



CPS

Feedback & Complaints

How to give feedback or make a complaint
to the Crown Prosecution Service



April 2010

Complaints

Introduction

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) aims to provide the highest standard of service and to get things right. However, there will be occasions when we do not.

If you are dissatisfied with the service that we have provided and you wish to pursue a complaint, you should follow the guidance in this section of the booklet.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about any aspect of our service.

Limited information can normally only be provided in ongoing cases. We reserve the right not to deal with a complaint in an ongoing case if it might prejudice the proceedings to do so.

We cannot comment on the conduct of other organisations, such as the police, the courts or the judiciary. If you have a complaint against another organisation you should direct it to them. A list of contact numbers for these and other useful organisations can be found under the 'Contact details' section at the end of this booklet.

Who can complain?

We will only deal with your complaint if you have been directly involved in the service about which you wish to complain. In cases, this will usually be the victim (or in cases where the

victim has died, their family), a witness, a defendant* or a solicitor acting for them.

You can nominate a representative to complain on your behalf. You will need to give **permission in writing** for the representative to act for you. We will liaise with the representative and treat them as if they are the complainant.

*The CPS's complaints procedure is not an avenue for defendants to seek to get the cases against them dropped or to overturn their convictions. If you are a defendant in this situation your complaint will not be considered as part of our complaints procedure. You should seek independent legal advice.

If you are a member of the public who is unconnected with the matter about which you wish to complain, you are entitled to receive an explanation from the relevant manager responsible for the subject matter of the complaint. Your complaint will not, however, be escalated through our complaints procedure.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

We will only consider complaints received **within six months** of the matter complained of. If you do not make your complaint within this time limit, we will not examine your complaint .

If you remain dissatisfied following a reply to your complaint and you wish to escalate your complaint further you should do so **within one month**. If you do not pursue your complaint within this time limit, we will refuse to examine your complaint further.

How will my complaint be treated and what will the outcome be?

We aim to deal with complaints sensitively, fairly and in confidence (within our legal obligations). We will tell you if your complaint is upheld, either wholly or in part, or rejected.

If your complaint is justified we will apologise, try to put the matter right, if possible, and take steps to ensure that it does not happen again. However, it is not our policy to pay compensation to members of the public.

How can I complain?

You may complain by telephone to a member of CPS staff, in writing (either by letter or by completing the form included in this booklet), or through our website: www.cps.gov.uk

Whilst we will try to resolve your complaint by telephone, we may ask you to put your complaint in writing (for example if we are unable to clarify the nature of your complaint over the telephone or if your complaint is of a complex nature). All third stage complaints **must** be provided in writing.

If you are unable to put your complaint in writing we are happy to receive it:

- on audio or video tape; or
- in writing via a friend, relative, advocate, or member of a local non statutory body such as a Citizens Advice Bureau on your behalf. You will need to provide **permission in writing** confirming that the representative has authority to act on your behalf.

What information do I need to provide?

To ensure that your complaint can be dealt with quickly and efficiently, you should state that you are making a complaint under our complaints procedure and provide full details of your complaint.

You should include your:

- full name;
- relationship to the subject of the complaint; and
- postal address.

If your complaint relates to a case, you should also include:

- the name(s) of the defendant(s);
Please note that we require the name(s) of the defendant(s) in order to identify a case.
- the nature and date(s) of any offence(s);
- the place where the offence(s) occurred;
- the police force that investigated the offence(s); and
- the court(s) that dealt with the case (if the case reached court).

If you have already tried to resolve your concerns informally with the CPS you should provide details of the CPS member of staff who assisted you.

When can I expect a response?

- We aim to acknowledge your complaint **within 3 working days** of receipt.
- We aim to reply to complaints at stages one and two **within 20 working days** of receipt.
- We aim to reply to stage three complaints **within 40 working days** of receipt.

If we cannot meet these targets, we will contact you to explain why we cannot meet them and when we hope to respond by.

What are the stages in the complaints procedure?

Informal resolution

Many individuals who are dissatisfied with the service that we have provided will want someone to look at the problem as quickly as possible. The initial step is to contact the office or member of staff who dealt with the matter. If we are unable to resolve your dissatisfaction then you may wish to pursue a formal complaint.

