



Independent
Complaints
and Grievance
Scheme

A Complaint has been made about me, a Guide for Respondents

This is a brief guide to the Independent Complaints
and Grievance Scheme (ICGS).

[parliament.uk](https://www.parliament.uk)

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Using the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS): Guide for Respondents

This guide is to help you find support if a complaint of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct has been made against you. We use the term 'respondents' to mean people who have had a complaint made about them. This guide will also explain what you can expect to happen throughout the complaints process.

The Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) is Parliament's independent mechanism for handling complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct. This guide for respondents provides a step-by-step breakdown of how the complaints process works and what you can expect at each stage. We encourage you to contact the ICGS Helpline (details below) to discuss your experiences with an independent, confidential advisor.

The ICGS provides advice and support to all members of the parliamentary community.

This guidance is broken down into several sections.

- 1 The Behaviour Code
- 2 Getting support and advice
- 3 If a complaint is made about you
- 4 Useful links and further information

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The Behaviour Code

The Behaviour Code sets out how all of us who work in Parliament should be treated and how we should treat others. The Code, the Bullying and Harassment policy and procedure and the Sexual Misconduct policy and procedure work together as part of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme to provide a framework to create a respectful and courteous working environment and to respond to any complaints of unacceptable behaviour promptly, fairly and effectively.

Behaviour Code

Whether you are a visitor or working in Parliament at Westminster or elsewhere, there are clear guidelines on how you should be treated, and how you should treat others:

- **Respect** and value everyone—bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated
- **Recognise** your power, influence or authority and don't abuse them
- **Think** about how your behaviour affects others and strive to understand their perspective
- **Act** professionally towards others
- **Ensure** Parliament meets the highest ethical standards of integrity, courtesy and mutual respect
- **Speak up** about any unacceptable behaviour you see

Unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously, independently and with effective sanctions

What is Bullying?

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving an abuse or misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority and can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.

What is Harassment?

Harassment is any unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

What is Sexual Misconduct?

Sexual misconduct describes a range of behaviours including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, voyeurism and any other conduct of a sexual nature that is non-consensual or has the purpose or effect of threatening, intimidating, undermining, humiliating or coercing a person.

More examples of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct can be found in the policies:

- [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)

If you're unsure if the behaviour you are experiencing is Bullying, Harassment or Sexual Misconduct, we always recommend contacting the ICGS Helpline for support.

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Getting advice and support

The ICGS helpline provides confidential advice, support and/or signposting about incidents of bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct on the Parliamentary Estate, in constituency offices or while undertaking parliamentary work. Any member of the Parliamentary community can contact the helpline, particularly anyone looking to make a complaint, anyone who has a complaint made about them, witnesses, or anyone providing support to another colleague. You may remain anonymous when contacting the helpline. You may remain anonymous when accessing advice if preferred.

ICGS Helpline Telephone Number
0808 168 9281

Text Relay
18001 0808 168 9281

Email Address
support@icgshelpline.org.uk

Opening Hours 9am–6pm Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours you can leave a message and your call will be returned the next working day. Other sources of support are available. Contact the ICGS helpline find out what further support is available to you. Your support could include:

- The Employee Assistance Programme – 0800 030 5182, or healthassuredeap.co.uk (username House, password: Parliament)
- Your line manager
- Trade Unions in the House of Commons and Parliamentary Digital Service
- Trade Unions in the House of Lords
- Trade Unions for Members' staff
- The Workplace Equality Networks (WENs)
- MAPSA (the organisation for Members' and Peers' staff)
- House of Lords HR service
- House of Commons HR service
- PDS HR Support
- Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service
- Mental Health First Aiders
- The Guardians
- Voice Champions



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If a Complaint is made about you

The information in this section outlines what will happen if you have a complaint made about you. There are six parts to this section, depending on your role and/or employer. Please navigate to the section which is most appropriate to you. The sections are as follows;

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I am a House of Commons, PDS or House of Lords staff

If you are House of Commons, PDS, or House of Lords staff, the decision-making body will be a senior HR representative in:

- People and Culture (Commons)
- Human Resources (Lords)
- Human Resources (PDS)



Step 1

You will be contacted by your Decision-Making Body and told that a complaint has been made against you and is being taken forward for investigation by an independent investigator. You will be told who has made the complaint and what it is about. You will be asked how you would like the investigator to contact you. You can let your line manager, HR service, trade union or another trusted individual know in confidence that you are involved in an ICGS complaint. They can discuss any actions to support you during and after an investigation (e.g. temporary changes to working practices, hours, accompaniment to ICGS meetings).



