could not have been made earlier and where it is still considered reasonably possible adequately and fairly to investigate the incident.

3. HOW TO COMPLAIN

3.1 All complaints should preferably be made in writing: by letter, fax or email.

3.2 If it is not possible for complaints to be made in writing, these can be made by telephone or in person by appointment to the Complaints Officer. This will ensure that a sufficient record of the complaint can be made at a mutually convenient time. If any special arrangements need to be made in order for you to make your complaint please let the Complaints Officer know and we will endeavour to see that these requirements are met.

3.3 Complaints should be sent or made to:

Mr Mervyn Stevens
Complaints Officer
UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V2QQ

or by email to: authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk

or by fax to: 020 7014 2453

or by telephone to: 0845 604 1857

3.4 Your complaint should give as much information as possible and the following factors should be considered and set out in your complaint:

- **when?** - date(s) of the event(s) that you are complaining about;
- **who?** - the name(s) of any individual(s) that you are complaining about;
- **why?** - explain clearly and concisely why you are dissatisfied;
- **where?** - where have we gone wrong - highlight the subject area of your complaint; and,
- **what?** - what do you think we should do to put matters right

3.5 Any documentary evidence that you may have to support your complaint would be particularly helpful.

4. HOW WE WILL DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT

4.1 The complaint will be acknowledged within three working days of receipt.

4.2 The complaint will initially be reviewed by a panel of at least two out of the following three:

- the Authority's Chief Executive;
- the Authority's Director General for Regulation;
- the Deputy Director of the Central Policy Secretariat; and
- a Non-Executive Director of the Authority.

4.3 The panel will decide, on the basis of the information provided, whether or not an investigation of the complaint is necessary. The result of this initial review will be notified to you within ten working days of receipt of the complaint. If the panel considers that an investigation of the matter is not justified then you will be informed of the reasons why. The decision of the panel may allow for the complaint to be resubmitted with further information.

4.4 If the panel determines that an investigation is warranted then you will be informed of the name and contact details of the officer that has been appointed to investigate the complaint.

4.5 All complaints received by the panel, including those subsequently investigated by an appointed officer, will be investigated fully, fairly, promptly and efficiently where the complaint is accompanied by clear evidence-based explanations. If this date is not achieved then you will receive a progress report and an explanation of why it has not been possible to conclude the investigation within the original timescale.

4.6 At the conclusion of the investigation you will receive a letter from one of the panel (in paragraph 4.2 above) setting out the following:

- how the matter has been investigated;
- the findings of the investigation; and,
- what, if appropriate, the Authority proposes to do to remedy the situation.

4.7 If your complaint is about one of the panel then you can address your complaint to the Authority Chair in the first instance. If your complaint is about the Authority Chair then the panel will find an independent and external senior person to review the matter and report to the Authority Board.

5. APPEALS

5.1 If you disagree with the initial decision of the review panel, are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately investigated or that the conclusions of the investigation are incorrect or unsatisfactory, then you may ask that the Authority Chair reviews the case as appropriate. The decision of the Authority Chair about the matter will be final.

5.2 If your complaint is about one of the panel and your complaint has been addressed to the Authority Chair in the first instance, and you disagree with the decision of the Authority Chair, then you may ask the Authority Board to review the case as appropriate. The decision of the Authority Board about the matter will be final.

5.3 If you wish to appeal against the decision of Authority Board following an investigation by an independent reviewer (paragraph 4.7 above) in respect of a complaint about the Authority Chair, you may ask the Authority Board to directly investigate and review the case again. The decision of the Authority Board about the matter will be final.

6. THE OMBUDSMAN

6.1 If all of the provisions within this procedure have been exhausted and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, then you may wish to contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman at:

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP

Telephone: 0345 015 4033

email: phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk

6.2 Further information about the Ombudsman, and how to refer matters to the Ombudsman, can be found at:

<http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>

Useful contacts

UK Statistics Authority

Complaints about any of the following:

- Authority publications, statements, correspondence by and with the Authority
- Production and publication of official statistics, their quality, good practice or comprehensiveness

Contact: Statistics Casework team
 UK Statistics Authority
 1 Drummond Gate
 London
 SW1V2QQ

email: authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk
telephone 0845 604 1857

Office for National Statistics

Complaints about the Office for National Statistics

Contact:

email: complaints.manager@ons.gsi.gov.uk
telephone: 0845 601 3034

National Statistician's Office

Complaints about the Government Statistical Service

Contact: Private Secretary to the National Statistician
 UK Statistics Authority
 1 Drummond Gate
 London
 SW1V2QQ

email: national.statistician@statistics.gsi.gov.uk
telephone: 01633 455306