

4th Annual Report

July 2021 – June 2022

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**Independent
Complaints
and Grievance
Scheme**

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Foreword

This is my third Annual Report as Director of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) and it covers the year from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. My first two years as Director were, of course, dominated by the challenges of the pandemic. This year those challenges were reduced as we have steadily returned to more normal working and home lives, although the effects still linger.

The past 12 months have seen change and development within the ICGS, and this Annual Report sets out the factual assessment of the operation of the ICGS in the past year. We have now implemented all but three of Alison Stanley's agreed recommendations from her 18-month independent review of the Scheme. We have recruited more investigators, as part of an ongoing focus on speeding up investigations and making sure we have the right people, with the right expertise, to work on the full range of disclosures we receive. I have finished the restructure of the ICGS team, with an increased number of members of staff, bringing invaluable experience. The team has established a new data working group, which analyses and acts on trends associated with the ICGS to ensure continuous improvements to the scheme. This is evident in this Annual Report, with improved quantity and quality of the available data of cases and the nature of complaints. This work will continue and more information will be shared during the year, to enable greater understanding and transparency of the scheme, while not compromising confidentiality.

The past year demonstrates the maturing of the Scheme itself and my team's management of it. There is still much to be done to improve the overall performance of the ICGS, most notably ongoing work to reduce the time taken to complete investigations (while not compromising the standard of investigations and recognising that delays are sometimes inevitable in complex cases).

Parliament is often described as a unique institution, and it is certainly an unusual workplace, characterised by power imbalances, public scrutiny and a culture where people work late into the night, under significant pressure, sometimes far from home, and there can be a blurring of professional and personal relationships. But this does not take away from the fact that it must be a safe and respectful working environment. The ICGS—the first Scheme of its kind in any Parliament around the world—has enabled and will continue to enable Parliament to identify and deal with bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct better than ever before. It supports and provides resolution for those who have experienced unacceptable behaviour, and this in turn supports the drive to improve the working environment and culture across Parliament.

Media stories in the past year sometimes gave the impression that “nothing has changed”, or that elements of Parliament's culture cannot be fixed. While I am in no sense complacent, and the Scheme can and must improve, I also know that the ICGS is a clear indication that things *have* changed. For many colleagues in Parliament, the Scheme has delivered confidential and sensitive support and robust independent investigation of complaints, which had not been possible previously. In the four years since its establishment, the ICGS has received 176 disclosures from the Helpline, opened 231 cases and resolved (either formally or informally) 133 cases.

This will be my last ICGS Annual Report, ending my three-year term as ICGS Director. I am looking forward to taking up a new role as Director of MPs' Staff Engagement in the House of Commons in the coming weeks, developing the House of Commons' service in this important area and supporting the response to future recommendations of the Speaker's Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my incredible team, for their hard work in and dedication to the work of the ICGS. They work tirelessly to ensure that due process is followed and outcomes are delivered, despite intense scrutiny from both within and outside Parliament.

I wish the Scheme, the team and the new Director every success in the future.

The ICGS is there for all of us. Please use it.

Jo Willows, ICGS Director

1. Key Developments

1.1 At a glance

In this reporting year (1 July 2021- 31 June 2022), 327 people contacted the ICGS Helpline, either by phone or email. Those 327 people made contact a total of 701 times, receiving information and support in a safe, confidential environment. This is broadly consistent with previous reporting years.

The ICGS team received 52 disclosures from the ICGS Helpline this year. From these, 59 cases were started (the number of cases is often higher than disclosures, as complainants can make a complaint against more than one person).

There were 29 cases that were closed during this reporting year. Of these, 21 investigations were completed (with an upheld or not upheld finding). A further two were completed by the Independent Investigator (but were awaiting a final decision from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards). Six cases were resolved informally (more than ever before). There were 22 ongoing cases.

Of the 21 completed investigations, 48% were upheld and 52% were not upheld.

The average timescales of full investigations increased by 20 working days compared with last year. The mean average of timescales of all years are as follows:

- This reporting year 2021-22, it was 216;
- In 2020-2021, it was 196;
- In 2019-2020, it was 127; and
- In 2018-2019, it was 121

The longest case closed during this reporting year (with an upheld or not upheld outcome) was 434 days, which was 138 working days shorter than the longest case closed in 2020-2021. This year, reasons for this slight increase included: cases being paused while awaiting clarifications to the ICGS policies, which required agreement on the floor of the House of Commons (finalised in April 2021); cases being paused while they were under consideration in other complaints processes; and parties in the investigation being on annual leave or on sick leave. Nevertheless, we regret the length of time that some cases have taken and will continue to look at ways in which to reduce timescales, without compromising the standard of investigations. The recent recruitment of new investigators will ensure that we can appoint more investigators who are available for work and can appoint the most appropriate investigator to a case as quickly as possible.

This year, fewer complaints progressed to a full assessment than those in previous years. Of the 44 cases that went to initial assessment, only 13 were recommended by Independent Investigators to warrant further investigation. The remaining cases did not meet the criteria to progress to a full assessment, were withdrawn or remained open, at initial assessment stage.

In the 2022 House of Lords' staff survey, 74% said that ICGS had been either fairly or extremely helpful in tackling behaviour issues.¹

1.2 Key ICGS developments and milestones

- In April 2022, the 'multiple complaints process' was agreed by relevant governance bodies, allowing potential complainants to be alerted to other complaints about the same person, to help them to decide whether they want to pursue a formal complaint;

¹ The House of Commons' staff survey is being carried out in the autumn of 2022.

- In April 2021, following the recommendation of Alison Stanley’s review, both Houses agreed to close the window to lodge complaints for non-recent cases of bullying and harassment. This came into effect on 28 April 2022. From this point on, complaints of bullying and harassment must be made within one year of the incident (or most recent incident if there is more than one).² (This time limit for bullying and harassment complaints does not apply to cases that involved Members of the House of Lords or their staff). Sexual misconduct cases have no such time limit;
- The restructure of the ICGS team is now completed, with an increased number of members of staff, with specialist experience;
- We have carried out a recruitment campaign for new investigators and up to 28 new investigators will be ready to start investigations at the end of the year, after security checks and training have been completed;
- The ICGS team has established a new data working group, which meets quarterly to analyse trends related to the helplines, investigations, feedback, finance, and communications, and acts on the trends to ensure continuous improvements to the Scheme;
- The ICGS/PCS oversight paper was amended on 8 August 2022, enabling the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to see evidence as it is collected by the Independent Investigators;
- Only three remaining recommendations out of the 33 agreed recommendations from Alison Stanley’s 18-month ICGS review are still waiting to be implemented;
- The Independent Expert Panel published five reports on MPs; and
- The independent House of Lords Commissioners for Standards published two reports, both concerning one Member of the House of Lords.

1.3 Freedom of Information (Fol) requests

Both Houses of Parliament are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and in the reporting year around 25 requests for information were received under the terms of the Act relating to the work of the ICGS team. (It is not possible to give an exact number, as some requests for information under the Act contain multiple questions, or cover the work of several different parliamentary functions, without specifically mentioning the ICGS).

These requests have covered a range of issues, including the number and nature of complaints under the Scheme, or the costs associated with running the Scheme. Due to the inherent sensitivity of managing complaints (based on personal information) and the need for confidentiality to ensure fair investigations and the provision of effective support to those involved, there are limits to information that may be disclosed in response to Freedom of Information (Fol) Requests. For this reason, we strive to make as much information available as possible through our annual and quarterly reporting, while ensuring that confidentiality is maintained. Where information has been disclosed in reply to Fol requests, this information is made available on the parliamentary website, where possible.³

² This time limit does not apply to complaints against Lords Members or Lords Members’ staff. In these cases, the Lords Codes of Conduct state that complaints must usually be made within six years of the conduct complained of. In exceptional circumstances the Commissioner may investigate conduct which occurred more than six years before a complaint is made, provided that the Conduct Committee agrees and that it is satisfied that there is a strong public interest in the matter being investigated.

³ <https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/foi/>

1.4 Media interest

In the spring of 2022, *The Sunday Times* newspaper reported:

*More than 50 MPs are facing allegations of sexual misconduct after being reported to Parliament's Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS). Around 70 complaints about 56 MPs have been received by the ICGS, according to Westminster insiders. It is understood that these range from allegations of sexual harassment to more serious wrongdoing.*⁴

Other media outlets then reported that 56 sexual misconduct cases against MPs were currently being considered by the ICGS. That figure was incorrect. The correct number of sexual misconduct cases brought forward against MPs for this reporting year was six. The total number of sexual misconduct cases brought forward against MPs since the start of the Scheme (July 2018) to the end of this reporting year was 14.

Confidentiality is at the heart of the ICGS and, in order to protect people using the scheme, it is important that a running commentary on case numbers is not provided, outside the annual and quarterly reporting process. However, due to the high levels of speculation about current figures and the continued reference to the incorrect figure of 56, the ICGS Director took the highly unusual step of emailing all MPs, MPs' staff and House Service staff in May 2022 to refute that figure and to say that we were seeing a similar trend in figures for this year as in previous years.⁵

While the figure connected to the ICGS was incorrect, the ICGS has no way of knowing the number of allegations about members of the parliamentary community, as these may be reported to different authorities. There are several routes that people can use to complain about sexual misconduct in the House of Commons:

- The Independent Complaints and Grievances Scheme (ICGS) – data about the number of allegations made through the Helpline is held by Victim Support;
- Members' HR Advice Service – provides confidential advice to Members of Parliament in their role as employers;
- Political parties' internal schemes; and
- The Police – any individual can make a complaint about criminal behaviour by another person.

⁴ The Sunday Times, [56 MPs face sexual misconduct claims](#), John Bootman, Caroline Wheeler and Harry Yorke, 17 April 2022

⁵ [Statement from the Director of the ICGS - UK Parliament](#)

2. The operating context of the ICGS

2.1 Background

The ICGS was established as a cross-party, bicameral initiative, by Resolution of the House of Commons on 19 July 2018. The Scheme initially covered the House of Commons (including MPs, MPs' staff and staff from the House Administration), the Parliamentary Digital Services (PDS) and third-party passholders, for incidents that happened from June 2017 onwards.

The Scheme has had several changes to its remit and scope:

- House of Lords Administration staff were included in the Scheme in November 2018, with Members of the House of Lords and their staff included from May 2019;
- In October 2019, the Scheme was further extended to include complaints dating back to any time before June 2017 and to any former members of the parliamentary community, including those who had left Parliament since June 2017; and
- In April 2022, a timescale of one year for bullying and harassment allegations by House of Commons, PDS, and House of Lords staff complainants was introduced, with effect from 28 April 2022.

In April 2021, both Houses approved textual changes to the policies and procedures concerning complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, in response to Alison Stanley's 18-month review of the ICGS.⁶ They also approved other clarification changes. A further update was made to the Bullying and Harassment policy in May 2022, which included the provision for facilitating multiple potential complaints about the same individual (referred to as Cluster Reporting – Recommendation 35).

Following further recommendations made by Alison Stanley, and the decision made on the floor of the House of Commons on 28 April 2021, the Houses implemented a time limit of one year for cases of bullying or harassment. This came into effect from 28 April 2022, meaning that from that date, for cases involving staff in the House of Commons, House of Lords or in the Parliamentary Digital Services and for cases involving MPs, complainants have one year to make a complaint about bullying or harassment from when the most recent incident took place. This time limit does not apply to cases involving Members of the House of Lords or those Members' staff. This is because the House of Lords Code of Conduct, which now incorporates the ICGS, states that all complaints under the Code must usually be made within six years of the conduct complained of.⁷ There is no time limit for making a complaint about sexual misconduct, recognising that those who have experienced sexual harassment or misconduct may not make complaints for a considerable time.

The ICGS consists of:

- The Behaviour Code, which clearly sets out the behaviour expected of all members of the parliamentary community;
- An independent bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct Helpline and an Independent Sexual Misconduct Advisory (ISMA) service, provided by the independent charity Victim Support;
- The Bullying and Harassment Policy and separate procedure;
- The Sexual Misconduct Policy and separate procedure;

⁶ [Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme: Independent 18-month review](#), Alison Stanley CBE FCIP, 22 February 2021, para 202, p51

⁷ Paragraph 140 of the Code of Conduct

- Independent Investigators provided by investigation service providers, and Independent Investigators (recruited to investigate non-recent and current complex cases);
- “Valuing Everyone” training;
- A Parliament-wide seminar programme, “Behaviour Code: why it matters”; and
- Provisions in the Codes of Conduct for Lords Members and their staff, which mean that bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct constitute a breach of the Codes.

2.2 The ICGS bicameral team and Memorandum of Understanding

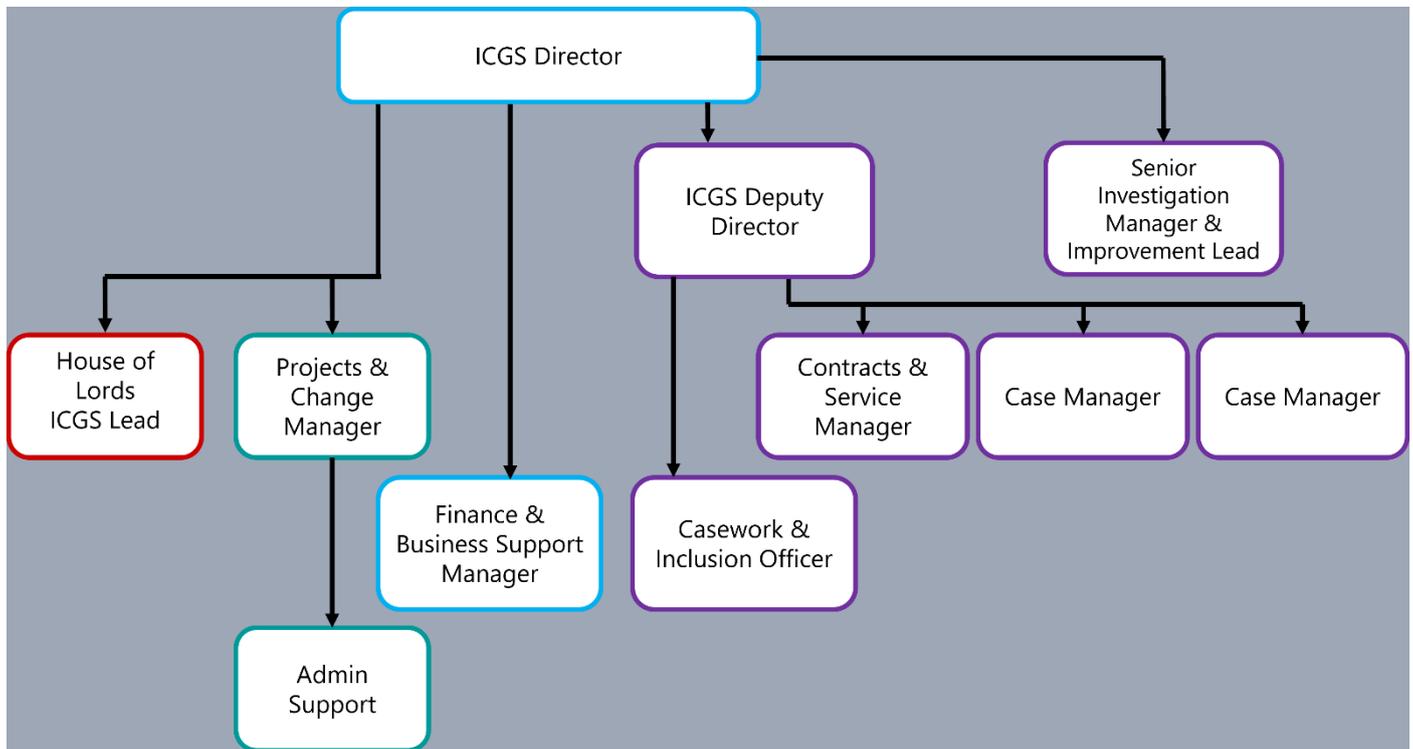
The bicameral ICGS team sits independently from any other team in the House of Commons or the House of Lords, following the implementation of Alison Stanley’s recommendation in her 6-month review. A joint ICGS Memorandum of Understanding—setting out the financial, HR and governance arrangements for the bicameral ICGS team—was agreed by the two House’ Administrations in March 2020, and will be updated in the Autumn of 2022 to reflect subsequent changes.⁸

In her 18-month review, Alison Stanley recommended a restructure of the ICGS team to ensure that “the roles and workflows are aligned to ensure effective delivery of a quality service”.⁹ We have completed the restructure, which involved recruiting, training, and realigning. The team has expanded in size and skillset, with new expertise brought in, and staff with experience in HR, investigations, training, inclusion, improvement and innovation.

The new post of Casework and Inclusion Officer has ensured that users of the scheme have a point of contact in the ICGS team, which makes the scheme more accessible and gives reassurance to complainants, respondents and witnesses. The current postholder has ensured that the Scheme is more understandable and accessible to users of the Scheme. The following organogram sets out the new structure:

⁸ [Independent Complaints & Grievance Scheme Annual Report \(July 2019 – July 2020\)](#), Memorandum of Understanding, Annex B, p 41.

⁹ [Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme: Independent 18-month review](#), Alison Stanley CBE FCIP, 22 February 2021, para 202, p51



2.3 Financial information

The ICGS is a demand-led scheme and there are no limits set on the number of investigations that can be carried out. Although there are new guidelines on the time that an investigation should take, some investigations are more complex than others and therefore take more time to investigate, which in turn means that they will likely be more expensive.¹⁰

During 2021/22, we budgeted for the recruitment of Independent Investigators, work to design the new Valuing Everyone refresh seminar and the new providers for the refresh seminars. The increase in budget is also as a result of the team restructure, with an increased number of experienced staff on the ICGS team.