Step 2

The investigator will contact you to introduce themselves. They will then write to you and provide a summary of the complaint, which will explain what the complaint is about and which policy the complaint is being investigated under. They will arrange a mutually convenient time/location to meet.



Step 3

The investigator will meet you and discuss your account of the complaint. They will gather any evidence you may have, such as emails or notes relevant to the complaint. They will ask you for a list of witnesses. The investigator will also speak to the person making the complaint (the complainant) and witnesses. After reviewing all the evidence, the investigator will write a draft report, a copy of which will be sent to you and the complainant. This is an opportunity for both parties to check that facts and dates are correct, to request corrections, to raise concerns if you feel some relevant evidence has not been considered or witnesses not interviewed, or to raise other concerns about how the complaint has been investigated.



Step 4

The investigator will write a final report explaining their findings and whether the complaint should be upheld. You, the complainant and the Decision-Making Body will all receive copies of the report. The Decision-Making-Body may contact your line manager at this time. There are several options that can be considered by the Decision-Making Body. Options include, but are not limited to, coaching, training and disciplinary procedures. If the complaint is not upheld, no further action will be taken and the matter will be treated as closed.

I am an MP or former MP

If you are an MP, the decision-making body will be the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Kathryn Stone (PCS).



Step 1

You will be contacted by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (PCS) and advised that a complaint has been made against you and is being taken forward for investigation by an independent investigator. You will be told who has made the complaint and the details of the complaint. You will be asked how you wish to be contacted by the investigator, and given the name of a member of the PCS's staff who will be your contact throughout the process. The PCS will oversee the investigation process. You can let your party whip, trade union or other trusted individual know that you are involved in an ICGS complaint. You must inform them that the process is confidential, and they must not share any information about your complaint with anyone else. They can discuss any actions to support you during and after an investigation (e.g. temporary changes to working practices, hours, accompaniment to ICGS meetings during working hours).



Step 2

The PCS will send you a copy of the initial assessment which sets out the complaint and which policy it is being investigated under. The investigator will contact you to introduce themselves and arrange a mutually convenient time and suitable location to meet.



Step 3

If the complaint proceeds to a formal assessment, the investigator will meet you and obtain your account of the complaint. They will gather any evidence you may have such as emails or notes relevant to the complaint. They will ask you for a list of witnesses. The investigator will also speak to the complainant and witnesses and obtain any other relevant evidence. The PCS will not see the evidence at this stage. The investigator will produce a full assessment report and send it to the PCS together with their recommendation as to whether the complaint should be upheld.



Step 4

The PCS will then check all the evidence and check that it is fairly and fully reflected in the report, that relevant evidence has been included and irrelevant evidence has not been relied on. The PCS will send both you and the complainant a copy of the draft formal assessment report to check that facts and dates are correct, to request any corrections, to raise concerns if relevant evidence has not been considered or relevant witnesses not interviewed or raise other concerns about the process of the investigation. The PCS will then decide whether or not she agrees with the recommendations of the investigator and will write to you and to the complainant to let you know about her decision. The PCS will decide what needs to happen if she upholds the complaint. If the PCS thinks the complaint needs more serious sanction than she can impose, she will refer it to the Independent Expert Panel (IEP).



Step 4 continued

In serious cases, the IEP can recommend suspension or expulsion from the House. Both you and the complainant also have a right of appeal to the IEP against a decision of the PCS. For more information on the IEP go to its webpage, or contact the ICGS team.

The Independent Expert Panel determines appeals and sanctions in cases where complaints have been brought against MPs of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct under the ICGS.

The panel is entirely independent, with no MPs taking part in its decisions.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact: independentexpertpanel@parliament.uk

I work for an MP

If you work for an MP, the decision-making body will be the line manager, who is usually the MP.



Step 1

You will be contacted by the Decision-Making Body (usually the MP you work for) and told that a complaint has been made against you and is being taken forward for investigation by an independent investigator. You will be told who has made the complaint and the details of the complaint. You will be asked how you would like the investigator to contact you. You can let your line manager, HR service, party Whip, trade union or another trusted individual know in confidence that you are involved in an ICGS complaint. They can discuss any actions to support you during and after an investigation (e.g. temporary changes to working practices, hours, accompaniment to ICGS meetings).



