

Consultation on the ICO's approach to data protection complaint handling

Overview

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is consulting on draft changes to how we handle data protection complaints. It sets out our proposed framework to assess and determine the extent to which it is appropriate to investigate each complaint. This will allow us to focus on cases where we can have the most impact and improve data protection compliance.

People have a statutory right to lodge a data protection complaint with the ICO if they think there has been an infringement of their data protection rights under the UK GDPR.

In recent years we have seen a significant increase in data protection complaints. In 2023/24, we received 39,721 complaints. In 2024/25 this rose to 42,881 and current forecasts indicate that this could increase to somewhere between 45,000 and 55,000 if the current trend continues.

The ever-increasing demand for our services is impacting our ability to respond quickly and effectively. We want to consider new ways of handling data protection complaints.

The Data (Use and Access) Act (DUAA) places new requirements on organisations to have a complaints process specifically for data protection related issues. Once the provision comes into force, we would expect that more complaints will be resolved by organisations without the involvement of the ICO.

If people do bring their complaint to the ICO, we want to provide the most effective service given the finite resources we have. That means looking at our own approach to handling complaints.

We are proposing changes to our processes to better support people who have experienced harm and focus our resources on those cases where we can have the biggest impact. Organisations will also benefit from reduced routine engagement on lower-risk cases, enabling them to focus on the most significant concerns. Our goal is not just to manage demand, but to raise standards around customer experience and regulatory effectiveness.

We have developed a draft framework that we propose to use to determine the extent to which it is appropriate to investigate each complaint. We are also proposing new reporting mechanisms to enable us to monitor complaint volumes across specific organisations and sectors. This will allow us to identify trends or themes which may benefit from other types of regulatory action.

The approach outlined in this consultation would ensure that every complaint contributes towards our understanding of an organisation's information rights practices, while allowing us to focus our resources on the most significant risks. It also strengthens our ability to identify systemic issues earlier.

It reflects our ambition to be a strategic regulator – one that considers every complaint, responds proportionately and uses the insight gained to drive improvements in data protection practices.

We need to do things differently and transforming our processes will enable us to target our resources to support people's information rights in a way that has a positive impact and addresses the areas that cause the greatest harm.

Please respond to the ideas in our consultation to help shape the process.

The questions are split into the following sections:

Section 1: About you.

Section 2: Your views on our approach.

Section 3: Questions to assess the impact of our proposed approach.

Section 4: Any additional comments about the framework.

The consultation will remain open until **23:59 on Friday 31 October 2025**. We may not consider responses received after this deadline.

The PDF document below includes a list of the survey questions.

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Please note that we are using the platform Citizen Space to gather this information. Citizen Space is provided by Delib. Please [see their Privacy Notice](https://www.delib.net/legal/privacy_notice) for further details.

Responding to our consultation requests and surveys

For this consultation we may publish in full the responses received from organisations or a summary of the responses. If we do publish any responses, we will remove any personal information, email addresses and telephone numbers from these responses. Please do not share any information in your response which you would not be happy for us to make publicly available.

Should we receive an FOI request for your response we will always seek to consult with you for your views on the disclosure of this information before any decision is made. For more information about what we do with personal data please see our [privacy notice](https://ico.org.uk/global/privacy-policy/) and the section on [responding to our surveys](https://ico.org.uk/global/privacy-policy/responding-to-our-consultation-requests-and-surveys/).

About you

1 Are you acting as:**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- an academic
- an individual acting in a private capacity (eg someone providing their views as a member of the public)
- an individual acting on behalf of an organisation
- other

2 If you chose other, please specify who you are acting as. If you have not chosen other, please skip the question.

If you chose other, please specify who you are acting as. If you have not chosen other, please skip the question.

