



The Role of the Independent Complaints Reviewer

My role as Independent Complaints Reviewer is to act as an honest broker in investigating complaints about the Audit Commission. My aim is to achieve the impartial and fair settlement of complaints, making a positive difference for the Audit Commission's customers now and in the future. If you remain dissatisfied with the Audit Commission's final response to your complaint, you can refer it to me at no cost to you.

This leaflet explains my role in more detail and how to go about referring your complaint. If you have a general enquiry you can write or telephone for advice or further information.

When referring your complaint please help me by giving as much information as possible and by being as specific as you can. At the back of this leaflet you will find an easy to complete form to help you. My office address and contact numbers are at the end of the leaflet.

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The Independent Complaints Reviewer

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If you believe that there has been a failure in the Audit Commission's standards of service or that you have been treated unfairly and been caused unnecessary problems or concerns, you can ask the Independent Complaints Reviewer (ICR) to investigate your complaint. The ICR will look into your complaint in an objective and impartial way.

Examples of poor service or unfairness can include:

- Failure to follow proper procedures
- Discourtesy
- Discrimination or injustice
- Excessive delay
- Not answering your complaint fully and promptly
- Failure to apologise for mistakes

The ICR is managerially independent of the Audit Commission and her service is free to complainants.

Who can make a complaint to the ICR?

Any person, group or organisation with a complaint about the standard of service received from the Audit Commission.

The Audit Commission has an internal complaints procedure. Initially, you should give the Audit Commission itself an opportunity to resolve your complaint. If you feel that the response that you have received is not satisfactory, you can ask the ICR to consider it on your behalf.

The ICR will usually only investigate complaints to which the Audit Commission has given a final response. The Commission's complaints procedure is explained on its website: www.audit-commission.gov.uk. Complaints should be sent in the first instance to the Complaints Unit Manager:

The contact details are:

Telephone: 0844 798 3131 (local call rate) Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421 Email: complaints@audit-commission.gov.uk

Please note that the ICR will not usually consider any complaint later than six months after the Audit Commission has completed its own investigations and offered a final response.

Are there complaints the ICR can't investigate?

The ICR will not initiate complaints herself and there are a number of complaints that she cannot investigate which are summarised below: -

- Complaints about maladministration on the part of organisations which fall within the Audit Commission's regulatory remit. (These complaints should be referred to the organisation itself or to the relevant Ombudsman service. If you do not know which Ombudsman covers the organisation concerned, we will be pleased to advise you.)
- Decisions made by the Audit Commission based upon the laws under which it operates (although complaints about the way in which such decisions were made may be investigated)
- Decisions made by appointed auditors from professional firms or from the Audit Commission's staff made in accordance with the Codes of Audit Practice for local government and health organisations or under their legal powers. (More details about the Codes of Practice can be found on the Audit Commission's website)
- Complaints about the exercise of the Audit Commission's legal powers to inspect and categorise the performance of local authorities or housing associations, which are subject to a formal review
- Complaints made by Audit Commission employees concerning their employment or by applicants for employment about recruitment procedures
- Complaints which have become the subject of court proceedings

If you are not sure whether your complaint falls within one of these categories we will be pleased to advise you.

How do I go about making a complaint to the ICR?

Initial contact can be made in writing, by telephone, by fax or by e-mail. Should you wish the ICR to investigate your complaint, it is better to put it in writing so that none of the facts are overlooked. If you would like help in putting your complaint in writing, you can telephone the ICR's office for assistance.

The following information will be needed to help the ICR deal with your complaint more quickly:

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- Your name, address, a daytime telephone number and, if available, an e-mail address
- The name of any person or organisation on whose behalf you are referring the complaint and the reason why you are dealing with it. You must also say whether they support the referral of the complaint
- The Audit Commission office or department involved and any reference number there
- Any relevant correspondence or documentation. It is preferable for you to send photocopies but if this is not possible, please make it clear which documents sent are originals and which you would like returned. Photocopies will be taken at no cost to you and the originals will be returned to you promptly
- Explain the reason for your complaint as clearly and precisely as possible
- Explain what you would like the Audit Commission to do to resolve your complaint

We have a Complaints Referral Form to help you.