Step 2

The investigator will contact you to introduce themselves. They will then write to you and provide a summary of the complaint. They will arrange a mutually convenient time/location to meet.



Step 3

The investigator will meet you and discuss your account of the complaint. They will gather any evidence you may have, such as emails or notes relevant to the complaint. They will ask you for a list of witnesses. The investigator will also speak again to the complainant and to witnesses. After reviewing all the evidence, the investigator will produce a draft report, a copy of which will be sent to you and the person making the complaint (the complainant). This is an opportunity for both parties to check that facts and dates are correct, to request corrections, to raise concerns if relevant evidence has not been considered or relevant witnesses not interviewed, or to raise other concerns about the process of the investigation.



Step 4

The investigator will produce a final report detailing their findings and say whether the complaint should be upheld or not upheld. You, the complainant and your Decision-Making Body, will all receive copies of the report.

If the complaint is upheld, your employer will be notified, who will then take appropriate action.

I am a Member of the House of Lords or a former Member of the House of Lords

If you are a Member of the House of Lords, the decision-making body will be either of the Lords Commissioners for Standards, Martin Jelley or Akbar Khan.



Step 1

The office of the independent House of Lords Commissioners for Standards, Martin Jelley and Akbar Khan, will be in touch to discuss the details of the complaint that has been made against you. Your complaint will be handled by one of the Commissioners. You will be told who has made the complaint and what it is about. Typically, you will be asked for a written response to the complaint. You can let your party whip, trade union or another trusted individual know in confidence that you are involved in an ICGS complaint. They can discuss any actions to support you during and after an investigation (e.g. temporary changes to working practices, hours, accompaniment to ICGS meetings).



Step 2

If a written response is not sufficient to conclude the investigation, the Commissioner will discuss the complaint further with you and potentially ask for any evidence you may have e.g. emails or notes relevant to the complaint. He will also speak to the complainant and witnesses. He may be assisted by an independent investigator. Formal meetings with the Commissioner are usually recorded so that a written record can be created. After reviewing all the evidence, the Commissioner will produce a draft factual report, and a copy will be sent to you and the person making the complaint (the complainant). This is an opportunity for both parties to check that facts and dates are correct, to request corrections, to raise concerns if you feel relevant evidence has not been considered or witnesses not interviewed, or raise other concerns about the process of the investigation.



Step 3

The Commissioner will then decide whether the complaint should be upheld and will write to or meet you and the complainant to advise of his decision. There are four possible outcomes of an investigation:

1. **Complaint dismissed:** after investigation the Commissioner finds the complaint is not upheld.
2. **Agreed resolution:** during the investigation and before any findings are made, the Commissioner agrees a resolution with the complainant and respondent;
3. **Remedial action:** after investigation the Commissioner finds the complaint is upheld but agrees remedial action with the respondent and complainant.
4. **Sanction:** after investigation the Commissioner finds the complaint is upheld but remedial action cannot be agreed or would be inappropriate. The Commissioner reports his findings, with a recommended sanction, to the Conduct Committee. After this, the Committee reports to the House.



Step 4

If the complaint is upheld, you may be asked to agree to remedial action as an appropriate outcome, in which case a report will be produced and published on the parliamentary website. If remedial action cannot be agreed or would be inappropriate, the Conduct Committee will consider the Commissioner's report and his recommended sanction, as well as an appeal. Following this, the Committee reports to the House.

The report will be decided by the House of Lords without debate.

The Conduct Committee is made up of five members of the House and four lay members who have relevant professional experience. In addition to considering the Commissioner for Standards' recommended sanction when this is not remedial action, the Conduct Committee is responsible for hearing appeals against the Commissioners for Standards' findings.

If you have any queries about the work of the Conduct Committee, please contact lordsconduct@parliament.uk

I work for a Member of the House of Lords

If you work for a Member of the House of Lords, the decision-making body will be either of the Lords Commissioners for Standards, Martin Jelley or Akbar Khan.