About you**3 If applicable, what is the name of your organisation?**If applicable, what is the name of your organisation? **(Required)****4 Is your organisation:****(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Public sector
- Private sector
- Charity or non-profit

5 What is the size of your organisation?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- 1 to 9 members of staff
- 10 to 49 members of staff
- 50 to 249 members of staff
- 250 to 499 members of staff
- 500 or more members of staff
- Don't know / unsure

6 Is your organisation: (choose all that apply)**(Required)***Please select all that apply*

- Headquartered in the UK
- A multinational organisation with a UK presence
- Solely based in the UK
- Unsure / don't know
- Other

If other, please specify:

Your views on our approach**The following questions relate to our proposed approach to complaint handling. This includes the following sections of the consultation document:****The framework****How we would apply the framework****What we would do with the information we collect from complaints****7 To what extent do you agree that 'our proposed approach to complaint handling' clearly explains how we'll handle complaints?****(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / unsure

If disagree / strongly disagree / not sure, please explain:

8 Is there anything else you think we should include in our proposed approach to complaint handling?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes', please explain:

Your views on our approach

The following questions relate to the proposed **framework document** <<https://ico.org.uk/media2/sb0plvif/proposed-dpt-framework.pdf>> .

9 To what extent do you agree that the proposed framework document clearly explains how we will handle complaints?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / unsure

Please explain your response:

10 Is there anything else you think we should include in this proposed framework document?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes', please explain:

Your views on our approach

The following questions relate to the 'criteria' (as set out in the **framework** <<https://ico.org.uk/media2/sb0plvif/proposed-dpt-framework.pdf>>) we'll use to assess complaints.

11 To what extent do you agree with the 'criteria' we'll consider when assessing complaints:**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / unsure

Please explain your response:

12 Is there anything else you think we should include in our criteria?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes', please explain:

Your views on our approach

The following questions relate to the 'what we will do with the information we collect from complaints' section.

13 To what extent do you agree with the proposed plans of what we would do with the information we collect from complaints?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / unsure

If 'Yes', please explain:

14 Is there anything else you think we should consider when using the information we collect from complaints?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

Yes
 No

If 'Yes', please explain:

Questions to assess the impact of our proposed approach

Within the [draft Impact Assessment of the ICO's proposed Data Protection Complaint Handling Approach](https://ico.org.uk/media2/y3xhuto3/dp-transformation.pdf) <<https://ico.org.uk/media2/y3xhuto3/dp-transformation.pdf>> we set out an initial, high-level outline of the potential costs and benefits of the proposed data protection complaint handling approach for different affected groups. We are seeking feedback on this draft assessment, in addition to any wider insights that you may be able to provide on impacts. This will allow us to iterate our impact assessment further to help inform our final data protection complaint handling approach.

15 Do you agree with the identified list of the affected groups in Section 5.4 of the impact assessment?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
 Don't know / unsure

16 Are there any other groups of stakeholders that you think will be affected by the proposed data protection complaints handling approach?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

Yes
 No

If so, please provide details below:

17 Do you agree with the assessment of costs and benefits outlined in the impact assessment?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / unsure

Please explain your response:

18 Are there any other costs and/or benefits that you think should be considered?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide details below and any evidence you might have to illustrate this:

19 Do you think the proposed data protection complaints handling approach will result in any additional costs or benefits for you / your organisation? (These could be financial or non-financial)**(Required)***Please select only one item*

- Cost(s)
- Benefit(s)
- Both
- Neither
- Don't know / unsure

20 Please describe the types of additional costs and / or benefits you / your organisation might incur, including a rough estimate where possible.

21 Is there any other evidence or information on potential impacts that you would like us to consider?

(Required)

Please select only one item

Yes
 No

If so, please outline this below. This could include a description, examples, or links to other sources of evidence.

Additional general comments about the proposed approach

22 Please provide any further general comments or suggestions you may have about the proposed approach.

23 Are there any terms or sections in the proposed approach you found unclear or overly technical?

(Required)

Please select only one item

Yes
 No

If 'Yes', please explain:

24 Would you be happy for us to contact you if we have any follow up questions based on your responses to this consultation?**(Required)***Please select only one item*

Yes
 No

If 'Yes' please provide your name / email address / preferred contact details.