What will happen once I have made my complaint?

We will acknowledge your complaint within one week. We will agree with you the issues that you would like us to consider and ask you to confirm this by signing a complaint summary. The ICR will then consider whether the complaint is a matter that she can investigate. If the ICR cannot look into your complaint or decides not to, you will be told why.

Once the ICR is satisfied that she can proceed, she will obtain a response to your complaint from the Audit Commission. The ICR has the right of full access to any documents and information she considers necessary to enable her to investigate your complaint.

The ICR hopes to resolve complaints by agreement whenever possible. We will want to know what you would like the Audit Commission to do to put things right and, if we can achieve a satisfactory settlement for you by conciliation, we will bring our investigation to a close at this point.

The ICR may decide that resolution is not possible and that further investigation or enquiries are necessary. In some cases this might involve speaking with you or, in exceptional circumstances, meeting you personally. All conversations or meetings will be informal and held in private.

The ICR will deal with your complaint as quickly as possible, but the length of time it will take can vary from case to case depending on its complexity.

On completion of her review, the ICR will send you a report. If your complaint has been resolved by agreement, the report will outline the terms of the resolution and any action the Audit Commission has agreed to take. Following investigation, the report will explain the ICR's findings and any recommendations. The report will also be sent to the Audit Commission's Chief Executive.

If your complaint is upheld, the ICR will seek an apology for you and, where appropriate, can recommend other redress action. She is able to comment on the Audit Commission's handling of any particular matter and can also make recommendations to improve its services in the future. Finally, in some cases, the ICR may recommend payment of limited compensation.

Will the Audit Commission take notice of the ICR's report?

The Audit Commission will implement recommendations made by the ICR in her report on a complaint. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Audit Commission refuse to act upon these recommendations. In this event, the Chief Executive will write to you and to the ICR giving a full explanation.

Will the ICR's findings be made public?

The ICR will not make her reports on individual complaints public, but she will produce annual reports. As well as statistical information, these reports will include brief anonymised summaries of completed cases. Annual reports are published inside and outside of the Audit Commission.

What should I do if I remain dissatisfied after the ICR has investigated my complaint?

The ICR's review is the final step you can take in respect of your complaint about the Audit Commission. Should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the ICR's review, please let us know. Although the ICR's decision is usually final, we will want to see any new information that is pertinent to your complaint.

Giving your views

The ICR welcomes all comments about her service, whether complimentary or critical. If you have any comments to make, please let us know. If you want to complain about the way we have dealt with you, please let us know immediately, and we will respond to your concerns promptly. Further information on how to make a complaint and the way we will respond can be obtained on request.

Important things to know about the ICR service

The ICR examines complaints informally. This means that we handle complaints in a different way from courts and tribunals, and we do not hold hearings which people are required to attend. We gather information in documentary form and usually settle complaints by correspondence. We only hold informal interviews where it is necessary to understand a complaint better, or to find out more about the Audit Commission's response to it.

The ICR cannot accept anonymous complaints or initiate her own investigations without a referral. Your name, and the name of any person or organisation you represent will be shared with the Audit Commission when we receive your complaint and ask for information about it.

In order to deal with your complaint effectively, we will need to handle personal details about you which may include sensitive information. We will try to do so considerately, but we may need to need to exchange information about your complaint with the Audit Commission in order to find out important facts about it.

We are able to see all of the relevant information about your complaint, including Audit Commission files and other data. Although we have the right of access to this information for the purposes of our investigation, we have no authority to release it to you or any other third party.

Any requests for data or information must be made direct to the Audit Commission. If such a request is made and we are examining relevant material, we will return it immediately to allow the Commission to deal with the request. The evidence will be returned to us as soon as possible so that our review can proceed.

The ICR will respect your privacy and will not publish information about you or your case. We will not discuss your personal case with the media or any other third party, although we may refer to the kind of issues it brings to light, in order to encourage better understanding of the causes of complaints and how they can be avoided through service improvement.

Need more help?

This leaflet is also available on audiotape and can be provided in other languages. Should you require information about this, please let us know by telephone, fax, letter or e-mail.