Step 1

The office of the independent House of Lords Commissioners for Standards, Martin Jelley and Akbar Khan, will be in touch to discuss the details of the complaint that has been made against you. Your complaint will be handled by one of the Commissioners. You will be told who has made the complaint and what it is about. You will be asked how you wish to be contacted. Typically, you will be asked for a written response to the complaint. You can let your party whip, trade union or another trusted individual know in confidence that you are involved in an ICGS complaint. They can discuss any actions to support you during and after an investigation (e.g. temporary changes to working practices, hours, accompaniment to ICGS meetings).



Step 2

If a written response is not sufficient to conclude the investigation, the Commissioner will discuss it further with you and potentially ask for any evidence you may have, e.g. emails or notes relevant to the complaint. He will also speak to the complainant and witnesses. He may be assisted by an independent investigator. Formal meetings with the Commissioner are usually recorded so that a transcript can be taken. After reviewing all the evidence, the Commissioner will produce a draft factual report, a copy of which will be sent to you and the person making the complaint (the complainant). This is an opportunity for both parties to check that facts and dates are correct, to request corrections, to raise concerns if relevant evidence has not been considered or relevant witnesses not interviewed, or to raise other concerns about the process of the investigation.



Step 3

The Commissioner will then decide whether the complaint should be upheld and will write to or meet you and the complainant to advise of his decision. There are four possible outcomes of an investigation:

1. **Complaint dismissed:** after investigation the Commissioner finds the complaint is not upheld. The complainant can appeal to the Conduct Committee.
2. **Agreed resolution:** during the investigation and before any findings are made, the Commissioner agrees a resolution with the complainant and respondent;
3. **Remedial action:** after investigation the Commissioner finds the complaint is upheld but agrees remedial action with the complainant and respondent.
4. **Sanction:** after investigation the Commissioner finds the complaint is upheld but remedial action cannot be agreed or would be inappropriate. The Commissioner reports his findings, with a recommended sanction, to the Conduct Committee. After this, the Committee reports to the House.



Step 4

If the complaint is upheld, you may be asked to agree remedial action as an appropriate outcome. If remedial action cannot be agreed, or would be inappropriate, the Conduct Committee will consider the Commissioner's report and his recommended sanction. Following this, the Committee reports to the House.

I am another Passholder

If you would like to complain about another passholder, the decision-making body will be usually be the employer of the person you are complaining about.



Step 1

You will be contacted by your Decision-Making Body and advised that a complaint has been made against you and is being taken forward for investigation by an independent investigator. For more information about who your Decision-Making Body is go to the ICGS FAQs, speak to the Helpline or contact the ICGS team. You will be told who has made the complaint and what it is about. You will be asked how you would like the investigator to contact you. You can let your line manager, HR service, trade union or another trusted individual know in confidence that you are involved in an ICGS complaint. They can discuss any actions to support you during and after an investigation (e.g. temporary changes to working practices, hours, accompaniment to ICGS meetings).



Step 2

The investigator will contact you to introduce themselves. They will then write to you and provide a summary of the complaint, which will explain what the complaint is about and which policy the complaint is being investigated under. They will arrange a mutually convenient time and suitable location to meet.



Step 3

The investigator will meet you and discuss your account of the complaint. They will gather any evidence you may have, such as emails or notes relevant to the complaint. They will ask you for a list of witnesses. The investigator will also speak to the person making the complaint (the complainant) and witnesses. After reviewing all the evidence, the investigator will produce a draft report, a copy of which will be sent to you and the complainant. This is an opportunity for both parties to check that facts and dates are correct, to request corrections, to raise concerns if relevant evidence has not been considered or relevant witnesses not interviewed, or raise other concerns about the process of the investigation.



Step 4

The investigator will produce a final report detailing their findings and saying whether the complaint should be upheld. You and the respondent will receive copies of the Report. If the complaint is upheld, the decision-making body of the respondent will also receive a copy of the report.

If the complaint is upheld, next steps will be decided by your employer.

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Useful Links

Please visit

- [Employee Assistance Programme](#)
- [Lords Improving our Workplace hub](#)
- [Commons Culture Hub](#)
- [PDS Culture Hub](#)
- [Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards](#)
- [House of Lords Commissioner for Standards](#)
- [House of Lords Conduct Committee](#)
- [Members Services Team SharePoint Site](#)
- [ICGS internet site](#)
- [Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policies and Procedures](#)
- [ICGS Hub](#)
- [Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policies and Procedures](#)

