

Complaints about the Probation Service

This factsheet is for people who are living with mental illness and have been involved with the Probation Service. This factsheet looks at how and when you can complain about them. Or when someone can complain on your behalf. It also advises on what you can do if you're not happy with the outcome of your complaint.

Key Points.

- You can complain about the Probation Service if you are unhappy about an issue that you can't resolve informally.
- You can appeal to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) if you're unhappy with the Probation Service's response to your complaint.
- You may be able to get support to make a complaint about the Probation Service.

This factsheet covers:

1. [What is the Probation Service?](#)
2. [How can I informally resolve my issue?](#)
3. [How can I make a complaint?](#)
4. [What if I'm unhappy with the response to my complaint?](#)
5. [Who can help me to complain?](#)

1. What is the Probation Service?

The Probation Service is a statutory criminal justice service that supervises offenders released from prison into the community.¹

Before 2018, there were two 2 services that managed offenders living in the community:²

- The National Probation Service (NPS), who managed high risk offenders, and
- Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC), who managed low and medium risk offenders.

The Probation Service is now the only service managing probation in England and Wales.³

This factsheet looks at how you can complain about the probation service.

What are Commissioned Rehabilitative Services?

Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRSs) also help ex-offenders resettle in the community. These services are provided at a local level by expert services.

This factsheet doesn't cover complaints about CRSs. If you want to complain about a CRS, you can ask them for their complaints policy.

2. How can I informally resolve my issue?

You might be unhappy with something to do with the Probation Service. It might be something like:

- someone did something you don't agree with,
- you think someone didn't do something they should have, or
- you think you're not being treated fairly.

To try to resolve your issue you can speak to people like:

- your Probation Officer,
- their manager, or
- the Senior Probation Officer.

It can be quicker and easier to sort things out informally than making a complaint. But if you still can't sort the issue out you can complain.

3. How can I make a complaint?

Who should I complain to?

You can complain by:

- speaking to someone, either in person or by phone, or
- putting it in writing, either in an email or by letter.

You should clearly use the word 'complaint.'

You can make your complaint to your local Probation Service contact centre. You can find a full list of them here:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/probation-finder. You can ask the team for a copy of their complaints policy.

Your local Probation Service contact centre should tell you how to make a complaint.

You can also make a complaint to the Probation Service by email to HMPSPublicEnquiries@justice.gov.uk.⁴

What should I say in my complaint?

You can explain:

- what has happened,
- why you aren't happy, and
- what you would like to happen next.

If you complain in person or over the phone you should make a note of:

- the full name of the person you spoke to,
- what you talked about, and
- the date and time

You can explain things like:

- where and when it happened,
- who was involved, and
- what was said and done.

Explain clearly what happened and why you're making a complaint. Include all the main points but try to keep your complaint as short as you can.

They will investigate your complaint. They may want to speak to you to get more information. When they have looked into the complaint, they should contact you. This should say what action they're going to take, if any. And the reasons for their response.

Sometimes you have a time limit to make your complaint. You can ask local Probation Service about this or read their complaints policy.

Once you've gone through the full complaints process, if you're still not happy you can contact the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO).

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4. What if I am unhappy the response to my complaint?

If you're unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you can contact the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO).⁵ The PPO is independent from the Probation Service.

You can only complain to the PPO if you're the person directly affected by the complaint. But they can sometimes accept complaints from someone on your behalf. This is if you're unable to complain on your own. You can contact the PPO to ask for more information about this.⁶

You can only complain to the PPO if:⁷

- you've gone through your local Probation Service's complaints process,
- it's within 3 months of their final complaint response, and
- your complaint is in writing.

You should give details about why you're unhappy with the Probation Service's response. It will help to send any paperwork you have from the Probation Service complaints process. You can find the contact details of the PPO below.

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO)

Telephone: 020 7633 4100 or 0845 010 7938

Address: Third Floor, 10 South Colonnade, London E14 4PU

Email: mail@ppo.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.ppo.gov.uk

At this link www.ppo.gov.uk/investigations/make-complaint/what-to-expect/ you can read more about:

- how the PPO decide whether to investigate your complaint,
- how they investigate it, and
- how they make a decision about your complaint.

You can look at the PPO's Terms of Reference to see if they will look at your complaint: www.ppo.gov.uk/about/vision-and-values/terms-of-reference

The PPO will tell you if they'll investigate your complaint. If not, they should tell you why.

The PPO aims to deal with your complaint within 12 weeks from the start of the investigation. Serious complaints may take longer. The PPO might agree that the Probation Service have done something wrong. They will recommend what the Service should do to put things right.⁸

You can watch a video explaining PPO complains here:

www.ppo.gov.uk/investigations/make-complaint/complaints-video

What if English isn't my first language?⁹

If English isn't your first language and you want to contact the PPO in your own language you can:

- write to them explaining your complaint in your own language,
- speak to them in your own language. Let them know in advance and they'll provide an interpreter.

You can read more here: www.ppo.gov.uk/investigations/make-complaint/help-to-complain-in-other-languages

What can I do if I disagree with the PPO's decision?

You might disagree with the PPO's decision. You might think that the PPO doesn't understand your complaint. Or they've missed something important.