Where necessary, we are able to provide a translation service to assist you in the presentation of your complaint.

The Independent Complaints Reviewer

New Premier House (Second Floor)
150 Southampton Row
London WC1B 5AL
Telephone 020 7278 6251
Fax 020 7278 9675

E-mail enquiries@icr.gsi.gov.uk

Website address: <http://www.icrev.org.uk/>



Complaint Referral Form

This form should only be completed after reading the [leaflet](#) explaining the role of the ICR.

1. Name

2. Address

Postcode:

3. Contact telephone numbers

4a. Fax number

4b. E-mail address

5. Name and address of any other organisation concerned in your complaint (eg local authority)

6. Are you referring the complaint on behalf of someone else?

If the answer is "no" please go to question 11

Yes

No

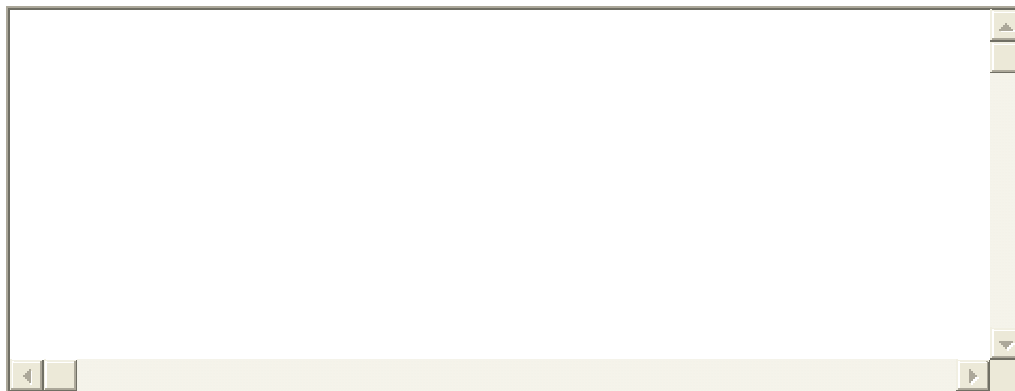
Details about any person or organisation on whose behalf you are referring the complaint

7. Name

8. Address

Postcode:

9. Explain why you are referring the complaint



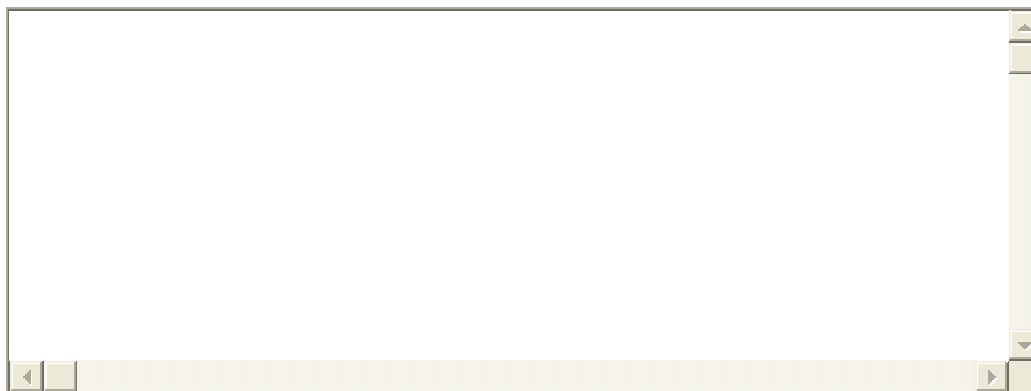
10. Are you referring the complaint with the agreement of the above person/organisation?

