

Factsheet 5: This factsheet provides information about the role of the Assisting Officer (AO).

The OSCO's Key Points about AOs

- The OSCO considers the AO to be an important part of the complaints process.
- An AO can be particularly useful to complainants or respondents who have left the Service. This is because an AO can keep an individual updated and can be seen as a link between the Services and the individual.
- Any Service person can be an AO as long as they are not involved in the complaint in any other way e.g. a witness.
- Being an AO can take up time. If the complaint is complex it could take more time than for other complaints. You will be expected to continue with your daily role as well as act as an AO.
- As an AO it is important that you have a good understanding of the Service complaints process and what is expected if you.

Assisting Officers are an important part of the Service complaints process for both complainants and respondents.

An AO's role is defined in [JSP 831](#). An AO's role as described in the JSP is to:

- Be impartial to the complaint. This means they should not be:
 - an officer involved in the processing or deciding of the complaint
 - directly in the employment chain of command
 - named in the Service complaint as a witness or respondent or have a personal interest in the outcome of the complaint.
- Be open and honest while carrying out their duties.
- Assist the complainant to write their statement of complaint (if needed) and to ensure the complaint itself is clear. This helps to speed up the resolution of the complaint.
- Respond to any requests from those involved in the progression of the complaint within the deadlines set.
- Remind the person being assisted (respondent or complainant) of the need to respond promptly to requests for information.
- Ensure that the person being assisted understands what the formal complaints process requires of them and you.
- Ensure that the person being assisted is aware of any welfare support available and to assist them to access it if required.

AOs should be offered by the Specified Officer (SO) at the earliest opportunity. Individuals can choose their own AO or ask the SO to appoint one.