The following figures highlight the total spend for each financial year, including external services (the Helpline, Independent Investigators and Valuing Everyone training) and staffing costs:

- for financial year 2020/21 (April 2020 to March 2021) the total spend for ICGS was £1,951,482 and by each House as follows: House of Commons £1,381,918 and House of Lords £569,564;
- for financial year 2021/22 (April 2021 to March 2022) the total spend for ICGS was £1,271,600 and by each House as follows: House of Commons £902,248 and House of Lords £369,353
- **for the current financial year 2022/23 (April 2022 to March 2023)** the total budget is £1,922,380 and by each House as follows: House of Commons £1,369,216, and House of Lords £553,164.

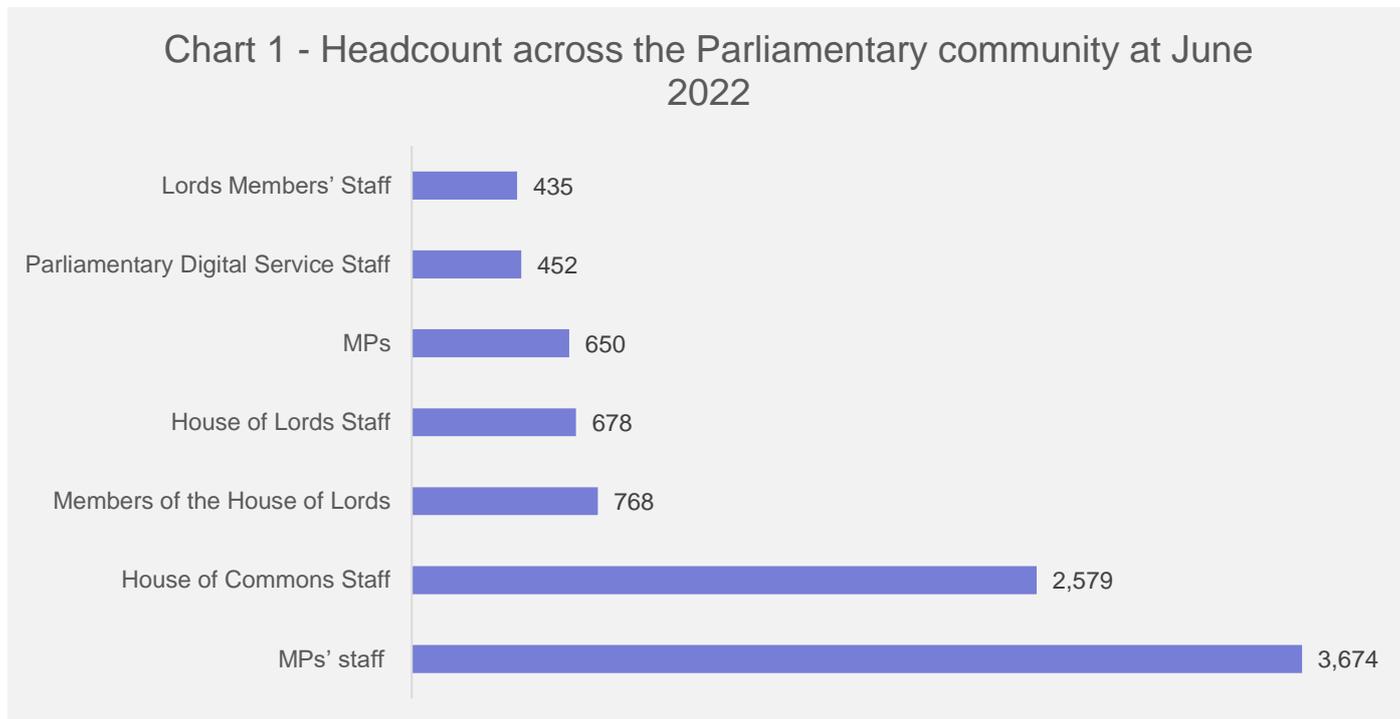
2.4 The Parliamentary Community

The parliamentary community is made up of Members of both the House of Commons and House of Lords, their staff, staff in both the House of Commons and House of Lords Administrations, staff in the Parliamentary

¹⁰ More information about the timescales of ICGS cases can be found in Chapter 5, *Investigating Complaints*.

Digital Services (PDS), as well as contractors, constituency office staff and visitors to the parliamentary estate.

Chart 1 shows the headcount across the parliamentary estate as of June 2022, highlighting the different sizes of the largest groups in the parliamentary community:



2.5 ICGS in the wider cultural context

The ICGS does not operate in a vacuum in Parliament; it exists within a wider cultural context. The ICGS team works closely with colleagues in both Houses, including the House of Commons' Director of Cultural Transformation and the House of Lords' Director of Cultural Change, and their respective teams. The cultural teams' work to change the culture of both Houses for all who work in Parliament is making a positive difference which, in turn, will make a difference to the work of the ICGS. They have worked on several specific initiatives, including the following:

Addressing inappropriate behaviours

Colleagues in the two respective cultural teams have worked with the ICGS Team to implement the recommendations of Alison Stanley's 18-month ICGS review that relate to culture change, including the roll-out of new guidance for managers on how to manage risk posed by the behaviour of passholders using their services. The following statistics cover both inappropriate behaviours as well as more serious behaviours covered by the ICGS. Although there is still a long way to go, the percentage of House of Commons Service/PDS employees who feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour rose from 55% in 2020 to 61% in 2021. Perceptions that the House of Lords takes bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct seriously also continued to rise. In the 2022 House of Lords staff survey, 69% agreed (either slightly or strongly) with the statement "I feel confident to challenge inappropriate behaviour"; 73% agreed with the statement "This organisation takes bullying and harassment seriously"; and 74% said that ICGS had been either fairly or extremely helpful in tackling behaviour issues. Similar questions will be asked of House of Commons and PDS employees in October 2022.

Stakeholders have expressed concern about gaps in the current processes for managing risks relating to passholders under investigation for violent or sexual offences. Both Commissions have agreed that options should be developed, with input from key stakeholders, on whether and how these processes might be extended, for consideration in the autumn of 2022.

Rewarding positive behaviours

The House of Commons Service encourages positive behaviours in line with the House Service values: inclusive, courageous, trusted and collaborative. The number of employees nominated for a values-related award grew from 573 in 2020 to 642 in 2021. In December 2021, the second annual *Living our Values Awards* was held, presided over by Mr Speaker in the House of Commons Chamber. The House of Commons Service network of Voice Champions, which grew by 50% in 2021, supports and encourages behavioural change.

The House of Lords Administration continued to embed its values—respect, inclusivity, professionalism and responsibility—and their accompanying behaviours, which outline what we can expect from each other at work and ensure we all play our part in building an inclusive and respectful workplace culture. The values are now part of the House of Lords Administration’s recruitment and induction process and were celebrated at the House of Lords Awards with the *Living our Values* category.

Giving colleagues a voice

Parliament has established a network of Guardians who are trained members of staff, helping to embed behaviours expected from everyone throughout the organisation, by acting as a sounding board for colleagues who have something that they might want to share, but are unsure about the most appropriate route.

2.6 Communications & Outreach

It is well established that continued effective communication and awareness work is key to the success of schemes such as the ICGS. Members of the parliamentary community, and the wider public, receive various communications promoting the ICGS through a range of channels, including:

- All-staff emails and newsletters in both Houses;
- Posters, leaflets and cards placed in prominent positions
- News stories on the parliamentary intranet home page, which received 4,850 unique views in total;
- The parliamentary public-facing internet site, updated this year;
- The House of Commons ‘*Everyone has a Voice*’ SharePoint site (viewed 862 times);
- Our new ICGS SharePoint Hub (visited 8,910 times this reporting period);
- Training sessions;
- Presentations and discussions involving colleagues from a range of departments in both Houses, including the Official Report, the Select Committee Team, In House Services and Estates Team, Parliamentary Digital Services, ParliGender (one of Parliament’s Workplace Equality Networks), and the Lords Steering Group for Change.
- House of Commons and House of Lords All-staff Town Hall meetings
- Regular training sessions and discussions with MPs’ staff, including having an ICGS presence at constituency roadshows and at weekly MPs’ office staff meetings run by the Members’ Service Team.

In 2022-2023, ICGS outreach work will be developed further, with a specific action plan built to focus on Estate-based staff and vulnerable groups. This work is done by staff of both Houses and the ICGS team, in collaboration with other colleagues.

2.7 Feedback on ICGS investigations

During this reporting year, we introduced feedback mechanisms to help us better understand people’s experience of the scheme. These come in the form of targeted surveys focusing on users’ experience, their understanding of the process, as well as the clarity of documentation they receive, and the length of time taken to complete each case. Users are also given the opportunity to provide further feedback on how they felt about the process and their observations more generally.

The surveys are optional and so far, response rates are too low to report on in detail. Overall, users are satisfied with the process while the majority commented on the fact that cases take too long. The majority of submissions we received were from complainants whose case did not proceed to Full Assessment and in each instance, they expressed their disappointment that their case was not taken forward. When response rates are higher, we will be able to report on the findings in more detail.

2.8 Parliamentary Privilege

The connection between parliamentary privilege and the ICGS was raised in different arenas in the past year. The House of Commons Standards Committee and the Women & Equalities Committee both discussed this issue and made recommendations in published Reports, which prompted responses from the Director of the ICGS to both Committees.¹¹ The Director of the ICGS also discussed the issue of parliamentary privilege with colleagues from the House of Commons Select Committee Team.

There is a distinction between the Behaviour Code, which applies at all times to all members of the parliamentary community, and the ICGS, which does not apply to formal proceedings of the House of Commons. This is an important distinction, which is set out in our ICGS Internet and Intranet sites. It is also important to note that the situation is different in the House of Lords (please see next section). The ICGS does not cover anything said (whether orally or in writing) by a Member of Parliament that forms part of proceedings in the House of Commons or its Committees. This includes what is said in speeches or interventions in the Chamber and General Committees and, in Select Committees, questions put to witnesses and other things said in the course of formal meetings, whether in private or in public. The reason for this exclusion is that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (PCS)—who has oversight of investigations against MPs conducted under the ICGS—has no remit to look into the behaviour of MPs during proceedings in the House or in Committees, apart from a limited role relating to declaration of interests under the Code of Conduct.

Examples of actions by a Member in the House of Commons Chamber or in a committee room while the House or Committee is sitting (whether in public or private) that would fall within the remit of the ICGS and PCS include:

- bullying or harassment of another person via whispering or passing notes; or
- sexual misconduct in the form of unwanted touching of another Member, employee of the House, a witness or a visitor.

Actions such as these would not be regarded as part of proceedings in Parliament and would therefore be eligible for investigation under the ICGS.

Freedom of speech in Parliament is a fundamental constitutional principle, but it is possible to challenge its abuse. If a Member used inappropriate words during proceedings, the following people could take action:

- In the Chamber, the Speaker/Deputy in the Chair could take action, either during the proceedings if inappropriate language is used, or by speaking to the Member;
- In Committees, the Chair could intervene (or another member of the Committee, if the Chair was the person behaving inappropriately) either during or after the proceedings. A member of staff could also intervene in a private meeting and/or speak to the Member afterwards about their behaviour. If appropriate, this could be supported by the 'Restrictions of Service' guidance for managers for all members of the parliamentary community, endorsed by the House of Commons and House of Lords Commission, which allows the team to consider how they might put in place measures to protect staff from the Member's behaviour, by restricting services;

¹¹ [Written evidence submitted by Josephine Willows](#), Director, ICGS, published in [New Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules: promoting appropriate values, attitudes and behaviour in Parliament](#), Committee on Standards, 1st Report of Session 2022-23, HC227, published 24 May 2022 and [Appendix 3: ICGS Response](#), in *Equality in the Heart of Democracy: a gender sensitive House of Commons: responses to the Committee's 5th Report of Session 2021-22*, 2nd Special Report of Session 2022-23, HC 417, published 17 June 2022

- If a witness was subject to inappropriate behaviour during a Committee oral evidence session, the witness could write to the Chair of the Liaison Committee.

2.9 ICGS and Proceedings in the House of Lords/Lords Committees

The House of Lords Code of Conduct prohibits bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, and in certain circumstances a complaint could be made against a Member for alleged bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct in the course of a proceeding. This rule is, though, subject to clear safeguards to ensure that freedom of speech and the expressions of opinion are protected, and during any investigation, the Commissioners for Standards are required to recognise the constitutional principle of freedom of speech as a “primary consideration”. The relevant sections of the Lords Code of Conduct are as follows:

Members are required to treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities (including parliamentary proceedings) with respect and courtesy. Behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of this Code.

[...]

In assessing, investigating and adjudicating allegations of non-compliance with this Code, the Commissioner and the Conduct Committee shall:

a recognise as a primary consideration the constitutional principle of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings, including but not limited to the need for members to be able to express their views fully and frankly in parliamentary proceedings;

b act in accordance with the principles of natural justice and fairness.¹²

2.10 Inclusion within the ICGS

Building on Alison Stanley’s recommendations to make the ICGS, we made several improvements to the Scheme this year, including:

- **Direct support**

In January 2022, a new role was created within the ICGS team. The Casework & Inclusion Officer is a trained Mental Health First Aider who assists users of the Scheme—complainants and respondents, and in some cases witnesses—throughout an investigation, ensuring that they understand the process and signposting them to available support options.

- **Data**

Complainants, respondents, and witnesses are all sent updated Diversity & Inclusion questionnaires when they first interact with the ICGS, which asks for demographic information about people involved in cases. This information is primarily used to understand who is using the scheme and to inform any work to reach under-represented sections of the parliamentary community.

¹² [Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords, Guide to the Code of Conduct, Code of Conduct for House of Lords Members’ Staff](#), 12th edition, June 2022, published 7 June 2022, paras 18 and 29

- **Helpline**

The ICGS Helpline continues to ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of their age, disability (including mental health), gender identity, gender expression, trans status, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. The Helpline offers a wide range of reasonable adjustments to disabled colleagues, including live video captioning. To support staff working on the Estate and those working flexible hours, anyone wanting to talk to someone from the Helpline outside their standard working hours can arrange to do so. They support all requests for reasonable adjustments.

- **Investigations**

The new Investigator Portal has a dedicated page containing guidance and signposting for investigators to support parties involved in a complaint with their mental health and wellbeing. It outlines the actions that investigators should take while interacting with people who are experiencing poor mental health, ensuring that users are offered the right level of support and guidance in relation to their individual circumstances.

3. Valuing Everyone

3.1 Introduction

Valuing Everyone Training continues to be a core part of the ICGS. It has been designed to help Members of both Houses, those Members' staff, and staff of both Houses to understand, recognise and prevent bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct and to give them the tools to question such inappropriate behaviour. The training and its resources also promote the range of services and support available to participants.

Valuing Everyone training was procured by the House of Commons Learning and Organisational Development Team (L&OD) in December 2018 and has been delivered by Challenge Consultancy since that time. It is a mandatory requirement for staff of both Houses and Members of the House of Lords and is offered widely to all members of the parliamentary community.

3.2 Who has completed the training?

To date, over 6,300 people have completed the training since it was launched in 2019. Attendees know that everyone attending the training is being shown the same material and given the same messages, with the only variation being the case studies discussed, which are contextualised according to whether the audience is made up of Members, Members' staff, staff of either House, or managers with responsibility for employing staff. From June 2019 to March 2020, the training was offered as a face-to-face workshop, for up to 14 participants. Since 20 March 2020, with the introduction of remote working and restrictions as a result of Covid-19, the training has been offered as an online workshop, for up to 20 participants.

Completion rates within the different parts of the parliamentary community are set out in the table below¹³:

Participants	Percentage completed
House of Commons Staff	95%
House of Lords Staff	97%
PDS Staff	98%
MPs	92%
MPs' Staff	25% (see paragraph below)
Members of the House of Lords	97%
Lords Members' Staff	3% (see paragraph below)

As was the case last year, there are high completion rates among staff in the House of Commons, House of Lords and Parliamentary Digital Service. These follow significant efforts to engage with colleagues across the parliamentary community, including those who do not routinely use IT in their roles, to ensure they had access to either an in-person or online training option. Given staff turnover, and the fact that some colleagues are on long-term leave or career breaks, it may never be possible to report 100% completion in these groups.

Similarly, the large majority of Members in both Houses have completed the course.

Completion rates for MPs' staff and Lords Members' staff remain substantially lower than the other groups, although there has been a slight increase from last year's statistics. These rates reflect the different contexts and working arrangements for these groups. MPs' staff are employed directly by their MP and currently it is not a requirement for MPs' staff to complete the training. This group is also subject to a relatively large amount of turnover and relatively short-term contracts. Lords Members' staff are, in the majority of cases, not

¹³ The percentages are as at 31 August 2022.

employees of the Member who sponsors their parliamentary access and are instead employed by other organisations. They vary in the extent to which they engage with parliamentary work, with some carrying out parliamentary work sporadically and some not visiting the parliamentary estate. The new approach to training, to replace Valuing Everyone (outlined below in Section 3.4), will allow for a more flexible and targeted approach, making it easier to engage with these 'harder to reach' groups.

3.3 Feedback

Completion of feedback on the training from participants has continued to be high. For the face-to-face workshops, over 97% of participants (over 3,000) completed evaluation forms. For the online workshops, the completion rate is 84% (over 2,500). These high completion rates continue to be a positive sign of participants' willingness to engage with the training and provide evidence that the training is meeting its objectives.

Headline findings from the completed evaluation forms include:

Has your confidence increased in calling out unacceptable behaviour?

- 79% who attended onsite indicated yes
- 92% who attended online indicated yes

How effective was the course in increasing your ability to recognise unacceptable behaviour?

- 93% who attended onsite stated very good or good
- 93% who attended online stated very good or good

How effective was the course in signposting support services and sources of help available?

- 96% who attended onsite said very good or good
- 95% who attended online said very good or good

Would you recommend the course to others?

