



HOUSE OF LORDS

House of Lords Commissioner for Standards  
Annual Report 2015–2016



# Foreword

This report, my sixth, covers the period from 1 June 2015 to 31 May 2016.

In my last report, covering 2014–15, I commented favourably on the significant decrease in complaints received compared to the previous year. The year under review in this report saw a marked increase in complaints received. However, despite the increase I investigated only three complaints, an increase of one from 2014–15.

**Paul Kernaghan CBE QPM**  
**Commissioner for Standards**

# Review of the year

## Complaints investigated

I investigated three complaints. I dismissed two as I found there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct. The other case was referred to the Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct and ultimately the member in question was suspended from the service of the House for eight months.

## Complaints in general

The complaints dealt with between 1 June 2015 and 31 May 2016 are set out in the table below. The table covers complaints I disposed of during the last year. The table does not account for a case in July 2015 in respect of which two complaints were received. Shortly thereafter the member resigned from the House of Lords. The Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct therefore agreed that my consideration of the complaints should cease.

<b>Formal complaints received</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Complaints subject to investigation</b>	<b>3</b>
(a) complaints dismissed	2
(b) complaints upheld and resolved by remedial action	0
(c) complaints upheld and referred to the sub-committee for sanction	1
<b>Complaints not investigated</b>	<b>22</b>
(a) because fell outside remit	13
(b) because anonymous	0
(c) because repeating allegations of previous inquiry	0
(d) because trivial or vexatious	0
(e) because no <i>prima facie</i> evidence of breach established	9

## Correspondence from members of the public

I have continued regularly to receive correspondence from members of the public. I reiterate my view that the interest taken in the conduct of members of the House of Lords underlines the importance of the House and its members operating in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

### **Meetings, etc.**

In the course of the year I contributed to the review of the House of Commons Code of Conduct and participated in a Parliamentary Standards Network meeting jointly hosted by the House of Commons and House of Lords at Westminster. This meeting brought together Commissioners and officers responsible for parliamentary standards in the United Kingdom, the devolved parliaments and assemblies, the States of Jersey and the Republic of Ireland.

### **Reflections and looking forward**

This is my last annual report as I stand down after six years in the post. Over that time the role has remained largely the same but naturally the operational environment has evolved and changed. The sanctions open to the House for breaches of the Code have increased: the House is now able to suspend members for any length of time, to deny access to House facilities or financial support, and to expel. This means that breaches of the Code of Conduct can now be responded to in a more agile and appropriate manner, depending on the facts of each case.

My reports are now formally sent to the House of Lords Appointments Commission. I hope that all who have the privilege of making nominations for membership of the House of Lords are able to reflect on my findings with a view to assisting them in nominating suitable candidates.

I wish my successor Lucy Scott-Moncrieff CBE well. I know she will find the role a fascinating one. In any office associated with maintaining standards there is a natural tendency to focus on cases where individuals have failed to abide by the relevant code of conduct. However, over my six years in office the relatively small number of investigations undertaken and the even smaller number of cases in which the Code of Conduct has been breached testify, I suggest, to the reality of a House primarily composed of members committed to upholding the agreed standards and acting on their “personal honour”.