First stage

Your complaint will initially be directed to the relevant manager responsible for the subject matter of the complaint. In relation to complaints about our casework, this will usually be the appropriate lawyer manager. They will look into your complaint and reply to you.

Second stage

Unresolved complaints will be referred to a more senior manager. In relation to complaints about our casework, this will usually be the Chief Crown Prosecutor. They will look into your complaint and reply to you.

Third stage

Complaints that are unresolved at the second stage will be referred to our Correspondence Unit (CU). They will consider the issues you have raised and advise you how the matter will be handled. This may involve the referral of the complaint to another member of staff who will look into it and reply to you.

The CU will not usually consider complaints relating to ongoing cases, as this may prejudice proceedings.

The Attorney General's Office

If you have exhausted our complaints procedure but remain dissatisfied with the way your complaint has been handled, you may refer your complaint to the Attorney General's Office (AGO). The AGO will consider if the CPS has applied the complaints policy and guidance correctly. **It will not, however, review any legal decisions.**

Feedback

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) encourages members of the public to provide us with both positive and negative feedback on our policies, procedures, services and performance. We welcome your views on your experience of dealing with us or your opinion on any of our services.

Any member of the public can provide feedback to the CPS and there is no time limit for providing feedback to us.

We will record and analyse your feedback in order to develop our services so that they continue to meet the needs of the public.

If you would like to provide formal feedback to us, you can do so:

- by completing the form included in this booklet and sending it to the complaints co-ordinator for the relevant CPS Area or Directorate;
- by letter to the complaints co-ordinator for the CPS Area or Directorate;
- by telephone; or
- via our website at www.cps.gov.uk

Further useful information, such as contact details for Area offices, can be found on our website. Alternatively, you may telephone CPS Enquiries on 020 335 70899 to obtain this information.

Contact details

Useful information, such as contact details for Area offices, can be found on our website at www.cps.gov.uk.

Crown Prosecution Service contacts

CPS Correspondence Unit

Tel: 020 335 70899

Email: enquiries@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Freedom of Information Act & Data Protection Act requests

Tel: 020 335 70000 (switchboard)

Email: foiunit@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Human Resources

Tel: 020 335 70000 (switchboard)

Email: hr.advice@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 0151 2396388 (recruitment)

Email: recruitment@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Policy

Tel: 020 335 70000 (switchboard)

Email: hqpolicy@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Procurement

Tel: 020 335 70000 (switchboard)

Email: procurement@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Prosecution witness expenses

Tel: 01924 205 221/261

Email: witness.expensesenquiry@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Publications

Tel: 020 335 70913

Email: publicity.branch@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Other useful organisations

The Attorney General's Office

Tel: 020 7271 2492

Email: correspondenceunit@attorneygeneral.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.attorneygeneral.gov.uk

The Home Office

Tel: 020 7035 4848

Email: public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Independent Police Complaints Commission

Tel: 08453 002 002

Email: enquiries@ipcc.gov.uk

Website: www.ipcc.gov.uk

The Ministry of Justice

Tel: 020 3334 3555

Email: general.queries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk

Victim Support

Tel: 0845 30 30 900

Email: supportline@victimsupport.org.uk

Website: www.victimsupport.org.uk

Citizens Advice

Find your local CAB: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk



*You must complete the sections marked **

Your details

*Full name (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, other):

*Postal address:

Telephone number:

Email address:

*Type of comment (tick one): Complaint Feedback

What is the best way for us to contact you if we need to do so? (tick one):

Letter Telephone Email

***Your comment:**

Please refer to the 'What information do I need to provide?' section in this booklet or on our website prior to completing this section.

Note: Please describe your relationship to the subject matter of your complaint. If you are complaining on behalf of someone else you must provide **written permission** to act for them.

Please fold, seal and post your completed form

Further copies of this document and information about alternative languages and formats are available from:

**CPS Communication Division
Rose Court
2 Southwark Bridge
London SE1 9HS
Tel: 020 335 70913
Email: publicity.branch@cps.gsi.gov.uk**

For information about the Crown Prosecution Service, and to view or download an electronic copy of this document, please visit our website:

www.cps.gov.uk

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