

Adjudicator's Office learning from complaints reports:

Putting the reports in context





Learning from complaints

Introduction

The role of the Adjudicator's office includes:

Resolve complaints that come to us by providing an accessible and flexible service and making fair and impartial decisions.

- We provide a high quality, impartial and independent review of complaints for individual customers.
- We are flexible in our approach to promote resolution.
- We will try to identify the specific issues that prevent resolution and to address those in the quickest and most effective way.
- When appropriate we will investigate and make formal recommendations.
- We will focus on what is important to our customers and help them to make complaints in the ways that best suit their needs.

Support and encourage effective resolution throughout the complaint handling process.

- We encourage and empower effective complaint handling in the department's processes.
- We will focus on customer experience and achieving positive outcomes.
- We will share good practice and role model the approach and behaviours that support effective complaint handling.

And

Use insight and expertise to support the department to learn from complaints and improve services to customers

- We will identify and feedback on the trends and issues that drive complaints or negative customer experience.
- We will provide an external perspective to feedback, which is informed directly by our customers.
- We will support learning from complaints to improve the service provided to customers, both by the Adjudicator's Office and by the department.



Purpose of the reports

The purpose of our reports is to provide HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) with broad thematic evidence of the effect their activities and processes have on their customers. Although we use evidence taken from customers who have ultimately complained to the Adjudicator's Office, what we find is indicative of the level of customer service others receive.

The main issues identified are described with use of our six complaint classifications, which highlight opportunities for learning. These are:

1. Policy and Process (e.g. were processes followed correctly? Did process issues contribute to the complaint?)
2. Decision Making (e.g. was decision making fair, reasonable and consistent? Was the decision made at the right point?)
3. Customer Focus (e.g. did the complaint handler department show empathy and understanding? Was the impact on the customer acknowledged?)
4. Culture and Behaviours (e.g. were departmental values demonstrated? Did the complaint handler take ownership of the complaint?)
5. Communication (e.g. were communications clear? Was the tone of response appropriate?)
6. Complaint Procedures (e.g. did the department demonstrate learning from mistakes? Was the complaint procedure followed?)

Each of our reports includes recommendations for HMRC/VOA to consider in order to improve their customer service. These recommendations will:

- help them meet customer service improvements needs they have identified and published,
- bring HMRC/VOA processes closer to those recommended by expert bodies such as the Ombudsman's Association; or,
- identify new areas for exploration in order to improve customer service.

Our expectations of HMRC and VOA

The Service Level Agreement between the Adjudicator and HMRC/VOA recognises the importance learning from complaints escalated to the Adjudicator's Office. These reports are our identification of important thematic opportunities for senior departmental leaders to consider.

Subsequent Adjudicator's Office reports, including the Annual Report, will report back on departmental progress in addressing our recommendations.

