

25 April 2025

**Reference: FOI 634 Freedom of Information request**

Thank you for your email, which we received on 31 March 2025. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

**You asked us:**

To provide information on the professional backgrounds of Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) staff and whether it is a requirement for them to have a legal background.

**Our response:**

We have searched our records and we hold the requested information on the above question.

A copy of the information that you requested is shown below.

Our staff come from a range of professional backgrounds. Staff have been recruited from both public and private sector backgrounds. Some PPO investigators have previously worked in the prison, police, probation and courts service. It is not a requirement for PPO staff to have a legal background.

The text below, from one of the PPO's recruitment campaigns for an investigator, explains succinctly what the organisation is seeking from potential applicants:

These are busy but very interesting posts, which will suit someone who likes variety, is able to deal with the unexpected and who can engage with and analyse a range of different information sources to reach sound, evidence-based conclusions.

You will need to be self-motivated and well organised, with strong written communication and analytical skills. Previous knowledge or experience of the Criminal Justice System, investigations or casework would be useful but is not essential. Investigation training will be provided, and a rolling programme of enrichment workshops and development forums will be available.

The PPO encourage applications from people from all backgrounds and aim to have a workforce that represents the wider society that we serve.

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.

[REDACTED]

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/>