You can appeal to the PPO if you disagree with them. You can do this by writing back to them and explaining why you disagree. The investigation will be reviewed by a member of senior staff who hasn't been involved in the case before.¹⁰ If your appeal isn't successful, they'll write to you and explain why.

What can I do if I disagree with the PPO's decision about my appeal?

If you're still unhappy with the PPO's response, you can take your complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO).¹¹

To do this you have to fill out a PHSO complaint form. You can find these on their website. The PHSO can investigate complaints by people who they think have been treated unjustly by the PPO.

Your complaint form must be signed by your local MP. The MP must then refer your complaint to the PHSO. To find out who your local MP is, go to the website www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/ or contact the House of Commons Enquiry Service on 0800 112 4272. The contact details for the PHSO are below.

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)

The PHSO makes final decisions on complaints that have not been resolved by the NHS in England. Or by UK government departments and other UK public organisations.

Telephone: 0345 015 4033

Address: The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Email (for MPs only): phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.ombudsman.org.uk/

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5. Who can help me to complain?

Friend or relative

You can ask a relative or friend to help you make your complaint.

You might need your relative or friend make the complaint for you. If you do, you're local Probation Service might only accept the complaint if you consent to them acting for you. But they might accept it without your consent if you lack mental capacity.

You can find more information about '**Mental capacity and mental illness**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

Advocacy

An advocate is someone who supports you to express your views and wishes and helps you to resolve an issue.

There might be advocacy services that could help you make a complaint.

You would need to speak to a community advocacy service. To search for services, you can try the following.

- Use an internet search engine – use search terms like 'community advocacy Leicestershire' or 'general advocacy Devon'.
- Ask a support worker or key worker if you have one.
- Ask your local council whether they have contact details for local advocacy services.

You can find more information about '**Advocacy**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

Your MP

You could ask your local MP to help you make a complaint. They could help you to complete forms or perhaps make a complaint on your behalf.

You can find out who your local MP is by going to the website www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/ or contact the House of Commons Enquiry Service on 0800 112 4272.

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Useful Contacts

Civil Legal Advice (CLA)

This organisation can sometimes offer free, confidential, and independent legal advice for people in England and Wales.

Telephone: 0345 345 4 345

Text: You can also text 'legalaid' and your name to 80010 to ask CLA to call you back. This costs the same as a normal text message.

Website: www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice

The Probation Service

The Probation Service for England and Wales is a statutory criminal justice service, mainly responsible for the supervision of offenders in the community. They also provide reports to the criminal courts to assist them in their sentencing duties.

Telephone: 0300 047 6325

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

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/probation-service

The Law Society

You might want to get some legal support after making a complaint. This organisation can help you find a solicitor.

Telephone (switchboard): 020 7242 1222

Telephone (find a solicitor): 020 7320 5650

Email: Online form on the website www.lawsociety.org.uk/get-in-touch/

Website: www.lawsociety.org.uk/find-a-solicitor/

Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)

Gives advice on discrimination and human rights issues to people in England, Scotland and Wales.

Telephone: 0808 800 0082

Address: FREEPOST EASS HELPLINE FPN6521

Email: Online form [here](#)

Website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

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References

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- ⁴ Gov.uk. *Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service – complaints procedure*. www.gov.uk/government/organisations/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service/about/complaints-procedure (accessed 7 September 2021).
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- ⁷ Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. *How to submit a complaint*. www.ppo.gov.uk/investigations/make-complaint/how-to-make-a-complaint-dvd/ (accessed 5 August 2021).
- ⁸ Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. *What to expect when you make a complaint*. www.ppo.gov.uk/investigations/make-complaint/what-to-expect/ (accessed 5 August 2021).
- ⁹ Prison and Probation Ombudsman. *Help to complain in your own language*. www.ppo.gov.uk/investigations/make-complaint/help-to-complain-in-other-languages/ (accessed 14.10.21)
- ¹⁰ Prison and Probation Ombudsman. *Appeal a PPO decision*. <https://www.ppo.gov.uk/investigations/make-complaint/appealppodecision/> (accessed 5 August 2021).
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This factsheet is available
in large print.

Phone 0808 801 0525

**Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4pm
(excluding bank holidays)**

Email advice@rethink.org

Did this help?

We'd love to know if this information helped you.

Drop us a line at: feedback@rethink.org

or write to us at Rethink Mental Illness:

RAIS

PO Box 17106

Birmingham B9 9LL

or call us on 0808 801 0525

We're open 9:30am to 4pm

Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays)



**Leading the way to a better
quality of life for everyone
affected by severe mental illness.**

For further information
on Rethink Mental Illness
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www.rethink.org

Need more help?

Go to **www.rethink.org** for information on symptoms, treatments, money and benefits and your rights.

Don't have access to the web?

Call us on 0121 522 7007. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and we will send you the information you need in the post.

Need to talk to an adviser?

If you need practical advice, call us on 0808 801 0525 between 9:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Our specialist advisers can help you with queries like how to apply for benefits, get access to care or make a complaint.

Can you help us to keep going?

We can only help people because of donations from people like you. If you can donate please go to **www.rethink.org/donate** or call 0121 522 7007 to make a gift. We are very grateful for all our donors' generous support.



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