

12 December 2024

Reference: FOI 598 Freedom of Information request

Thank you for your letter, dated 12 November, which we received on 14 November 2024. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You asked us:

To provide information regarding the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's (PPO) responses time for all cases for the last three financial years as well as the current financial year. You specifically requested:

- The total number of cases the PPO has handled each year, as well as the current number of cases under investigation.
- The average wait time for a response, broken down into categories of three months, six months, twelve months, and eighteen months or longer.
- The average time it takes for cases to be fully resolved.

Our response:

We have searched our records, and we hold the requested information.

A copy of the information that you requested is enclosed within our response and the data on the response times is correct as of 31 October 2024.

To note, we have calculated the time categories you requested as follows:

Under three months	13 weeks and under
Three to six months	14 weeks to 26 weeks
Seven to 12 months	27 weeks to 52 weeks
13 to 18 months	53 weeks to 78 weeks
Over 18 months	79 weeks or more

For the current cases under investigation (correct as of 11 December 2024), this includes all cases that are currently under investigation (251).

For context, we assess whether an investigated complaint case is on time by whether it is complete at 12 weeks, for standard complaints, or 16 weeks, for complex cases. We allow longer investigation time for complex cases as they require a more in-depth investigation and so this will impact our response times. Additionally, this past calendar year, we have launched the new branding of the independent prisoners' complaints investigation. The

launch of this involved multiple visits to prisons to raise awareness which took up time and therefore has slowed our response rates.

Lastly, unlike other Ombudsman, we investigate deaths as well as complaints. We have not included the response times for these investigations but if you should require this too, let us know.

I hope that this is helpful.

You have the right to appeal against our response if you think it is incorrect. Details can be found in the 'How to Appeal' section attached at the end of this letter.

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) carries out **independent investigations** into complaints and deaths in custody. The detailed role and responsibilities of the PPO are set out in our office's Terms of Reference. The PPO has three main duties:

- to **investigate complaints** made by prisoners, young people in detention (prisons and secure training centres), offenders under probation supervision and individuals detained under immigration powers (detained individuals)
- to **investigate deaths** of prisoners, young people in detention, approved premises' residents and detained individuals due to any cause, including any apparent suicides and natural causes
- to **investigate deaths of recently released prisoners** that occur within 14 days of release from prison (except homicide)

The purpose of these investigations is **to understand what happened, to correct injustices** and **to identify learning** for the organisations whose actions we oversee so that the PPO makes a significant contribution to safer, fairer custody and offender supervision.

We may use or share your data only to the necessary extent when conducting our independent investigations in the exercise of our official authority. We will share your data with third parties (e.g. the prison) in order to make sure the information is accurate; to prevent or detect failings; and to identify lessons learnt. We may sometimes need to share your data with third parties if required by law. We only keep your personal data for as long as it is needed, as set out in our data retention policy. If you need any further information about how your data is used, please contact us.

How to Appeal

Internal Review

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to an internal review. The handling of your request will be looked at by someone who was not responsible for the original case, and they will make a decision as to whether we answered your request correctly.

If you would like to request a review, please write or send an email to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's office **within two months of the date of this letter**, at the following address:

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
Third Floor
10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf
London
E14 4PU
E-mail: Mail@ppo.gov.uk

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

If you remain dissatisfied after an internal review decision, you have the right to apply to the Information Commissioner's Office. The Commissioner is an independent regulator who has the power to direct us to respond to your request differently, if he considers that we have handled it incorrectly.

You can contact the ICO at the following address:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Internet address: <https://ico.org.uk/>