- 100% who attended onsite stated yes
- 97% who attended online stated yes¹⁴

3.4 New steps, 'The Behaviour Code: why it matters'

With the contract to provide Valuing Everyone training coming to an end in 2022, work is currently underway to design a new training module that continues to support the ICGS and meets the needs of the current phase of culture change programmes in both Houses. This will also deliver on one of the final outstanding recommendations from Alison Stanley's 18-month review of the ICGS. Alison Stanley praised the quality of the training and proposed that it should be refreshed, repeated at intervals, and that steps should be taken to ensure training is completed by those groups who have yet to achieve significant completion rates.¹⁵

A bicameral team has worked extensively and collaboratively with colleagues across Parliament, and consulted the key governance bodies, including the Commissions and Boards in both Houses. As a result,

¹⁴ These cover the period since the training was introduced in 2019 up to 19 July 2022. Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers.

¹⁵ [Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme: Independent 18-month review](#), Alison Stanley CBE FCIPD, 22 February 2021, paras 228-247, pp58-65.

we have been able to reflect on some of the more critical feedback arising from the Valuing Everyone training, as well as the very positive statistics noted above.

The new approach will include a seminar for new starters, whether staff or Members in either House, that focuses on the Behaviour Code. Pilot seminars, entitled 'The Behaviour Code: why it matters', are planned for the Autumn of 2022. The seminar will emphasise how members of the parliamentary community are expected to show respect towards each other, reinforcing the positive behaviours we expect to see and reflecting the improvements in Parliament's culture since the ICGS was first established in 2018. The seminars will promote the same messages to all members of the parliamentary community, but as with Valuing Everyone courses, some content and examples will be tailored to be relevant to the different core audiences (staff of both Houses, MPs, and Lords Members). The content of the seminar has been shaped by 'writers' room' sessions, involving staff and Members of both Houses. Work is currently underway to procure a delivery partner for the new seminar.

Existing members of the parliamentary community, who have already completed the original Valuing Everyone training, will receive refresher information in the form of an awareness campaign. This will allow us to engage individuals primarily in their existing spaces, rather than expecting them to attend a 'separate' training course or seminar. This awareness programme approach also makes it easier to engage with 'harder to reach' groups within the parliamentary community, such as contractors, in a proportionate and cost-effective way. We shall be tracking the effectiveness of the new approach, including the new seminars, which will be reflected in next year's Annual Report.

4. The ICGS Helpline

4.1 Introduction

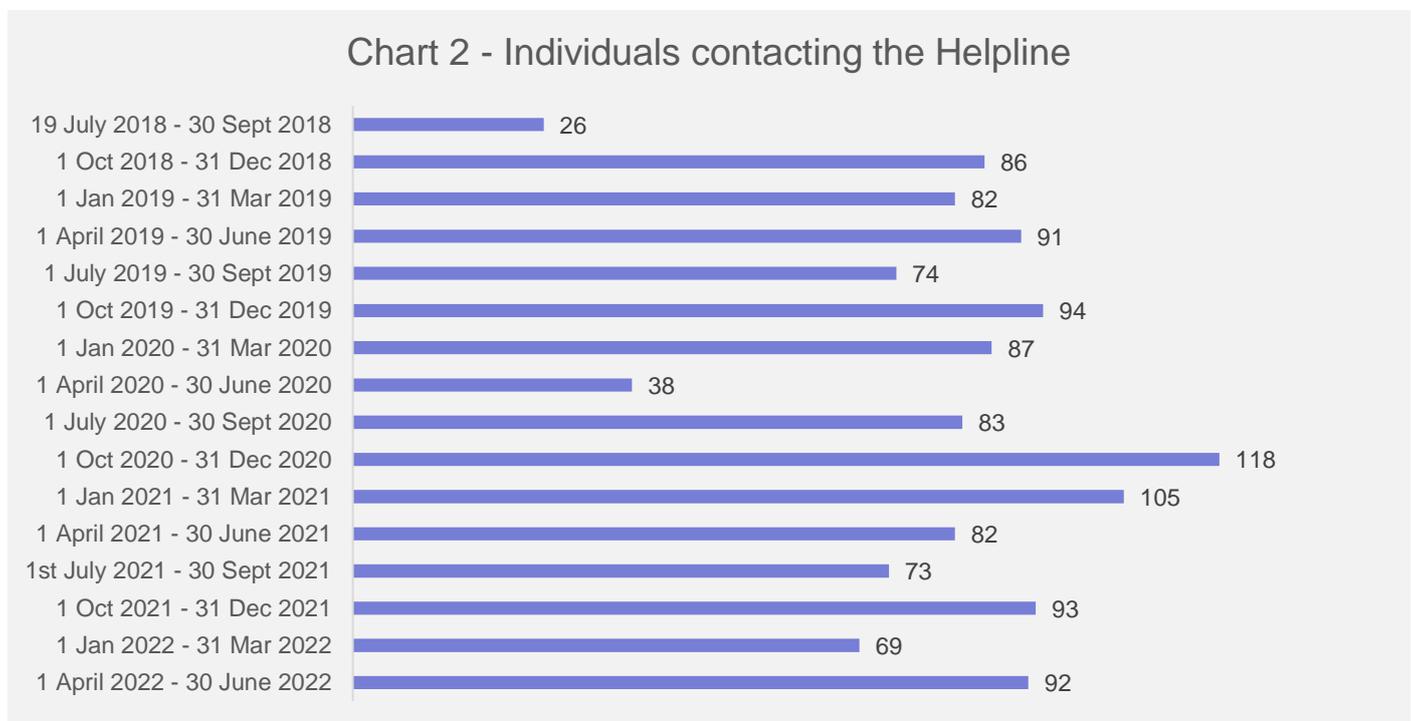
The ICGS Helpline acts as a gateway into the Scheme and plays a pivotal role in providing independent, confidential advice and information. Past and present members of the parliamentary community can call the Helpline on 0808 168 9281 from 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday or can send an e-mail to support@ICGSHelpline.org.uk. The Helpline has two main aims: to provide support and guidance for those needing help and information; and to act as a channel for making an official complaint. All callers contacting the Helpline deal directly with a highly-trained expert and callers often seek advice or signposting to our other support functions, including the Employee/Individual Assistance Programme (EAP/IAP).¹⁶

The Helpline is currently provided by the independent charity Victim Support, who provide both the Helpline and the Independent Sexual Misconduct Advisory (ISMA) service. Having been awarded the contract in a competitive tender, Victim Support have provided these services since July 2020, with a contract that runs for an initial term of three years, with the option to extend for a fourth year. Prior to Victim Support holding the service, the Helpline and ISMA service were delivered by two separate providers. The bullying and harassment helpline was provided by Health Assured and the Independent Sexual Misconduct Advisory (ISMA) service was provided by Solace Women’s Aid.

Victim Support started delivery of the Helpline service at the start of the new contract, with no loss of support for users across the parliamentary community and has built on the strong foundations laid by the previous providers. Quarterly statistics on the use of the Helplines are proactively published on the parliamentary website.¹⁷

4.2 Number of people contacting the Helpline

In this reporting year, 327 different people contacted the Helpline, either via phone or email. This compares with 388 people in the previous reporting year.¹⁸ A breakdown of these figures since the scheme began is set out in Chart 2 below:



¹⁶ The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is for staff and Members’ staff of both Houses. The Individual Assistance Programme (IAP) is for Members of both Houses. The same support is provided by both Houses.

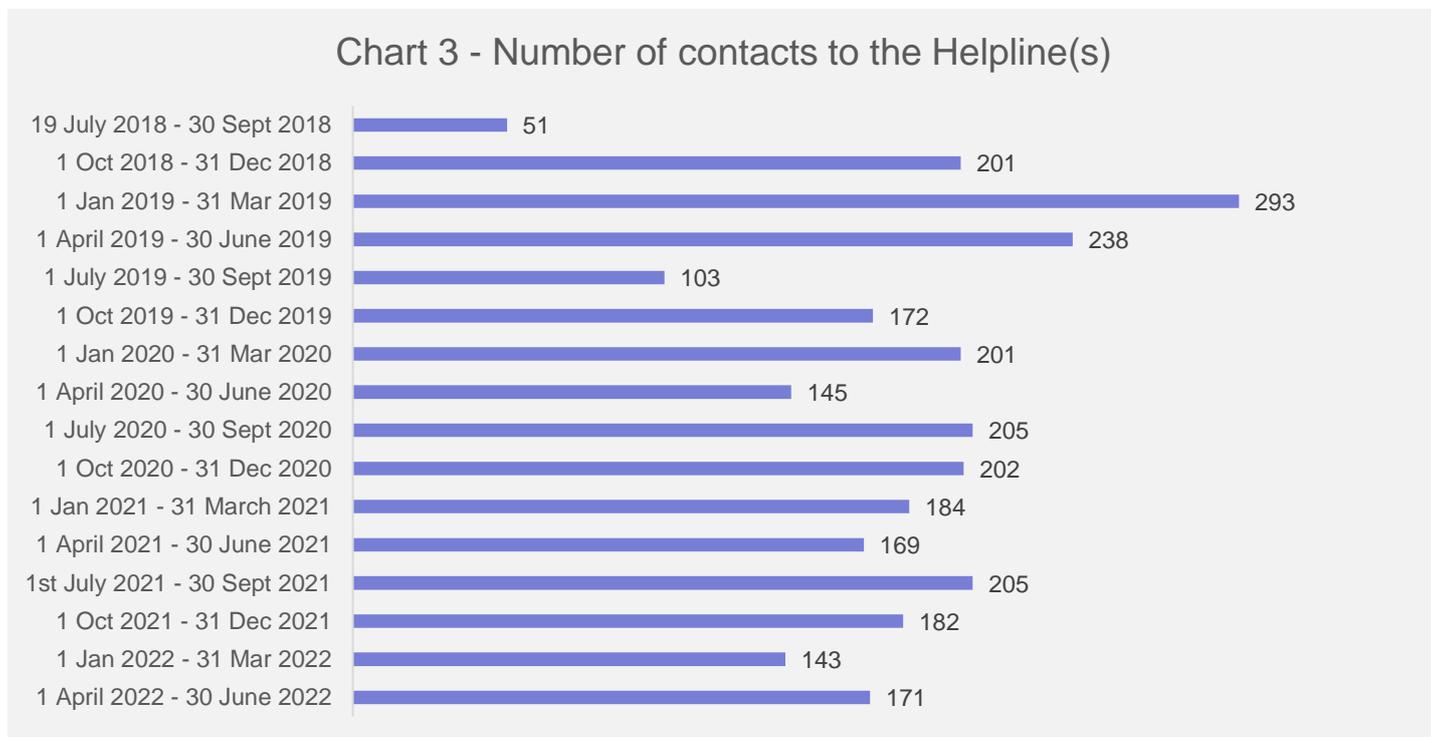
¹⁷ [Independent Complaints and Grievances Scheme proactively published statistics - UK Parliament](#)

¹⁸ There is the chance that contacts contacted the Helpline twice and were anonymous both times, with not enough identifiable info about the case to link the second contact to the first, so have had a new case created.

Since the start of the scheme, the number of people contacting the Helpline has been reasonably consistent, with around 80-90 individuals per quarter. The outlier appears to be the April to June 2020 quarter—when 38 people contacted the Helpline—which coincided with the first lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the past 12 months, the Helpline has fluctuated from 69 unique contacts between January and March 2022, to 93 unique contacts between October and December 2021.

4.3 Number of contacts to the Helpline

From 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, there were 701 in-bound contacts to the Helpline, comprising 214 (31%) phone calls, and 487 (69%) emails. This compares with 760 inbound contacts to the Helpline in the previous reporting year. The average yearly total of contacts to the Helpline since the Scheme began is 716, meaning that the 701 contacts received in this reporting year fall broadly in line with the average. A quarterly breakdown of these totals, since the Scheme began, is set out in Chart 3 below. For reporting purposes, it is important to note that the Helpline runs a report at the end of each quarter to identify unique contacts within that period. This means that, in a number of situations, the same unique contact (person) may contact us across different quarters, and therefore be represented more than once in the data set below:



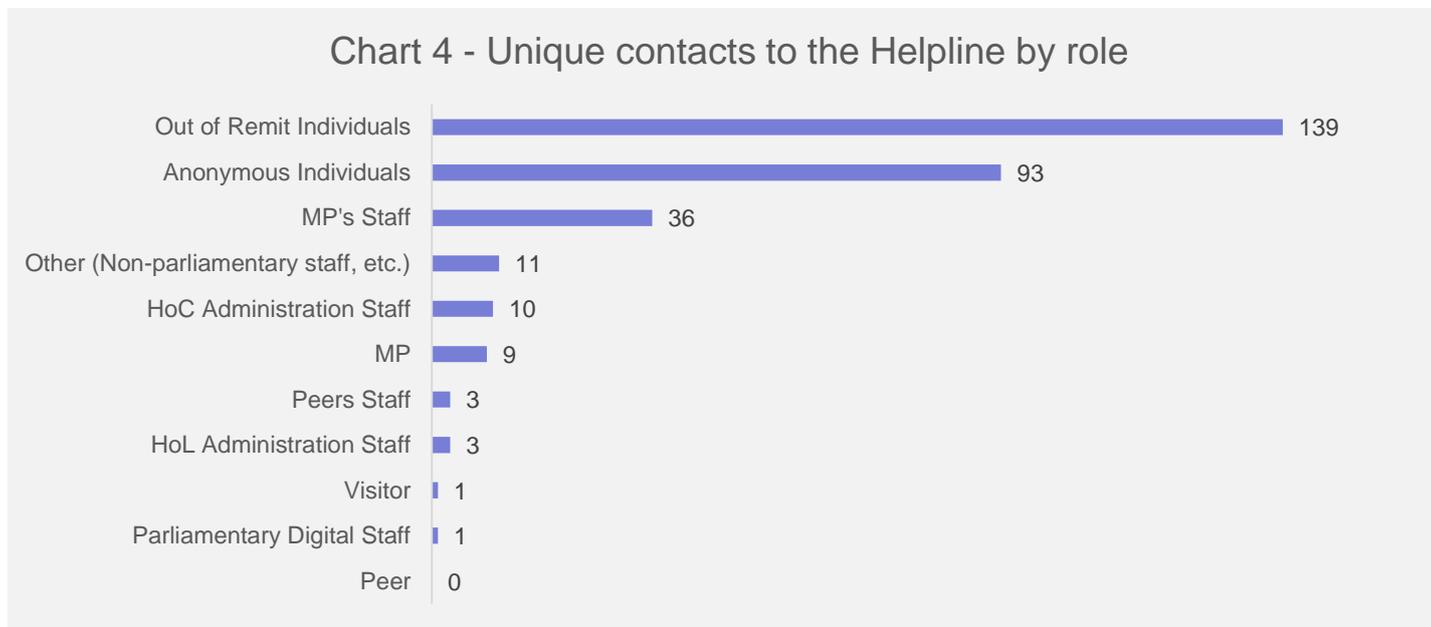
As with last year’s Annual Report, the number of contacts has remained relatively consistent throughout the Scheme’s existence. The low volume of contact to the Helpline in the July to September 2019 quarter coincided with Parliament’s summer recess, with a less noticeable decrease than the previous chart during the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. In this year’s reporting period, there were slightly fewer total contacts (327 people), and each on fewer occasions (701 contacts), when compared with last year’s data (338 and 760 respectively).

4.4 Which groups are contacting the Helpline?

Key to building trust and confidence in the Helpline and the overall scheme is the ability to remain confidential when making initial contact with the Helpline. People may choose to do this for several reasons, including wanting to understand more about their options without having to disclose their identity, wanting to

understand how to support someone else without divulging any specific details, or simply having a confidential space in which to talk about their experience. These contacts are highlighted in the chart below as “Anonymous Individuals”.

The Helpline also receives contact from members of the public and the media, wanting to know more about the Scheme. These callers are either out of the remit of the Scheme, or not enough information is given by the caller to identify them as being within the scope of the ICGS. These are highlighted in the chart below as “Out of Remit Individuals”. Chart 4, below, breaks down the categories of people contacting the Helpline over the last year:



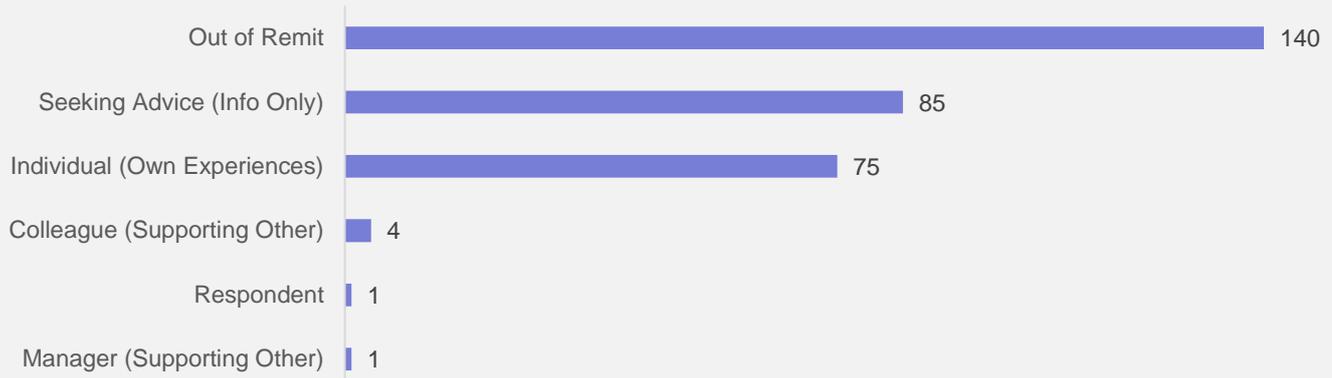
Where the Helpline was able to identify the role of individuals contacting the helpline, the most common role identified was MPs’ staff, accounting for 36 out of 306 contacts, which is 12% of all contacts. If the “Out of Remit” and “Anonymous” individuals are removed from the data set so that the data measures contacts where the individual’s role has been confirmed, MPs’ staff account for 36 out of 74 unique contacts (48.6%). The fact that almost all elements of the parliamentary community are represented in these figures suggests there is a relatively consistent level of awareness in the Scheme across Parliament.