Yes

No

Details about your complaint

11. Please explain your complaint/s as clearly and precisely as possible.



12. Have you received a final written response to your complaint from the Audit Commission?

Yes

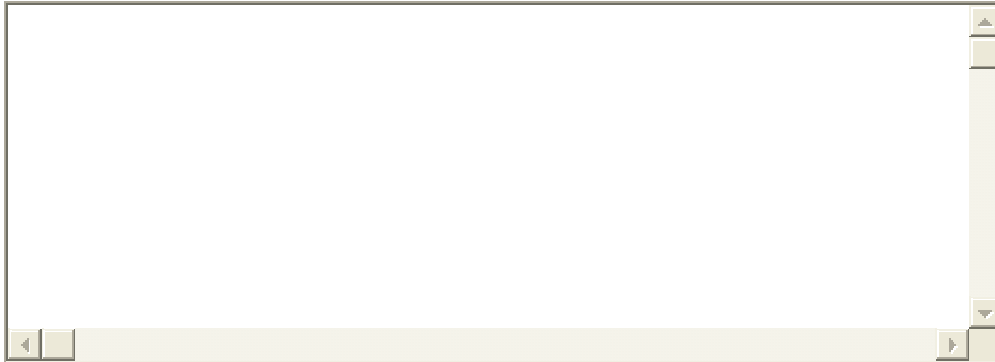
No

13. When did you receive the response from the Audit Commission?

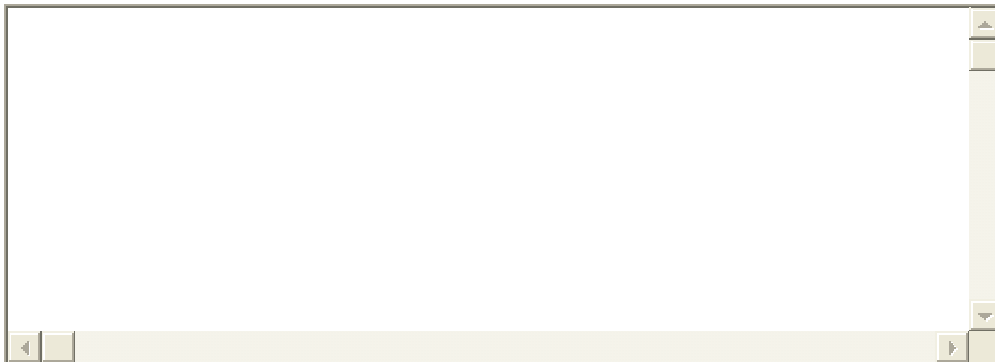
14. Has your complaint been referred to any other organisation? If so please provide details

Yes

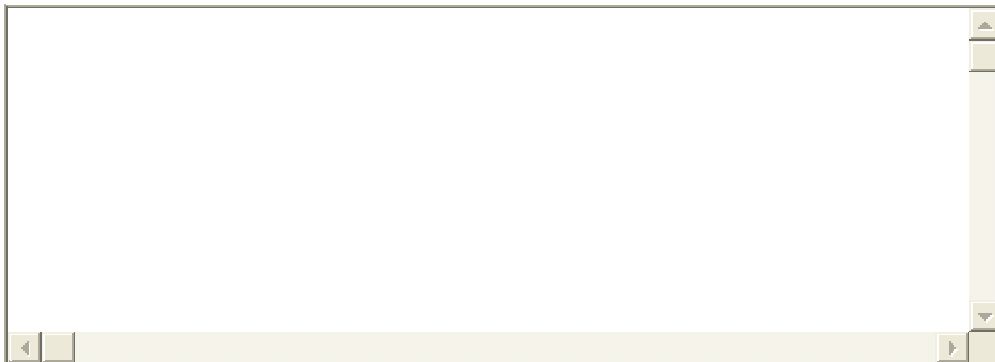
No



15. Please explain as clearly as possible how would you like the Audit Commission to put the matter right for you?



16. Please forward all relevant documents to the ICR. Please list below the documents you are sending (Please post all documents to the ICR office)



Please read the following information and then check the box to confirm that you want to refer your complaint to the ICR

I would like the Independent Complaints Reviewer to consider my complaint. I understand that:

- You will need to handle personal details about me, which could include sensitive information in order to deal with my complaint effectively.
- You will need to exchange information about my complaint with the Audit Commission (for example to find out important facts about my case).
- You handle complaints in a different way from the courts, not requiring people to attend hearings in person, but resolving disputes by correspondence.
- You may publish examples of where things can go wrong, based on real cases, but you will always respect my privacy and keep my personal information confidential.



I would like the Independent Complaints Reviewer to consider my complaint and understand the above terms and conditions.