

Factsheet 13: This factsheet provides an overview of what the Office of the Service Complaints Ombudsman (OSCO) can do when contacted by family members and friends of Service personnel and where they can find advice and assistance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I make a complaint on behalf of a Service person?

No. Family members of current and former Service personnel can contact the Ombudsman for information at any time. However, a complaint can only be made by the Service person themselves.

If I contact the Ombudsman will the chain of command find out?

Contact with the Ombudsman is confidential. The Services are only made aware of who has contacted us if it is done as part of the process of making a referral or conducting an investigation. This is never done without the consent of the Service person. The only exception to this is if the Ombudsman has concerns that an individual is a risk to themselves or those around them. In these instances the Ombudsman has a duty of care to contact the chain of command.

I have concerns about my loved one's wellbeing, can the Ombudsman intervene?

If the Ombudsman has concerns for the immediate safety of an individual then she will pass these on to the Service for their action. However the Ombudsman does not have the power to intervene in the management of Service personnel.

The Ombudsman provides independent and impartial scrutiny of the Service complaints system. Although this system does not extend to family members of Service personnel, we understand that you may have concerns about how your loved one has been treated or how a complaint they have made or has been made against them has been handled.

The OSCO welcomes contact from family members of Service personnel, whether to ask for information or provide feedback on the system. However, the Ombudsman cannot accept a complaint from a family member or talk to you about your loved one's complaint without their express consent.

If your loved one has made a Service complaint or is a respondent to a complaint and requires further support they could:

- speak to their Assisting Officer (AO)
- phone our office, in confidence, for information
- contact the bullying and harassment line for their Service or the SSAFA helpline (0800 731 4880)
- speak to the Welfare Officer
- discuss their concerns with the Padre in confidence.

If it is you and not your loved one, that needs further support, try contacting the Service's [Families Federation](#) to see how they can assist. If you want to make a complaint of your own, you will need to do so directly to the Ministry of Defence. You can find further information [on our website](#) about the complaint procedure and the address of where to send complaints.

Further information on the OSCO, including the different types of applications, timelines for making an application and OSCO processes, can be found on our website www.servicecomplaintsombudsman.org.uk

Independence | Impartiality | Integrity