The only part of the community who did not contact the ICGS in the most recent reporting period were Members of the House of Lords. This is in line with recent results of the House of Lords Members survey, which suggested that Members of the Lords are more likely to use other avenues available to them should they have concerns about behaviour that contravenes the Lords Code of Conduct. As part of the ICGS’s ongoing awareness raising work, we are considering ways to engage with Lords Members to ensure they are aware of the Scheme.

4.5 Why are people contacting the Helpline?

Chart 5 below gives a breakdown of the reasons why people are contacting the Helpline. Since last year’s Annual Report, Victim Support have changed the way in which they report on this data; they now report separately on individuals who contact the service but are out of remit of the Scheme. When someone’s reason for contacting the Helpline was within the scope of the Scheme, the most common reason for contacting was to seek advice or information about a particular incident. This accounts for 85 out of 166 ‘In remit’ contacts, or 51%. The second most common reason for contacting the helpline was to disclose specific information about their own experience, either by reporting an incident or wishing to make a formal complaint. This accounts for 75 out of 166 ‘In remit’ contacts, or 45%. By contrast, relatively small numbers made contact either as a manager in support of someone else, as a colleague in support of someone else, or as a respondent to a complaint.

Chart 5 - Reason for contacting the Helpline



4.6 Service User Feedback from the Helpline

During this reporting year, Victim Support implemented a Service User Satisfaction Survey to help gather feedback about people's experiences of the Helpline and to identify good practice and areas for further improvement. This survey is optional, and the response rates are too low to report on, but overall satisfaction is high. If response rates are higher, we shall report on the findings.

5. Investigating complaints

5.1 Overview of complaints

Complaints are investigated by Independent Investigators who are commissioned by the ICGS team on a case-by-case basis. During this reporting year, investigators were selected from three specialist providers and a pool of Independent Investigators.

There were 52 disclosures received from the Victim Support Helpline this reporting year, an increase of 16 from 2020-2021 (there were also 52 disclosures received in 2019-2020). Three of these disclosures were ineligible. From the 49 eligible disclosures, 59 individual cases were opened. (The number of complaints can be higher than the number of disclosures as complainants can raise complaints against more than one respondent in a single disclosure).

Of the 59 cases, 44 progressed through to the Initial Assessment stage. At the end of the Initial Assessment stage, Independent Investigators recommended that 13 of these cases warranted further investigation and so progressed through to a Full Assessment.

This Annual Report highlights all cases opened in this reporting year, not only those received *during* the year. By the end of this reporting year, 29 cases were closed: six were resolved informally; 21 investigations were completed with an “upheld” or “not upheld” finding; and two were closed by the Independent Investigator but were awaiting a final decision from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. Of the 21 completed investigations, four were received and completed in this reporting year, 17 were carried over from previous years and completed in this reporting year, and 22 cases remained open.

Of the 21 completed investigations, 48% were upheld and 52% were not upheld. The split in previous years is as follows:

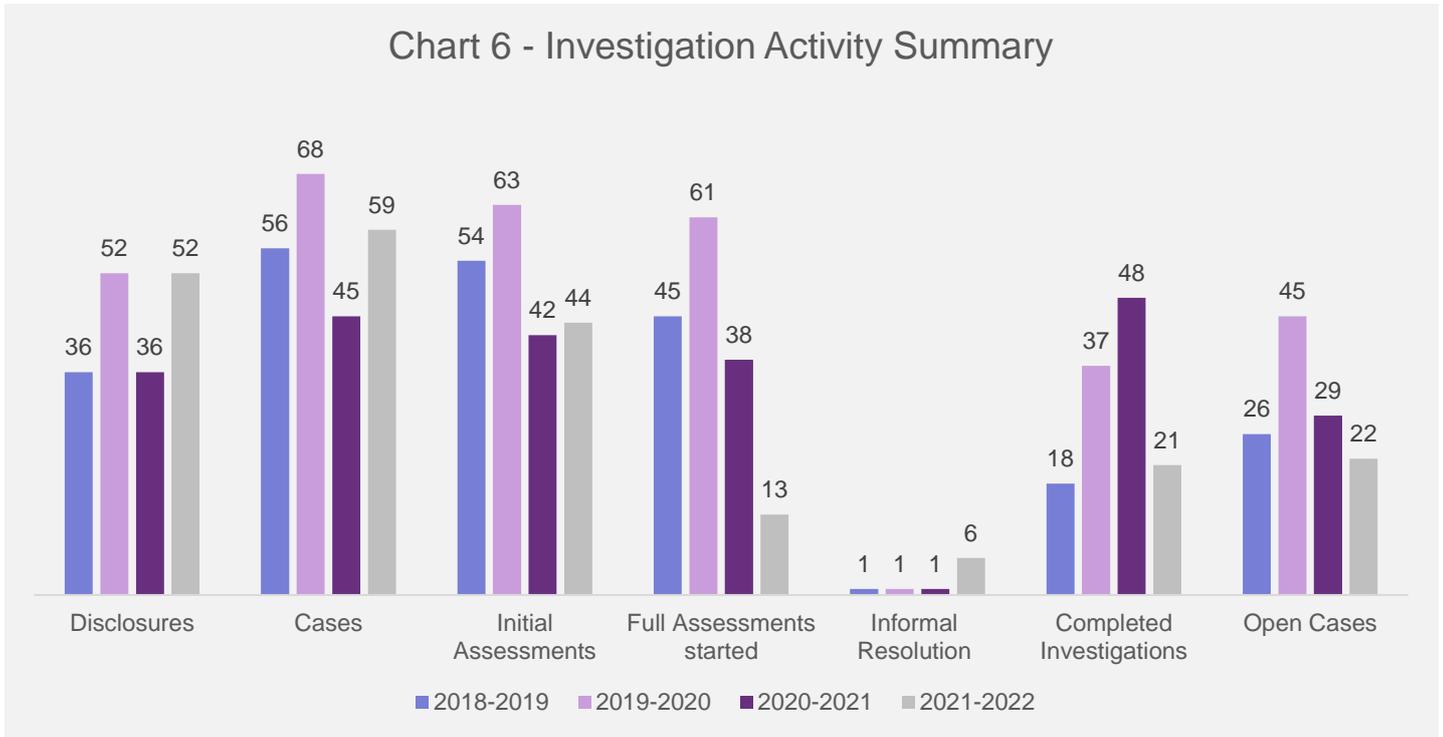
- In 2018-2019 of the 18 completed investigations, 11% upheld and 89% not upheld;
- In 2019-2020 of the 37 completed investigations, 32% upheld and 68% not upheld; and
- In 2020-2021 of the 48 completed investigations, 46% upheld and 54% not upheld.

Of the 21 completed investigations and the two closed cases pending a decision from the PCS, 12 of those were cases where an MP was a respondent. These cases took an average time of 262 days. This compares with cases involving House staff, which took an average of 186 days, and MPs’ Staff cases, which took an average of 133 days.

The mean average timescales of closed cases (where there has been a decision made by the Independent Investigator) increased by 20 working days from last year.

The longest case that was closed during this reporting year (with an upheld or not upheld outcome) was 434 days, which was 138 working days shorter than the longest case closed last year.

Chart 6 - Investigation Activity Summary



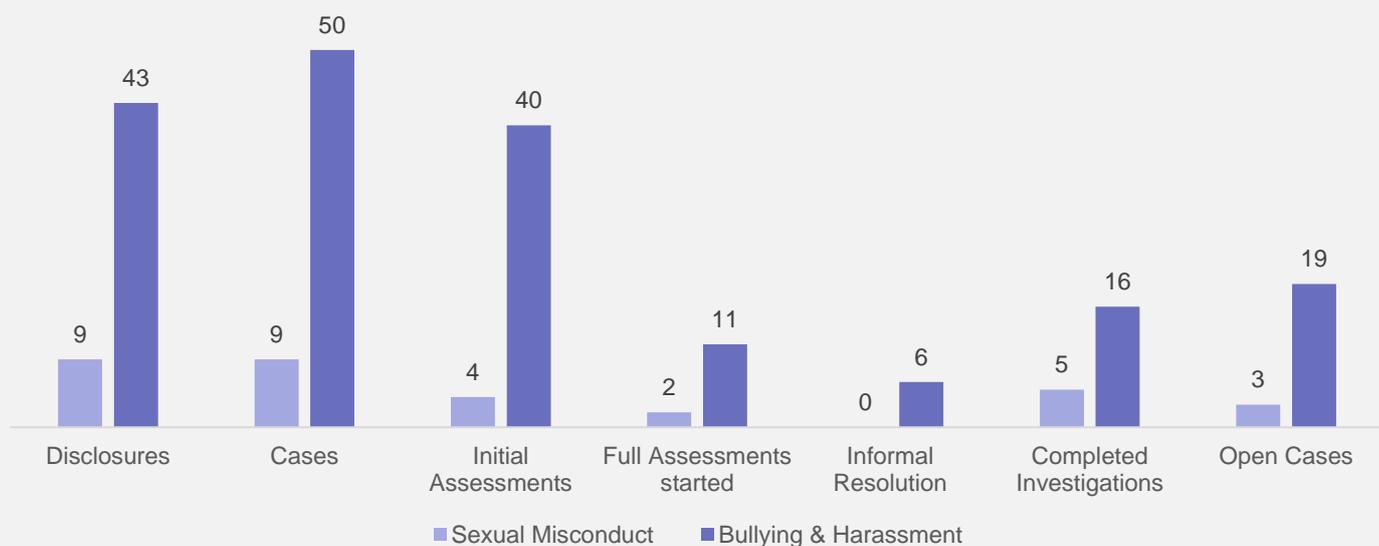
19

Investigation Activity Summary split by Sexual Misconduct and Bullying and Harassment

In last year's Annual Report, we highlighted the percentage split between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment cases at disclosure stage. For the first time, we can now show the split between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment cases at each stage of the ICGS process and we shall continue to highlight this split in future Annual Reports. This year, we have seen an increase in the number of complaints being brought forward under the Sexual Misconduct Policy compared with previous years. Last year, 91% of disclosures sent from the Helpline to the ICGS team were complaints under the Bullying and Harassment Policy and 9% were under the Sexual Misconduct Policy. This year, 83% were complaints under the Bullying and Harassment Policy and 17% were under the Sexual Misconduct Policy.

¹⁹ All year-to-year periods used in charts run from 1 July to 30 June.

Chart 6a Investigation Activity Summary - Sexual Misconduct vs Bullying & Harassment



5.2 Initial Assessments

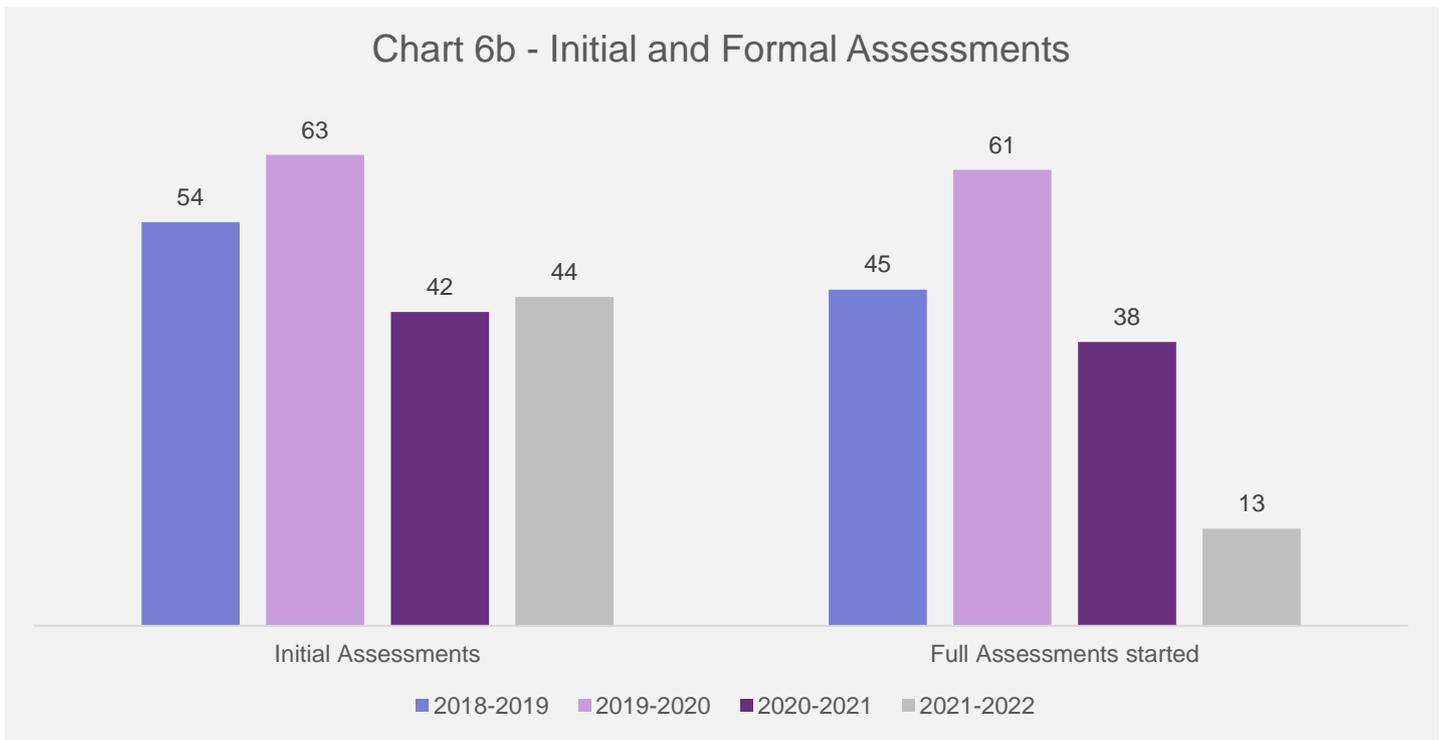
The first stage of any complaint is the Initial Assessment. During this step, the Independent Investigator will meet the complainant to discuss their experiences and the allegations. The investigator will then decide whether the behaviour being complained about is eligible under either the Bullying and Harassment or the Sexual Misconduct Policy, and find out whether it has already been investigated through another process.

This year, there has been a noticeable difference in the number of cases that progressed to Full Assessment. Last year, 90% of complaints progressed from an Initial Assessment to a Full Assessment. This year, that percentage dropped significantly to 30% of complaints progressing to a Full Assessment from Initial Assessment. It is worth noting that the number of Initial Assessments recorded in this Annual Report are also included in the 19 open cases, so of the 44 Initial Assessments, there are some that are yet to progress to full assessment.

There are a range of contributing factors that could explain the drop in the number of Initial Assessment progressing to Full Assessments. Complainants may want to follow a different route, following a discussion with the investigator, and withdraw their complaint. The complaint may not fall within the scope of the ICGS. Some complainants stop engaging with the process, for a variety of reasons (including be on long-term sick leave or leaving the organisation). Complaints that relate to justifiable management decisions are less likely to progress to Full Assessment stage. Also, there has been a greater use of informal resolution, which means that the formal process is not required.

The ICGS does not currently record reasons why a case does not progress to a Full Assessment. However, we shall be tracking this and reporting on it in next year's Annual Report.

Chart 6b - Initial and Formal Assessments

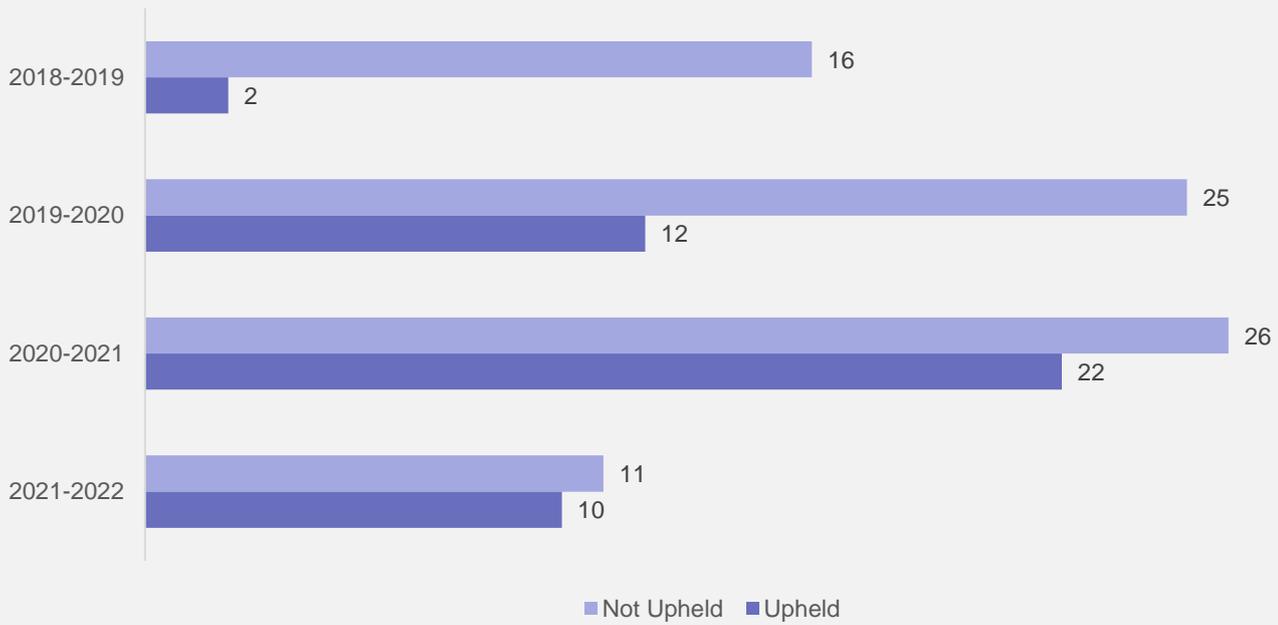


5.3 Outcomes

At the end of a full investigation, a recommendation will be made by the investigator on whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld. Where an MP is a respondent in a case, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (PCS) is the Decision-Making Body. The IEP determines sanctions in ICGS cases where the PCS does not have the necessary sanctions available to her and hears appeals from either complainants or respondents against the PCS's decisions in ICGS cases involving MPs or former MPs. The outcomes reported here are those made at the final known point in the process, either by the investigator, the PCS or the IEP.

Chart 7 below shows the outcomes of a completed investigation where there was an upheld or not upheld finding.

Chart 7 - Completed investigations with a recorded outcome



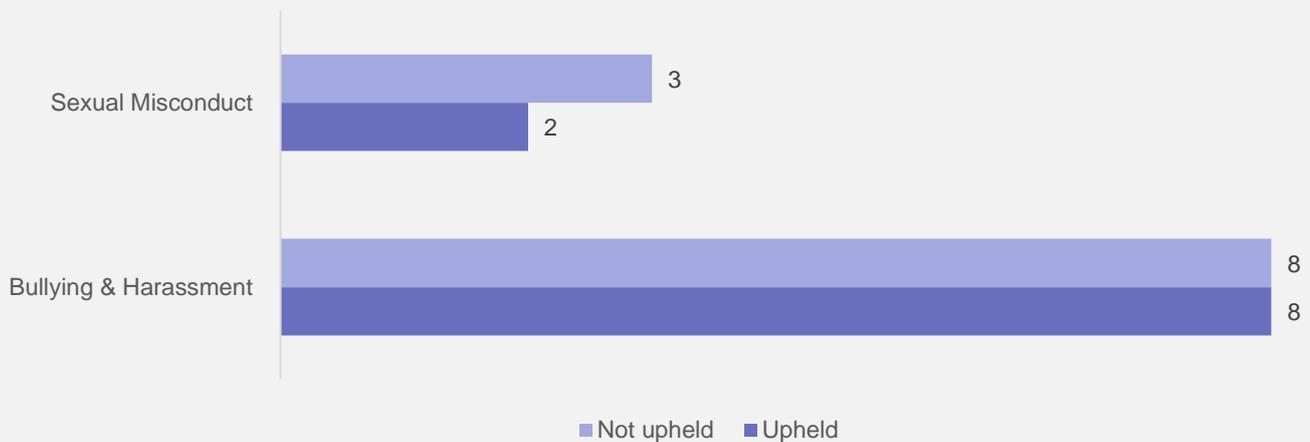
In 2018-2019 of the 18 completed investigations, 11% upheld and 89% not upheld
 In 2019-2020 of the 37 completed investigations, 32% upheld and 68% not upheld
 In 2020-2021 of the 48 completed investigations, 46% upheld and 54% not upheld
 In 2021-2022 of the 21 completed investigations, 48% upheld and 52% not upheld

Outcomes split by Sexual Misconduct and Bullying and Harassment

In last year’s Annual Report, we highlighted the percentage split between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment cases at disclosure stage only. This year, for the first time, we have shown the split between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment for a case outcome.

Chart 7a below shows how many cases have been upheld and not upheld under the Bullying and Harassment and the Sexual Misconduct Policy in 2021-2022.

Chart 7a - Completed investigations with a recorded outcome - Sexual Misconduct vs. Bullying & Harassment



5.4 Complainant and Respondent Groups

The ICGS records which group of the parliamentary community complainants and respondents sit within.

Where the ICGS believe that the identities of complainants and respondents are at risk of being exposed, their case has been omitted from this chart.

Complainant Groups

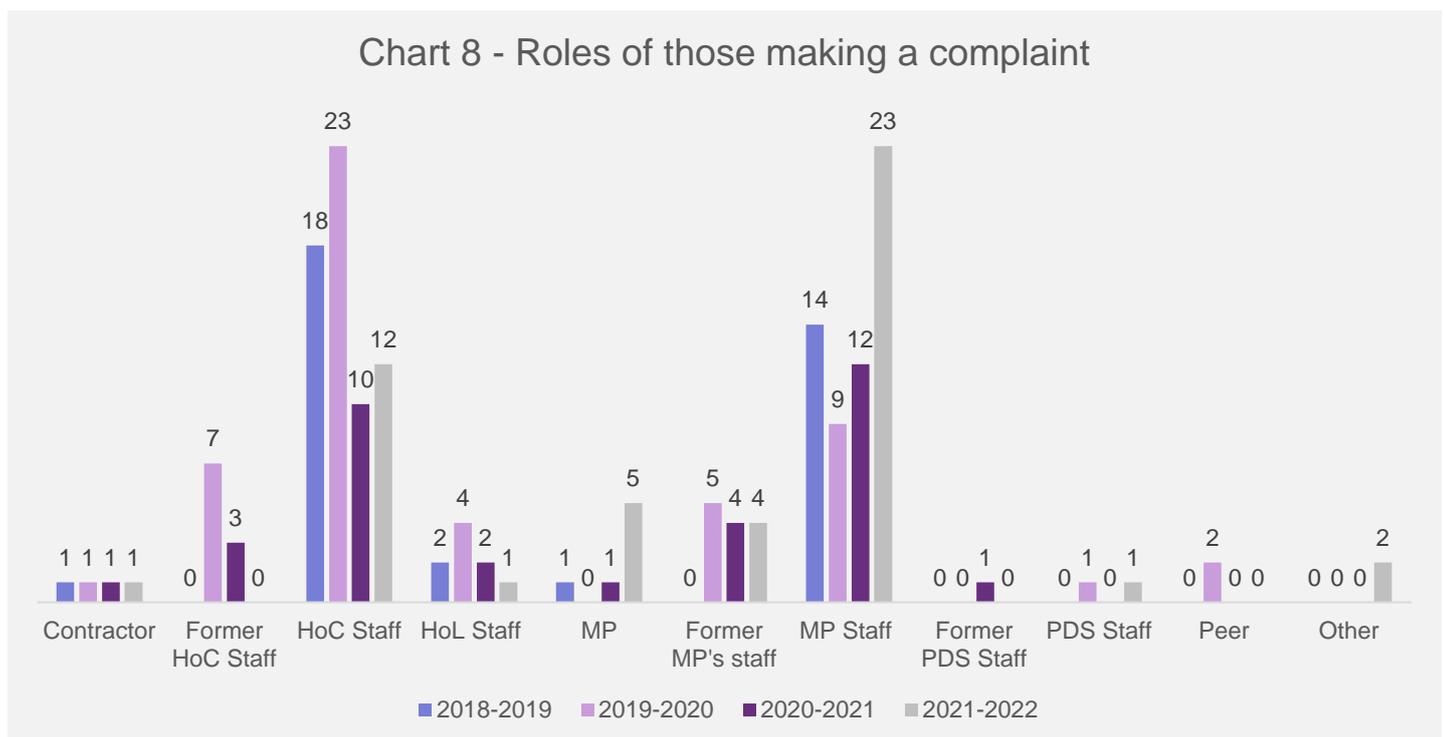
The largest group of complainants in 2021-2022 were MPs' staff. They made 23 complaints, compared with 12 last year. This is in line with the statistics provided by the Helpline (outlined in Chapter 4), where the most commonly identified group of staff to contact the Helpline were MPs' staff. Of those 23 complaints, 19 were made under the Bullying and Harassment Policy and four were made under the Sexual Misconduct Policy. Seventeen of the 23 complaints were made against MPs (three under the Sexual Misconduct Policy and 14 under the Bullying and Harassment Policy).

The second largest group of complainants were from House of Commons Administration Staff who made 12 complaints, compared with 10 last year, all of which were made under the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

It is worth noting that MPs' staff is the largest group in the parliamentary community (3,674), followed by House of Commons Administration Staff (2579).

This reporting year, five MPs used the ICGS to make a complaint compared with one the year before.

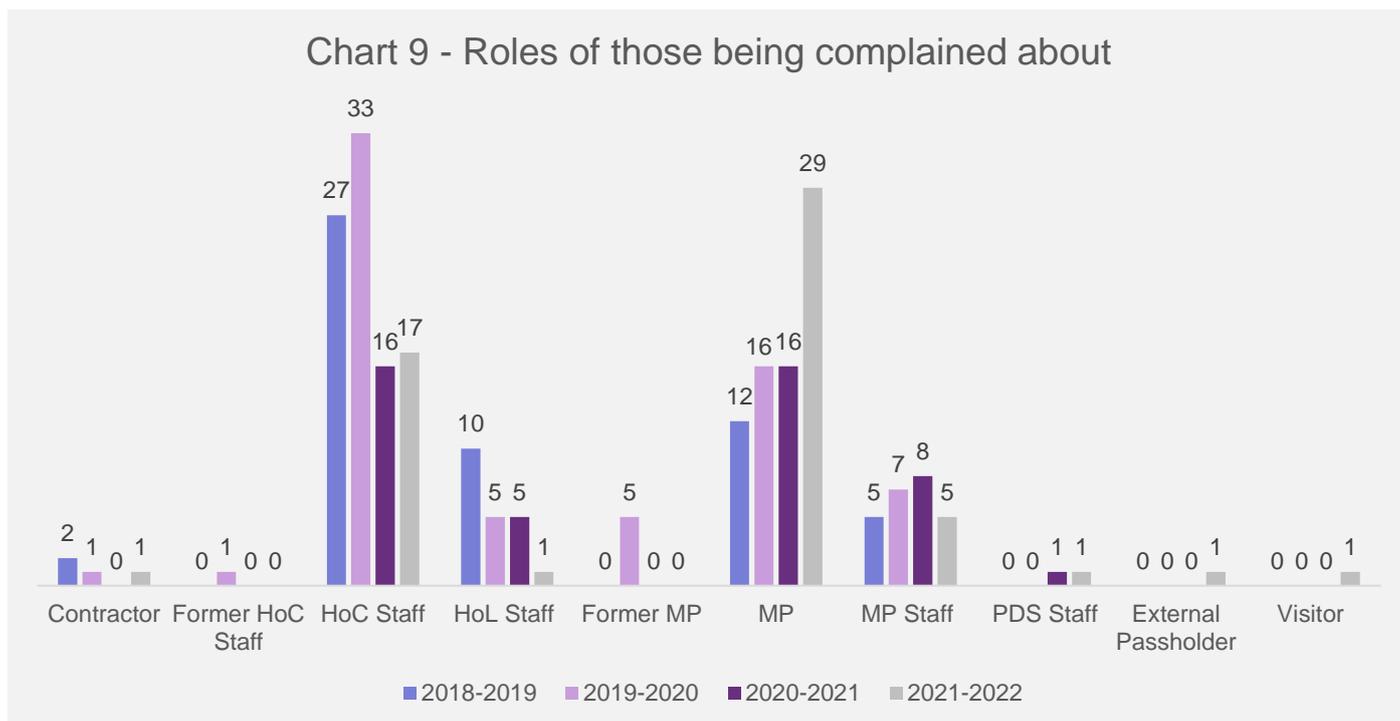
Chart 8 below shows the different groups of those individuals who made a complaint under the Scheme.



Respondent Groups

The largest group of respondents in 2021-2022 were MPs, with 29 complaints being made against this group. Of those 29 complaints, 23 were made under the Bullying and Harassment Policy and six under the Sexual Misconduct Policy. The second largest group of respondents in 2021-2022 were House of Commons Administration Staff, against whom 17 complaints were made. All 17 complaints were made under the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

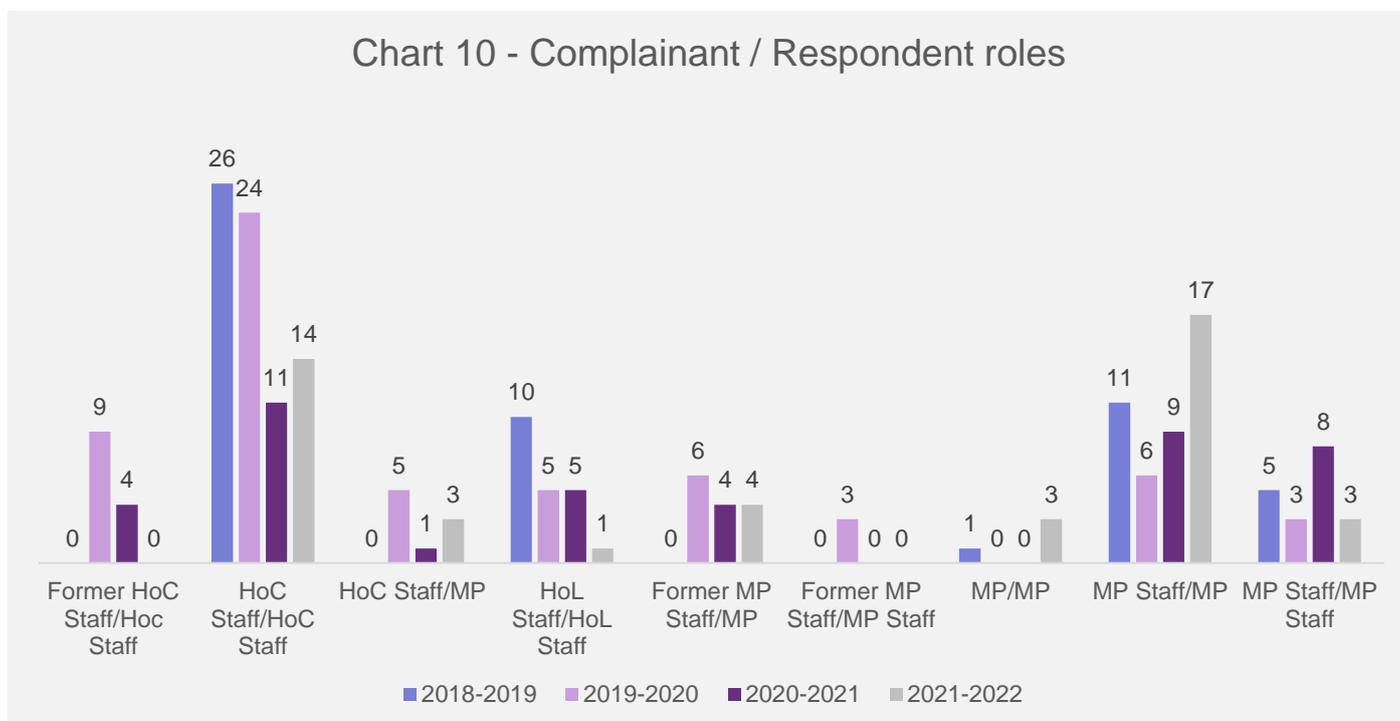
Chart 9 below shows the groups of those being complained about under the Scheme.²⁰



Relationship between complainants and respondents

The most noticeable increase was the number of MPs' staff making complaints about MPs. This may be linked to the increased visibility of upheld cases and sanctions placed on MPs published by the Independent Expert Panel. There were no complaints raised by former House of Commons Administration staff.

Chart 10 below shows the groups of the individuals who made a complaint and those about whom they made a complaint about:



²⁰ Complaints about Members of the House of Lords or their staff do not feature in this chart, as these are handled under [the provisions of the House of Lords](#) Further details are included in paragraph 6.2 below.

5.5 Timescales

Timescales of Initial Assessments

In last years Annual Report, we reported on the time taken (in working days) to complete a full investigation. This year, for the first time, we are also reporting on the time taken, in working days, to complete an Initial Assessment.

Chart 11 below shows the time taken, in working days, for cases which had an Initial Assessment but did not progress to a Full Assessment:

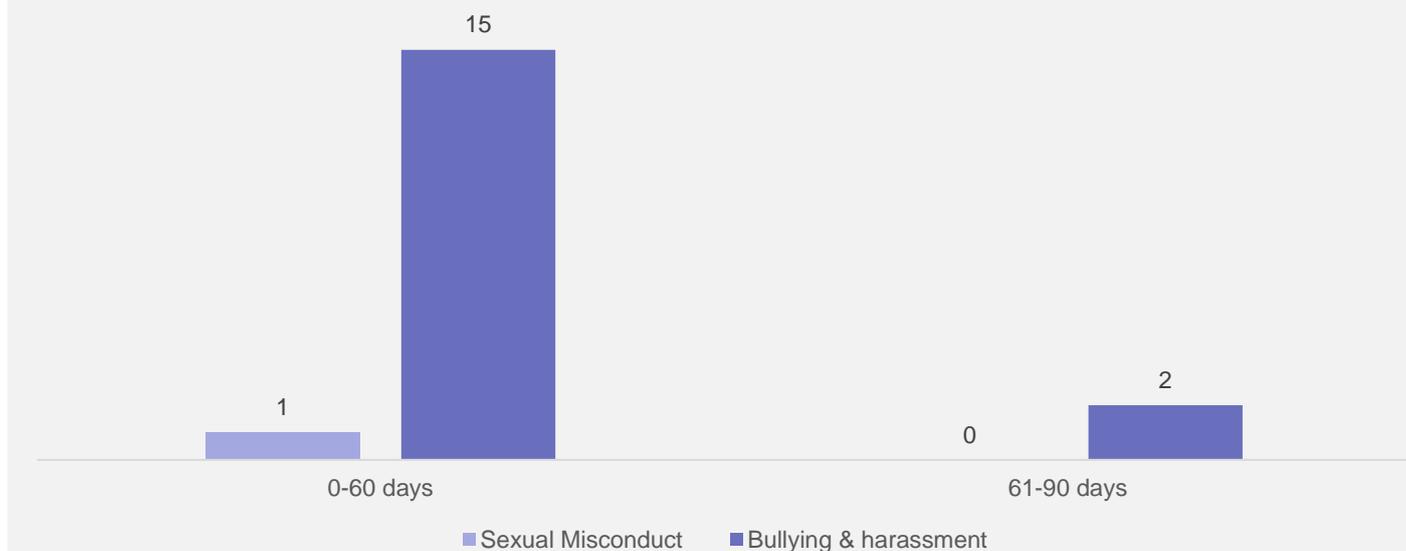


Timescales for cases which did not progress to a full assessment split by sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment

In last year’s Annual Report, we highlighted the percentage split between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment cases at Disclosure Stage only. This year, for the first time, we have shown the split for the number of working days taken to complete an Initial Assessment between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment cases.

Chart 11a below shows the breakdown of time taken, in working days, for complaints which did not progress to a Full Assessment, based on the Independent Investigator’s decision in 2021-2022. This breakdown shows the split between complaints brought forward under the Sexual Misconduct Policy and those brought forward under the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Chart 11a - Sexual Misconduct vs Bullying & Harassment: time taken for cases that did not progress



Timescales for completed investigations

The ICGS always strives to complete investigations in a timely investigation, while also ensuring investigations are thorough and fair.

The mean average timescales of full investigations increased by 20 working days compared with last year's mean average. The mean average of timescales of all years is as follows:

- This year's reporting year of 2021-22, it was 216;
- In 2020-2021, it was 196;
- In 2019-2020, it was 127; and
- In 2018-2019, it was 121.

The longest case closed during this reporting year (with an upheld or not upheld outcome) was 434 working days, which was 138 working days shorter than the longest case closed in 2020-2021. Cases that were paused are included in this data. This year, the ICGS team began recording more data on the reasons why cases are paused and will report on this in next year's Annual Report.

Three of this year's longest cases this year were paused for several months while awaiting clarifications to the ICGS policies, which required agreement on the floor of the House of Commons (finalised in April 2021). Other reasons for pauses in cases included: awaiting the establishment of the IEP; health and wellbeing concerns for either party; and bereavement.

There were 23 cases completed by the Independent Investigator this reporting year (this includes the 2 PCS cases that were awaiting a final decision from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards on 30th June). Of those, 12 were cases where an MP was a respondent and three of those 12 were non-recent cases, which were complex due to the time elapsed since the allegations occurred.

In cases where MPs were a respondent, cases took an average time of 262 days. This compares with cases involving House staff, which took an average of 186 days, and MPs' Staff cases, which took an average of 133 days.

The ICGS has implemented several changes to tackle lengthy timescales in investigations which include:

- Regular reviews of the complaints process, which has led to steps in the process being reviewed, and some being removed;

- A new tracker system, tracking invoices paid and associated costs, including the number of working days and the length of time taken. This ensures that case workers and investigators are regularly reviewing the progress of investigations;
- Additional resource in the ICGS team dedicated to progressing cases; and
- A new investigators portal, with updated guidance and timescales, including new processes for progressing an investigation when the interviewee is causing a delay.

There are circumstances that can cause reasonable delays. This year, they included:

- Cases being paused while they were under consideration in other complaints processes; and
- Parties in the investigation being on annual leave (usually this is no longer than two weeks).

We regret the length of time that some cases have taken and will continue to look at ways in which to reduce timescales, without compromising the standard of investigations.

Chart 12 below shows the longest, shortest and mean average in working days for the length of time taken for the Independent Investigator to reach their conclusion and to complete a case.

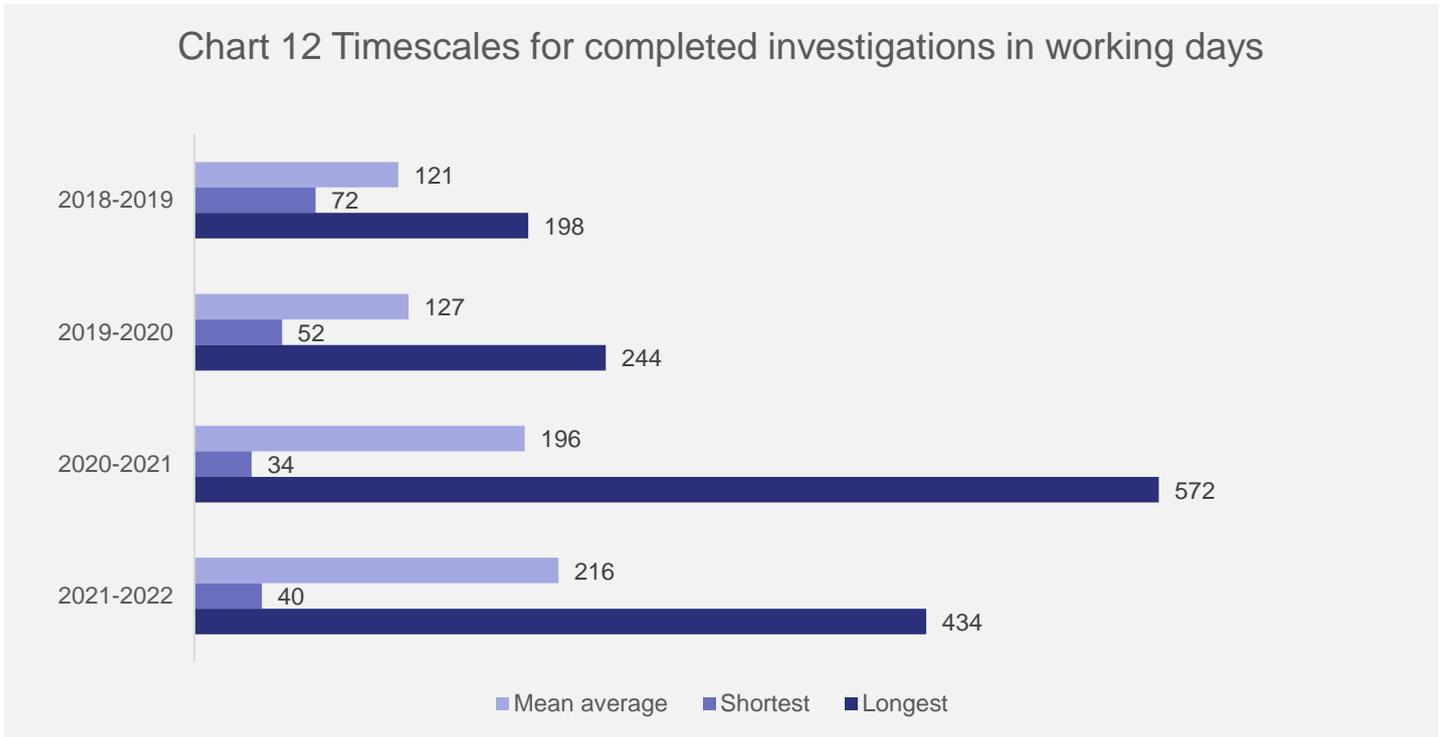
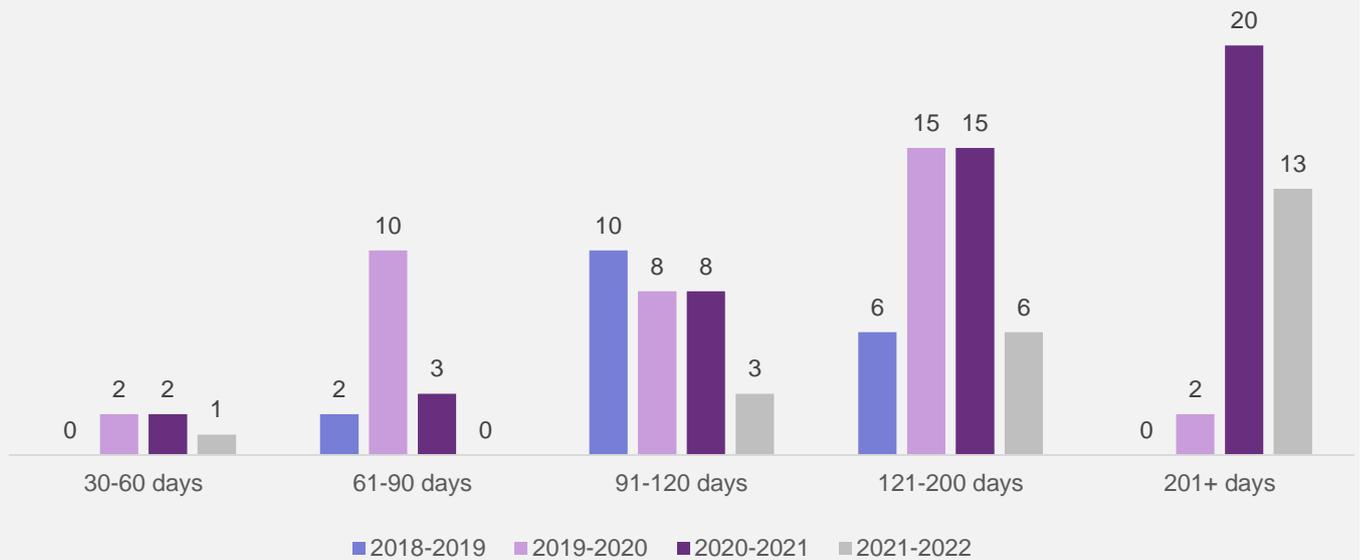


Chart 12a below shows the number of working days it took for the Independent Investigator to reach their conclusion and to complete a case in that reporting year. For cases where an MP is a respondent, this does not include the time taken for the PCS to reach their decision.

Chart 12a - Timescales of completed investigations in working days

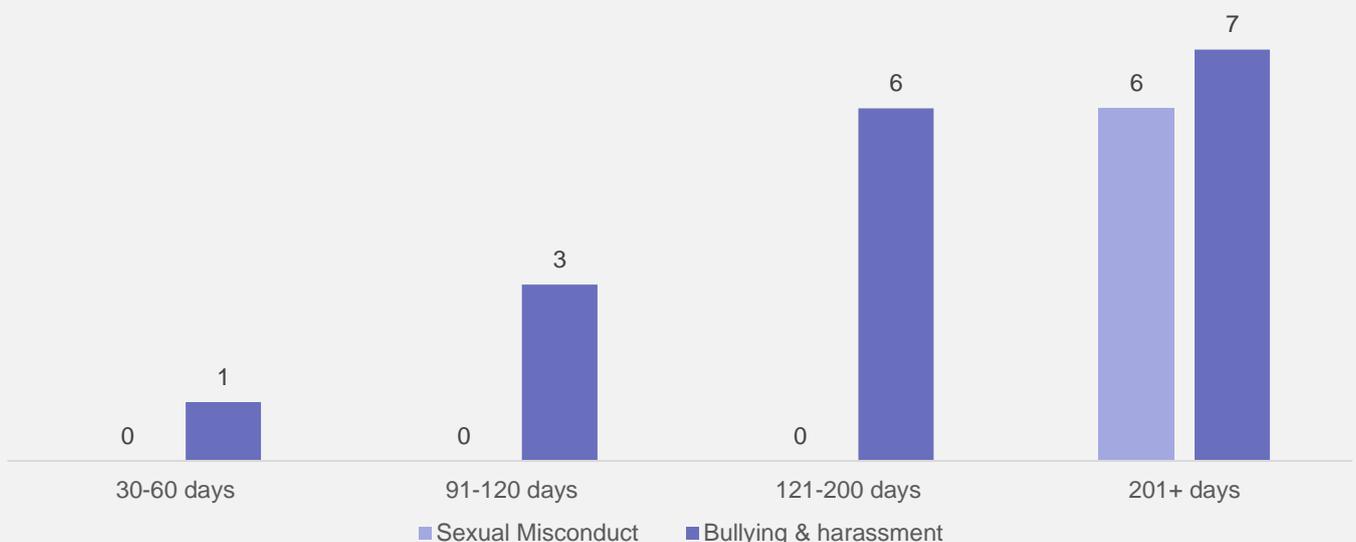


Timescales for completed investigations split by sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment

In last year’s Annual Report, we highlighted the percentage split between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment cases at disclosure stage only. This year, for the first time, we have the number of working days taken to complete an investigation, split between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment cases. Cases concerning sexual misconduct are often more complex than those involving bullying and harassment, and can therefore take longer.

Chart 12b below shows the breakdown of time taken between sexual misconduct and bullying and harassment, in working days, for completed investigations which have an upheld or not upheld finding in 2021-2022. All six complaints which were brought forward under the Sexual Misconduct Policy took over 201 working days.

Chart 12b - Sexual Misconduct vs Bullying & Harassment: time taken for completed investigations



Timescales of cases that were withdrawn

Complainants can withdraw their complaint at any point in the process up until the Factual Accuracy Check stage.

This reporting year, 13 complainants withdrew their complaint and 92% of these were withdrawn at the Initial Assessment stage. Nine of the 13 complaints withdrawn were brought forward under the Bullying and Harassment Policy and the remaining four were brought forward under the Sexual Misconduct Policy. Two further cases that were carried over from previous years were withdrawn during this reporting year, both under the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

There are different reasons why some complainants decide to withdraw their ICGS case. The ICGS does not currently record the reason why complainants choose to withdraw. However, this is something we will be reporting on in next year’s Annual Report.

Chart 13 below shows the time taken, in working days, for cases that were withdrawn at any time in the process:

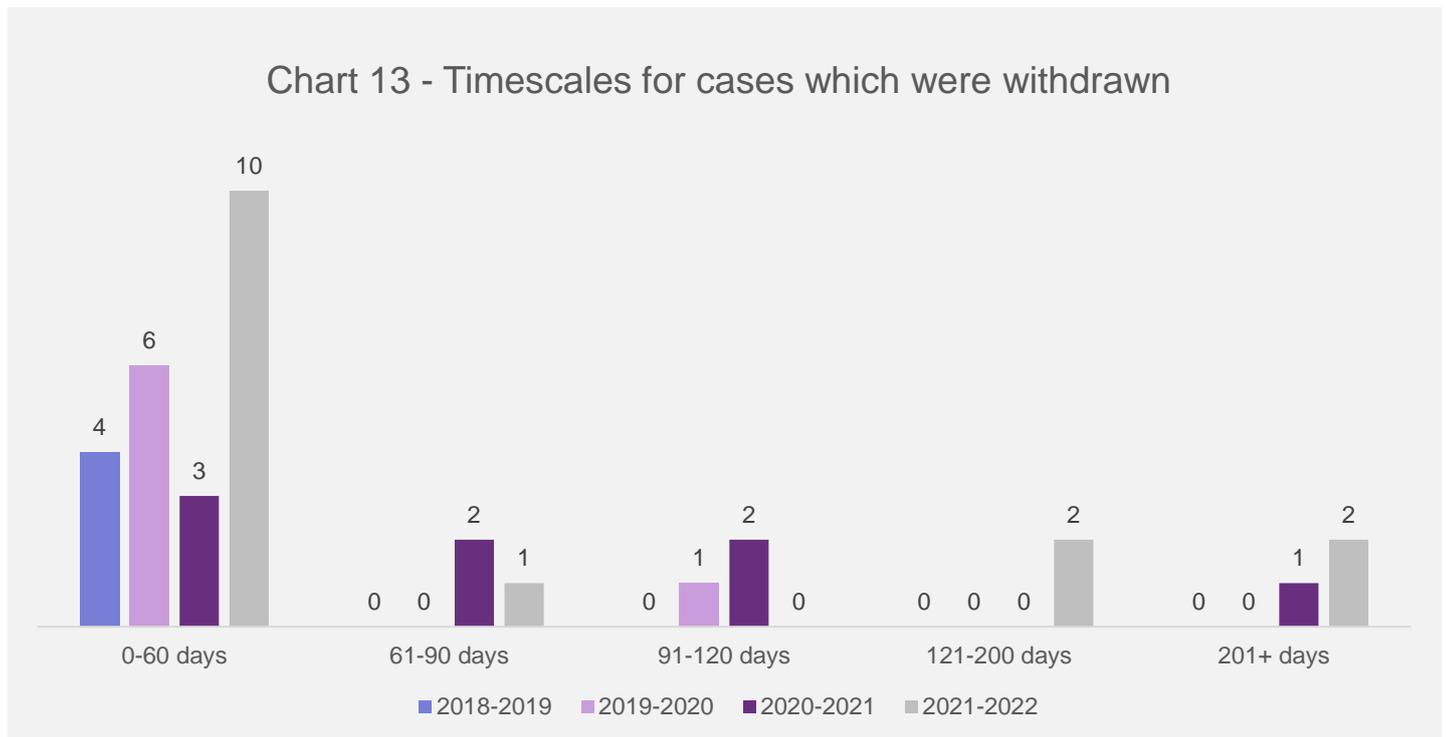
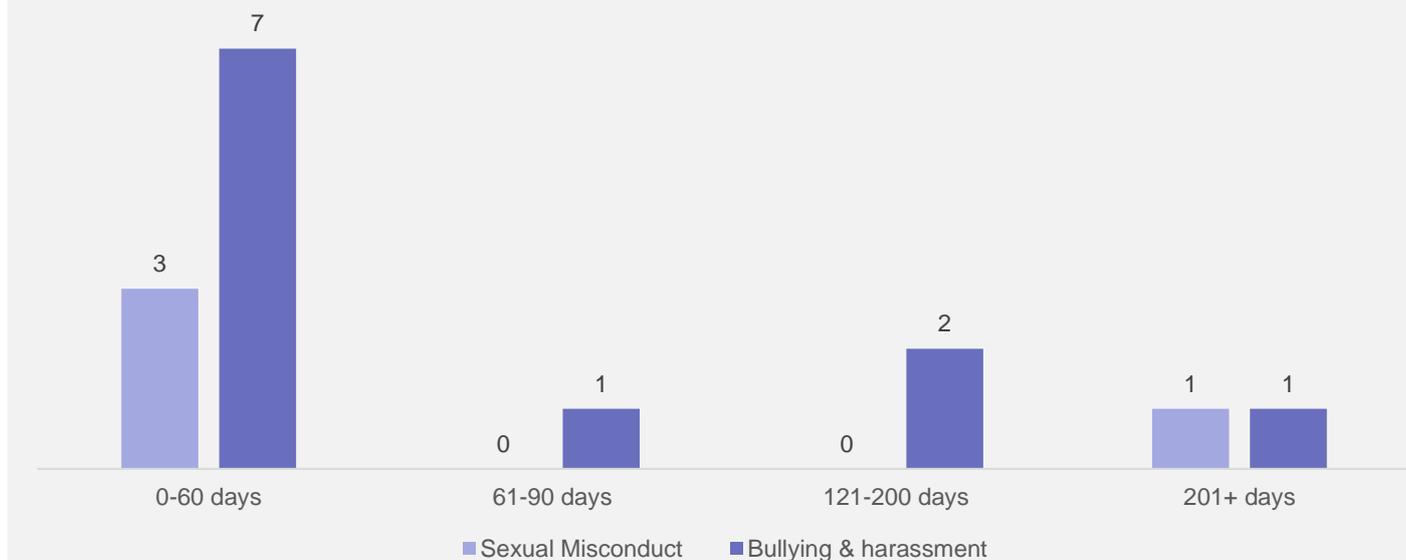


Chart 13a below shows the breakdown of time taken, in working days, for complaints which were withdrawn by complainants in 2021-2022. This breakdown shows the split between bullying and harassment and sexual misconduct complaints.

Chart 13a - Sexual Misconduct vs Bullying & Harassment: time taken for cases that were withdrawn



5.6 Informal Resolution

In her 18-month review of the ICGS, Alison Stanley recommended that the ICGS team develop more routes to resolve ICGS cases informally. This recommendation was consulted on with key stakeholders and implemented in October 2021. This year, for the first time, a separate figure showing the number of cases resolved through informal resolutions is included in this report. In previous years, there has been only one case resolved informally each year. This year, six cases were resolved through the new process. This represents just over a fifth (21%) of all closed cases in 2021-2022. As chart 6a highlights, all six cases that were resolved informally were complaints brought forward under the Bullying and Harassment Policy. While not always the case, informal resolution is often less appropriate in cases involving sexual misconduct. If a complainant who has made a complaint under the Sexual Misconduct Policy chooses to resolve the complaint informally, the matter will either remain with the Helpline and the ICGS will not be involved in the process or it will be referred back to the Helpline if the complainant decided during the process that they would like to explore informal resolution. This is referred to as Pathway 2 in the Sexual Misconduct Policies and Procedures. There have been no complaints that have been resolved under Pathway 2, from the start of the Scheme, to date.

Informal resolution needs to be agreed to by both the complainant and the respondent. It can include: facilitated conversations, which may result in an acknowledgement of the behaviour by the respondent and impact on the complainant; written letters of apology; attending training; changing the working environment; or mediation.

Informal resolution has potential benefits, including increased control on the part of complainants, improved timescales, greater flexibility and quicker outcomes. The benefits of a successful informal resolution can encourage a better working environment and improved relationships. The option of informal resolution is raised by the investigator with the complainant at Initial Assessment stage (where appropriate) and with both parties at Full Assessment. Options for informal resolution remain open throughout an investigation.

5.7 Benchmarking

The ICGS is a unique scheme in any Parliament in the world, covering a wide range of people, Decision-making bodies, and employment relationships. There are many different variables, including different stages

in the process according to where the respondent works in Parliament. As a result, some cases take a longer time to complete. It is important to ensure that Parliament is keeping pace with other organisations in terms of length of investigations. However, making direct comparisons with other schemes can be challenging given the unique position of Parliament. The ICGS is committed to increasing the pace of investigations, while also ensuring that they are of a consistent high quality.

To understand how the ICGS compares with similar schemes, we asked other administrations for their investigation timescales. We would like to thank those who have responded by providing data. Below is a description of each of the organisations who provided us data, followed by a table which shows the average length of investigations:

- The Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland investigates complaints about the conduct of Members of Scottish Parliament (MSP's), Scottish local authority councillors, and board members of devolved public bodies;
- Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards carries out investigations into complaints about the behaviour of Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in relation to their respective codes of conduct; and
- The Senedd Commissioner for Standards receives and investigates complaints about the conduct of Members of the Senedd, reports to the Senedd about investigations and advises Members of the Senedd and the public about complaints procedures.
-

Institution	Average length of investigation ²¹
The Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland – complaints against MSP's	36 working days
The Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland – complaints against councillors/board members of public bodies	89 working days
Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards	N/A ²²
The Senedd Commissioner for Standards	121 working days ²³
ICGS	216 working days

We are continually working to reduce the time taken to investigate ICGS cases. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the ICGS is the only parliamentary body listed above that contracts Independent Investigators on a case-by-case basis, rather than the investigators being recruited as employees. The ICGS also deals with many different types of employment relationships compared with other parliamentary schemes, with the accompanying different Decision-Making Bodies. As a result, the ICGS model can lead to unavoidable delays. However, we are working to speed up the time that investigations take. The recruitment

²¹ This number has been calculated from the time at which a complaint is received, to the final recommendation/decision made. The data is from the institutions' most recently published reporting period, unless specified otherwise.

²² The Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards office does not currently report or analyse the length of investigations in detail but explained that they are seeking to include such detail in their next annual report.

²³ The Senedd Commissioner for Standards receives complaints about various areas outside of bullying/harassment and sexual misconduct. To help make the comparison as direct to the ICGS as possible, the calculated figure above is in relation to a complaint about bullying.

of new investigators will ensure that we have more investigators who are available for work and can appoint the most appropriate investigator to a case as quickly as possible.

5.8 Recruitment of Independent Investigators

Currently, we have a combination of investigator service providers, from whom we recruit investigators, and a pool of Independent Investigators.

The provider organisations are as follows:

- Conflict Management Plus Solutions (CMP) has provided investigators since September 2018 and were successfully awarded the contract again in September 2020;
- Total Conflict Management (TCM) were contracted in September 2020; and
- EA Inclusion were contracted in September 2020.

The contracts were for an initial two-year period, with extension options of two further 12-month periods. The contracts for CMP and TCM have been extended until September 2023.

In December 2019, following the extension of the ICGS to cover non-recent cases, the ICGS team recruited a separate pool of Independent Investigators. This pool has specialist experience from the commercial, public and law enforcement sectors to investigate non-recent and more complex cases.

The need to recruit more investigators was identified in 2021, as the pool of available, high-quality investigators decreased. We want investigators to have the requisite skills to investigate the specialised nature of some complaints and to reflect the demographics of the parliamentary community as a whole, including age, gender, ethnicity and disability. To ensure that the Scheme is independent, investigators are not recruited as employees, but are contracted on a case-by-case basis, either individually or through the investigator service providers.

Work on recruiting a new panel of investigators started in May 2022, led by a member of the ICGS team. Detailed job specifications for the role of investigator were circulated to all key stakeholders. The advertising campaign ran for three weeks in July 2022, in the following sites/publications: LinkedIn (with a listing and sponsored update); Twitter; The Guardian; Black History Month; The Lawyer; Public Appointments website; Diversity Network; and the Gatenby Sanderson website. We received 192 applications.

The application form required examples of agreed competencies and were scored by external markers. As a result, 79 people were invited to progress to the next stage—a timed, online exercise, based on a case study, with key questions designed to test analytical competency and writing skills, and a panel interview, involving members of the ICGS team and Decision-Making Bodies (including colleagues from Commons HR and the PCS). We hope to have recruited and trained up to 30 new investigators by late Autumn 2022, which will mean that we have available investigators with the right expertise for any ICGS case.

6. Investigations into Members of both Houses

6.1 The PCS and the IEP

The ICGS team works closely with the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (OPCS). The ICGS and the PCS have an agreed oversight paper, which sets out the process to be followed for ICGS cases where the respondent is a Member of Parliament. This paper has recently been amended in August 2022; the PCS now sees evidence as it is collected by the investigators during an investigation. This is a six-month pilot and will be reviewed at the beginning of February 2023.²⁴ Metrics used to assess the new oversight paper will include issues of quality identified by the PCS, timeliness of investigations, and the views of Independent Investigators.

In June 2020, the House of Commons approved motions to establish an Independent Expert Panel (IEP) with the power to determine sanctions in cases involving MPs, after the ICGS process had been completed. The Panel started hearing ICGS cases against MPs in early 2021. The IEP is independent, with no MPs or House staff taking part in its decisions. The core function of the IEP is to determine sanctions in ICGS cases where the PCS does not have the necessary sanctions available to them and to hear appeals from either complainants or respondents against the PCS's decisions in ICGS cases involving MPs or former MPs. The House of Commons must approve a sanction that can only be imposed by the House. The motion to impose a sanction is decided without debate.

On 19 October 2021, the House of Commons voted for a standing order provision that if the IEP determined a sanction that would, if recommended by the Committee on Standards, attract the provisions of the Recall of MPs Act 2015, the Committee for Standards would automatically make a recommendation for a suspension of equal length.

The PCS's Annual Report can be found on [the PCS Internet Site](#).

In this ICGS reporting year, the IEP published five reports on cases involving the conduct of the following MPs or former MPs: Keith Vaz (23 September 2021); John Bercow (8 March 2022); Liam Byrne MP (28 April 2022); Patrick Grady MP (14 June 2022); and Patricia Gibson MP (23 June 2022).

Details of each report and the IEP's Annual Report can be found on [the IEP Internet Site](#).

The case against Patricia Gibson MP was the first time that an appeal has been successful and the allegation against her was ultimately not upheld. The key reasons that the IEP rejected the case were that: the wrong test was used when considering whether the conduct was of a sexual nature (the test was insufficiently applied); substantial changes were made to the report after the Factual Accuracy Check; and evidence had been treated inconsistently. We acknowledge that a robust appeal process will on occasion—quite rightly—result in an ICGS investigation's findings being overturned. In this case, we recognise that there are lessons to learn to ensure that ICGS investigations are consistently conducted to the highest standards, and we are working actively to ensure that our contractual and quality assurance processes are effective.

6.2 Investigations by the House of Lords Commissioners for Standards

Complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct about Members of the House of Lords or Lords Members' staff are handled under the provisions of the Lords Code of Conduct and Guide to the Code, rather than directly through the policies and procedures of the ICGS (applying the same definitions of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct, and with investigations being led by the independent Lords Commissioners for Standards and assisted by an ICGS independent investigator). The ICGS team works with the Commissioners' office on sharing information about the expertise and availability of ICGS Independent Investigators.

²⁴ [oversight-process-amendments---june-2022.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)

During the period covered by this Annual Report, there were two reported investigations of complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct by Members of the House of Lords. Both related to the conduct of Lord Pendry. In the first, the Commissioner concluded that a finding of bullying could not be demonstrated on the balance of probabilities, and the complaint was dismissed. In the second, the Commissioner concluded that the conduct met the criteria for bullying and was a breach of the Code, and that the seriousness of the breach warranted a suspension from the House for one week. Lord Pendry submitted an appeal to the Conduct Committee. The Committee rejected the appeal and upheld the findings and recommended sanction. The House agreed the Conduct Committee report into the conduct of Lord Pendry, who was therefore suspended from the House for one week.²⁵

More information on the work of the Lords Commissioners for Standards may be found in the Commissioners' [Annual Report 2021-22](#).

²⁵ [The Conduct of Lord Pendry](#), December 2021; [The Conduct of Lord Pendry](#), April 2022.

7. Confidentiality and the ICGS

Confidentiality is vital to the integrity of all ICGS cases and is emphasised from the first contact with the Helpline, and throughout any investigation. Divulging the details of an ongoing investigation can pose a risk to the wellbeing of others involved in that process and can cause damage before a fair and thorough investigation is carried out. Complainants, respondents and witnesses are asked to sign confidentiality agreements at the start of an investigation. Any breach of confidentiality will be treated seriously and may be considered as an aggravating factor in a case. In very serious cases, a breach of confidentiality may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter by the relevant Decision-Making Body.

We do understand that those involved in a complaint, as a complainant or respondent, may wish to discuss the complaint with trusted individuals, including trade union representatives, Party Whips, line managers, or very close friends or family, as appropriate. We ask that people keep contacts to a minimum and carefully consider what information is shared. If someone involved in a complaint chooses to share information with a trusted individual, they must inform them that the ICGS complaint is confidential and that they are strictly forbidden from sharing any information with others.

It should be noted that if a complaint progresses to full investigation, the respondent will know the identity of the complainant and both will know the identity of all witnesses. Independent Investigators use evidence gathered from both parties and witnesses to recommend whether or not to uphold a complaint. This evidence is kept confidential within the ICGS process, but is not kept confidential from those making a complaint or being complained about. A key component of a fair investigation is that both parties have the opportunity to interrogate the facts of the case. During the case against Liam Byrne MP, a mistake was made during the course of this investigation and individuals were given the incorrect information.²⁶ We apologised to those who were provided with incorrect information. The independent investigator also apologised directly to those witnesses, at the time. The ICGS has built in additional safeguards to ensure that this does not happen again.

Parties retain the right to seek legal advice and to discuss matters relating to the case with the Police or with the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Services (PHWS), if required. As well as discussing the details of their case with trusted individuals outlined above, those involved in a complaint can also access the ICGS Helpline, receive ISMA support (for complainants of sexual misconduct), and/or receive support from the ICGS Casework and Inclusion Officer. This gives those involved in complaints the opportunity to discuss any issues and concerns confidentially with someone connected to the ICGS, but who is not directly connected with investigating the complaint they are involved in.

In its report into the conduct of Patricia Gibson MP published on 23 June 2022,²⁷ the Independent Expert Panel outlined the general importance of confidentiality:

The confidentiality of the ICGS process plays a vital role in enabling complainants to come forward, safe in the knowledge that their complaint will be investigated without attendant publicity and that they will be protected with anonymity. A breach of confidentiality also erodes the trust of all the Parliamentary staff and MPs who are subject to the Behaviour Code and the Independent Complaints and Grievance scheme. The sub-panel consider that knowingly breaching confidentiality may hamper the ability of the investigator, the Commissioner, and the Independent Expert Panel to deal with cases. Breaches of confidentiality, therefore, risk the integrity of the ICGS scheme and its decision-making processes, with the potential to affect their outcome. Accordingly, the sub-panel consider that when such breaches occur that fact may be reflected in any sanction.²⁸

More information about confidentiality, including FAQs can be found on the ICGS Hub and on Parliament's website.²⁹

²⁶ Independent Expert Panel Report, [The Conduct of Mr Liam Byrne MP](#), 28 April 2022, HC1272

²⁷ Independent Expert Panel Report [The Conduct of Ms Patricia Gibson MP](#), 23 June 2022, HC 303

²⁸ As above, paragraph 2.65

²⁹ UK Parliament ICGS Confidentiality information: [ICGS - Confidentiality - UK Parliament](#)

8. Alison Stanley's 18-month review of the ICGS

The ICGS Delivery Report, published in July 2018, included a commitment to both a 6-month review and an 18-month review of the Scheme. Alison Stanley CBE FCIPD was appointed to lead on the 6-month, and then the 18-month review. The purpose of the review was to assess whether the ICGS delivered a fair, thorough and consistent process for addressing bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct that had the confidence of the parliamentary community. The review included studying the following:

- The effectiveness and impact of the Scheme;
- Policy changes to the Scheme, including changes to the Scheme's governance;
- The processes of the Scheme and their operation;
- Third party reporting, cluster complaints and the appropriateness of time limitation period for historic cases; and
- Any other matters the reviewer considered relevant.

This reporting year, a key focus of the ICGS team has been to implement the majority of Alison Stanley's remaining 33 agreed recommendations. Of the 33 recommendations brought forward, three are still in progress. A full list of all recommendations can be found in Annex A of this report.

Progress on the three recommendations that are outstanding is outlined below:

- **Recommendation 13** – (partially complete) Updated contracts for Independent Investigators, which include clear requirements relating to communication and service levels, are in the process of being finalised and will be implemented in tandem with the ongoing recruitment exercise to increase the pool of Investigators. Work on a tracking system has also progressed significantly, with a more robust system for identifying case progress at any stage already in place. Work on procuring a specific Case Management System (CMS) for the Scheme has begun, with the aim of having this in place by December 2022.
- **Recommendation 23** - The governance arrangements and the establishment of the Change Control Group are still awaiting final approval by the outstanding relevant bodies.
- **Recommendation 31** – Agreement in place to design new seminar for new starters, to replace existing Valuing Everyone training. An external consultancy is working with project sponsors in both Houses to hold 'writers' room' sessions to design content. The new seminar is to be tested and rolled in the Summer and Autumn of 2022.

ICGS 18month Review – Outstanding recommendations update – 18 August 2022

Recommendation Number	Recommendation text	Update
13 (D)	116. Service: identify the service level requirements under the contract including requirement to keep parties regularly updated, to adhere to the set timescales and promptly report to the ICGS team if the timescales cannot be met and communicate these to the Independent Investigators.	Service Level Agreements are already in place, with the requirements listed in para 13(D) specifically listed and currently adhered to by investigators. The new contract—which will be used once the new panel of investigators is in place—has included in it several service level requirements, such as committing investigators to set timescales, regular communication, and to following guidance set out on the investigator portal.

13 (E)	117. <i>Tracking: building on work already underway, establish an effective tracking mechanism which protects confidentiality but allows progress on cases to be understood and challenged at any point.</i>	The Team currently has an excel-based case tracker in use, but this is a temporary measure until the new CMS system is introduced. A New CMS system for tracking ICGS cases has been approved by PDS for 22/23. Scoping workshops have already taken place with PDS Colleagues and work is scheduled to begin on building an initial version of the CMS in September. The target is to have the CMS in place by the end of the calendar year (Dec 22)
23	212. <i>Governance arrangements. See table in para 212 of the ICGS 18 Month Review: Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme: Independent 18-month review</i>	House of Commons Commission will consider the issue of governance in Autumn 2022. All other relevant stakeholders have agreed implementation.
31	245. <i>As the Valuing Everyone training is an essential component of Parliament's commitment to an improved workplace culture, I recommend that the training should be retaken on a regular basis by all members of the Parliamentary Community, at a minimum every three years and that the training itself should take account of user feedback and include tools and examples of how to challenge poor behaviour and model good behaviour. I also recommend that the training should continue to align itself with wider cultural change and diversity and inclusion work.</i>	Project group established to consider the range of training options to update/replace Valuing Everyone training. Discussions with stakeholders and governance bodies have taken place, the new 'Behaviour Code: why it matters' seminar has been designed and the procurement of a provider is nearing its completion, with the successful provider to be chosen in the autumn of 2022.

9. Looking forward

In the coming year, the ICGS team is prioritising work on:

- Training the new investigators and holding seminars for existing and new investigators, starting with one on 'Informal Resolution';
- Issuing all investigators with new contracts, which include several Service Level Requirements such as committing investigators to set timescales, regular communication, and to following guidance set out on the investigator portal;
- Establishing the new ICGS governance structures, if agreed;
- Rolling out the new '*The Behaviour Code: why it matters*' seminars to new members of the parliamentary community and holding awareness campaigns for current members of the parliamentary community; and
- Working with PDS colleagues on building the new ICGS Case Management System (CMS) for tracking ICGS cases, with the target of having the CMS in place by the end of December 2022.

Annex A: Developments in the ICGS

Date	Milestone
2017	
01/11/17	Allegations and accounts in the Press of inappropriate behaviour and a culture of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct at Westminster led to the establishment of a cross party Working Group on an Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy.
2018	
08/02/18	Cross-party, bicameral Working Group on an Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy published its report.
28/02/18	Resolution passed in the House of Commons to develop a Parliament-wide Behaviour Code and an Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS)
01/03/18	Following a Newsnight report on alleged inappropriate behaviour by MPs towards staff, the House of Commons Commission agreed to establish an independent inquiry into bullying of staff in the House of Commons, appointing Dame Laura Cox QC.
18/03/18	House of Lords Commission agreed with recommendations to deliver the recommendations of the Cross-Party Working Group on an Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy (ICGS).
04/07/18	House of Lords Commission endorsed the Behaviour Code; referred it to the Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct.
13/07/18	The Commons Committee on Standards report published
17/07/18	ICGS Programme Team delivery report published
19/07/18	House of Commons endorsed the Behaviour Code and policies and procedures related to bullying and harassment and sexual misconduct as laid out in the ICGS Delivery Report.
01/08/18	Updated version of the House of Lords' Code of Conduct published, incorporating the new Behaviour Code and the rule that Members must treat their staff and all those visiting or working for or with Parliament with dignity, courtesy and respect
15/10/18	Dame Laura Cox QC's report into bullying and harassment of House of Commons staff published
24/10/18	House of Commons Commission considered the Laura Cox report and agreed three recommendations highlighted in that report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terminate the valuing others policy and suspend operation of the respect policy recommending that the house terminate it as soon as possible; • Amend ICGS to ensure house employees with complaints involving non recent allegations can now access the scheme; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the process for determining complaints brought forward by house staff against members will be entirely an independent process in which members of parliament will play no part
24/10/18	House of Commons Commission confirmed that the Valuing Others and Respect Policies had been terminated
05/11/18	General debate held in House of Commons chamber on Dame Laura Cox's report
10/12/18	Committee on Standards published a report into the implications of the Cox report for the House's standards system
2019	
07/01/19	House of Commons agreed that lay members of the Committee on Standards could move motions and amendments including reports and be able to vote
07/01/19	Committee on Standards' report debated and agreed by the House
28/01/19	Alison Stanley appointed by the House of Commons Commission to review the first six months of the operation of the ICGS
25/02/19	HoC Commission agreed the membership of an Advisory Review Panel
13/03/19	Committee on Standards set out its role in ICGS appeals, deciding to delegate decision-making on appeals to an Appeals Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee would also deal with cases escalated to the Committee by the Commissioner
18/03/19	Advisory review panel ratify Alison Stanley's appointment and agreed her Terms of Reference
04/04/19	House of Lords' Committee for Privileges and Conduct's report on changes to the Code of Conduct published
30/04/19	House of Lords agreed to the Committee for Privileges and Conduct's report
03/05/19	Committee on Standards launched inquiry into possible reforms to system of sanctions for breaches of the rules set out in the code of conduct for MPs
09/05/19	House of Lords agreed the members who would serve on the Conduct Committee
21/05/19	Consultation on extending the ICGS to non-recent cases launched
12/06/19	Alison Stanley's 6-month review of the ICGS report published
14/06/19	Consultation on extending the ICGS to non-recent cases closed
24/06/19	House of Commons Commission agreed (subject to approval from the House) to extend the ICGS to non-recent cases

24/06/19	Alison Stanley report presented to House of Commons Commission
10/07/19	Naomi Ellenbogen QC's report into bullying and harassment in the House of Lords published
11/07/19	Gemma White QC's report into bullying and harassment of MPs' staff published
17/07/19	House of Commons agreed to extend the ICGS to cover non-recent cases and to be open to all former members of the parliamentary community
21/10/19	ICGS made available to any current or former member of the parliamentary community wanting to raise concerns, seek advice or make a complaint about bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct by MPs, MPs' staff or House of Commons staff, that occurred at any point
2020	
05/03/20	House of Lords Conduct Committee agreed its Report, Progress report and amendments to the rules of conduct
16/03/20	House of Lords Conduct Committee agreed arrangements for the investigation of non-recent cases in the House of Lords under the ICGS
16/03/20	House of Lords approved the Conduct Committee's Report, Progress report and amendments to the rules of conduct
27/04/20	House of Commons Commission confirmed its preferred option of a new independent panel of experts (that would not include current or former MPs) with the power to determine ICGS cases and decide on sanctions that would be implemented, subject to agreement from the House
27/04/20	House of Commons Commission agreed proposals for an independent system
23/06/20	MPs approved motions to establish the Independent Expert Panel whose function will be to determine sanctions in ICGS cases referred to it by the PCS where the PCS does not have the necessary sanctions and to hear appeals from either complainants or respondents against the PCS's conclusions in ICGS cases involving MPs. The House of Commons would be required to approve a motion (without debate) to impose such determined sanctions
09/10/20	Alison Stanley started work on the 18-month independent review of the ICGS
18/11/20	Second ICGS Annual Report published
25/11/20	Members of the Independent Expert Panel appointed
2021	
22/02/21	Alison Stanley published her 18-month review of the ICGS, including 36 recommendations

23/02/21	The Independent Expert Panel published its first report
19/03/21	The Lords Management Board agreed to changes to the ICGS policies and procedures and agrees a cut-off for non-recent cases of bullying and harassment for Lords staff to one year from the last reported case, to start on 22 April 2022
22/03/21	The Commons Commission approved recommendations from the 18-month review
01/04/21	Deadline for Members in the House of Lords to complete Valuing Everyone training
21/04/21	The House of Commons agreed changes to the ICGS policies and procedures and agrees a cut-off for non-recent cases of bullying and harassment for MPs and Commons staff to one year from the last reported case, to start on 22 April 2022.
19/07/21	The House of Lords Commission approved recommendations from the 18-month review
15/10/21	The Independent Expert Panel (IEP) published updated guidance on their procedures. They also published two-page summaries for complainants and respondents.
22/10/21	Publication of the third ICGS Annual Report (20/21)
2022	
26/04/22	House of Commons agreed 'multiple complaints process', allowing potential complainants to be alerted to other possible complaints about the same person, to help them decide whether they pursue a formal complaint
28/04/22	Alison Stanley 18-month Review recommendation, regarding the agreed time limit for non-recent cases of bullying and harassment, was implemented. Reporting time limit applied of one year from when the bullying and harassment incident (or the latest of those incidents) happened.
16/05/22	Recruitment campaign for additional Independent Investigators was launched
22/06/22	ICGS Independent Investigator portal went live
30/06/22	ICGS attended their first Constituency Roadshow, in the Humber & York area, to talk about the ICGS to MPs' staff.

Annex B: Glossary of commonly used ICGS Terms

The aim of this guide is to ensure the ICGS is accessible to everyone. We have created this aid to provide an explanation for words and terms we frequently use. These are not legal definitions.

Aggravating factors

An aggravating factor is a behaviour that increases the severity of an action

Alison Stanley 6-month and 18-month review

To assess the work of the ICGS, two reviews of the Scheme were carried out by an independent reviewer Alison Stanley CBE FCIPD, in 2019 and in 2021

Allegations

The wording of the complaint that you have made will be put into allegations by the investigator and you will be asked to sign that the wording is correct if your complaint goes to a Formal Assessment.

Appeal

This is the process where people who have complained and people who have been complained about can request a formal change to an official decision following the completion of an ICGS Investigation, only if the Decision-Making Body for the respondent has an appeals policy and procedure.

The only rights of appeal are in cases involving MPs where decisions made by the PCS can be appealed to the IEP and in cases involving Members of the House of Lords in which an appeal can be put to the Conduct Committee.

There are no appeals in cases where the respondent is employed by the House of Commons, PDS, or the House of Lords. Not all decisions may be appealed. An appeal should not be confused with a review which examines the application of the process rather than the outcome of the case (see section on 'Review' further down)

Balance of Probabilities

The balance of probability standard is applied when an investigator is satisfied that, based on the evidence available, the occurrence of the event was more likely to have happened than not and that the alleged behaviours displayed constitute bullying or harassment or sexual misconduct.

Behaviour Code

The **Behaviour Code** makes clear the standards of behaviour expected of everyone, past or present, in the parliamentary community.

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.

A full definition of bullying is available by speaking to the ICGS Helpline or in the ICGS Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Code of Conduct (Commons)

The Code of Conduct for Members sets out the standards of behaviour expected of Members of Parliament (MPs) as they carry out their work.

Code of Conduct (Lords)

The Code of Conduct provides members of the House of Lords with guidance on the standards of conduct expected of them in performing their parliamentary duties.

Complaint

After speaking to the ICGS Helpline (or the Lords Commissioners), members of the parliamentary community can choose to make a formal complaint about behaviour they have experienced so that it might be investigated independently. A complaint begins only when the details of the behaviour are made in writing, with support from the ICGS Helpline, using a standardised template called the disclosure form.

Complainant

This is an individual who reports or makes a complaint of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct.

Collective Complaint

If there is more than one complaint about the same person, with agreement from all those making the complaints, the complaints can be assessed together usually by one investigator.

Decision-making bodies (DMB)

This is the person or body responsible for deciding what action to take if a complaint is upheld. So, for example, if the respondent is employed by either House, the DMB would normally be the Commons or Lords HR department. If the respondent is an MP, the DMB will be the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards or (potentially) the Independent Expert Panel. To find out who the relevant decision-making body is, contact the ICGS Helpline.

Disclosure form

If you decide to make a formal complaint, the Helpline (or in some cases, the Lords Commissioners) will record the details of the complaint in the disclosure form. The form will be used by the ICGS team to allocate an external Independent Investigator. The Lords Commissioners will use the form themselves and will allocate an external independent investigator to help them with the investigation.

Employee/Individual Assistance Programme (EAP/IAP)

A confidential support service for employees of both Houses and PDS, as well as Members of both Houses and Members' staff. The service may be able to help you with health and wellbeing information and stress at work. It can also be used by former members of the parliamentary community involved in ICGS cases.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in certain other contexts (for example in the provision of goods and services). It prohibits discrimination based on nine "protected characteristics" which are –

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Act protects people from direct and indirect discrimination, as well as from harassment and victimisation.

Evidence

Any information which can be used by the independent investigator to determine whether a complaint should go to a full/Formal Assessment and, at a later stage, to determine whether the complaint is upheld. Evidence comes in many forms, it may be written or taken from any meetings with both parties and witnesses, as well as other relevant documentation including e-mails, social media posts and other correspondence.

Factual Accuracy Check

A step during an investigation of a complaint, when complainants and respondents can review the draft report produced by an independent investigator. Both parties can use this opportunity to ensure that facts and dates are correct and 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. The investigator then decides what (if any) changes should be made to the draft report.

Full Assessment (Formal Assessment in policies)

A step during an investigation of a complaint where the investigator will gather detailed evidence from the complainant, the respondent and any witnesses, as well as other relevant evidence. This will usually involve holding meetings with those involved, as well as requesting written evidence. The independent investigator will then produce a draft report, which will be sent to both parties for a Factual Accuracy Check. Once this is completed, the investigator will produce a final report and will send this to the complainant and the decision-making body for the respondent. This step may be different for cases involving the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards or the Lords Commissioners for Standards.

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. A full definition of harassment is available by speaking to the ICGS Helpline or in the ICGS Bullying and Harassment Policy.

House of Lords Conduct Committee

The Committee reviews and oversees the Codes of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords and Members' staff, and the work of the Lords Commissioners for Standards. The Committee considers appeals in cases under the Codes, following a finding of the Commissioners for Standards.

ICGS Helpline

In most cases, this is the first step if you are experiencing bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct and want advice/support. You can also phone the Helpline to get advice for someone else or are looking for more information.

You can contact the Helpline by phone or e-mail. When you contact the Helpline, an expert advisor can support you by talking through your experiences. They can then guide you through options for dealing with the behaviour, including making a formal complaint. These conversations are completely confidential. The ICGS Helpline is run by an independent charity, Victim Support.

ICGS Hub

An online SharePoint site featuring the information and guidance you need to understand how the ICGS works and what support is available to you.

ICGS Stakeholder Forum

Meeting monthly to discuss latest developments, and to provide guidance and challenge to the ICGS team, the ICGS Stakeholder Forum is made up of representatives from across the parliamentary community, including Decision-Making Bodies, Trade Unions and House staff with responsibility for ICGS-related work.

ICGS Team

The bicameral team responsible for the ICGS, liaising with investigators, complainants, and respondents, and implementing improvements to the Scheme.

Independent Expert Panel (IEP) House of Commons

In cases where the respondent is an MP or former MP, the Independent Expert Panel hears appeals by the complainant or respondent against decisions made by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and determines sanctions in cases referred to the Panel by the Commissioner.

Independent Investigator

If you decide to make a formal complaint, it will be allocated to an independent investigator (unless your complaint is being handled by the Lords Commissioners). Independent Investigators are responsible for

undertaking key stages in the investigation of a complaint, including Initial Assessment, Formal Assessment and Factual Accuracy Checks. For cases where the respondent is a Member in the House of Lords, the Lords Commissioner will investigate the case, with the help of one of these Independent Investigators.

Independent Sexual Misconduct Advisor (ISMA)

We offer additional support to anyone who reports experiences of sexual misconduct in Parliament. When contacting the Helpline, those complainants can be connected with an ISMA, who is a trained Independent Sexual Misconduct Adviser and can guide them throughout the process.

Informal Resolution

Many cases can be resolved through informal, alternative resolution, without the need for a formal investigation. Informal resolution can include facilitated conversations, brokered written communications between both parties, or conversations supported by an appropriate third party. The outcomes of informal resolution are often the same as the outcomes of a formal investigation and can include an apology from the respondent, an agreed behaviour contract for working together, training and mediation.

Initial Assessment

Before a complaint goes to a formal investigation, the independent investigator needs to check whether your complaint meets the conditions for it to progress to a full investigation. During the Initial Assessment, they will establish whether the complaint meets certain criteria, including whether it is eligible under the Bullying & Harassment or Sexual Misconduct policy or if it has been already investigated elsewhere. Their decision will be sent to the complainant in writing. They will also identify any witnesses the complainant is hoping to involve and what a satisfactory outcome would be for them (including informal resolution).

Lords Commissioners for Standards

The House of Lords Commissioners for Standards are responsible for the independent and impartial investigation of alleged breaches of the House of Lords Codes of Conduct for Members of the Lords and Members' staff.

Mitigating factors

Mitigating factors are any circumstances which may reduce a respondent's blameworthiness for a finding of misconduct in an ICGS case. For example, an independent investigator may find that a respondent's actions were attributable (wholly or in part) to mental health factors or a medical condition. This could result in the DMB imposing a lesser sanction.

Not Upheld

Once a complaint has been fully investigated, the independent investigator will produce a report outlining whether, on the balance of probabilities, the behaviour occurred, using the evidence and considering the impact on the complainant.

Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (PCS) (Commons)

The PCS has oversight of investigations conducted in an ICGS case where an MP or former MP is the respondent. The Commissioner is also the primary Decision-Making Body for investigations conducted under the Scheme, although it is the IEP which imposes sanctions in more serious cases.

Parliamentary Community

The Parliamentary Community means people who work for or with Parliament, in particular staff of the House of Commons and House of Lords, Parliamentary Digital Service staff, Members of both Houses, their staff, and certain contractors. "Staff" includes self-employed individuals as well as employees, and interns and other paid or unpaid staff.

Pathway 2

If you are experiencing sexual misconduct you may choose to resolve the matter through informal resolution at any point after contacting the ICGS Helpline. Informal resolution of sexual misconduct cases is referred to as Pathway 2 in the Sexual Misconduct Policies and Procedures.

Policies

There are two policies that support complainants and respondents—the [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#) and the [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#). Both documents set out who the ICGS applies to, the types of behaviour covered.

Procedures

There are two procedures that support complainants and respondents—the [Bullying and Harassment Procedure](#) and the [Sexual Misconduct Procedure](#). Both documents outline how complaints are dealt with in the ICGS.

Respondent

This is an individual who is accused of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct.

Sanctions

If a complaint is upheld, the Formal Assessment report will be sent to the Decision-Making Body who may impose sanctions. For employees of the two Houses, the types of sanction applied can include a letter or apology, a requirement to complete training, formal warning, or dismissal. For Members of either House, sanctions can include an apology to the House, a requirement to complete training, or suspension or expulsion from either House.

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.

A full definition of bullying is available in the ICGS Sexual Misconduct Policy or by speaking to the ICGS Helpline.

Statement of Complaint

The Statement of Complaint is written by the investigator, checked by the ICGS Liaison team and then signed by the complainant and is for the complainant only. It contains both the allegations that are being taken forward and any that are not being taken forward.

Summary Initial Assessment

The summary Initial Assessment is for the respondent only and outlines the allegations that are being taken forward against them. It also discusses the possibility of informal resolution. This is what the DMB uses to inform the respondent of the complaint.

Victimisation

When the person making a complaint, a witness, or someone supporting either the complainant or any witnesses, is treated unfavourably by the respondent as a result of their involvement. If victimisation is uncovered during the course of an investigation, it will be taken seriously and may be considered to be an aggravating factor if the case is upheld.

Vexatious complaint

A complaint brought without any proper basis. If an investigator concludes that the complaint is malicious, vexatious or deliberately false, the DMB for the complainant may invoke its relevant policies and procedures against him or her.

Upheld

Once a complaint has been fully investigated, the independent investigator will produce a report outlining whether, on the balance of probabilities, the behaviour occurred, using the evidence and considering the impact on the complainant.