

Freedom of Information request 3026/2014

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Information request

Please send me information about complaint stages, whether head office in London (Tothill Street) is still reviewing complaints?

Does Parliamentary health ombudsman has a power to overturn decision what the decision makers have made on job seekers complaints in relation to benefits entitlement if there was sanction imposed?

DWP response

1. Complaint stages:

DWP businesses have in place clear, published [complaints procedures](#).

- Tier one - Resolution: complaints are dealt with by business led, centralised teams whose role is to: clarify the complaint; co-ordinate an investigation into the complaint; consider appropriate redress¹; and where possible agree resolution actions which satisfy the customer that their complaint has been resolved. There is a 15 working day target for responding. If the complaint cannot be resolved at tier one, it escalates for review at tier two.
- Tier two - Review: centralised complaint review teams reconsider the tier one response and determine whether any further action is required in order to provide redress to the complainant. The final business response advises the complainant that they can approach the Independent Case Examiner (ICE) if they remain dissatisfied with the response to their complaint. There is a 15 working day target for responding.

Independent Tier:

The [Independent Case Examiner \(ICE\)](#) provides a free complaint review and investigation service. ICE will either resolve the complaint by getting the business to agree to take specific action or issue an investigation report containing an outcome finding and if appropriate case specific and systemic recommendations for redress. All final investigation reports tell the

¹ Redress may take the form of: an apology; corrective action; an explanation; information; and / or financial redress.

complainant that they can ask an MP to escalate a complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the ICE investigation. ICE aim to respond to complaints about the businesses they investigate within an average of 38 weeks from the date the complaint is accepted for investigation.

2. You asked if DWP's head office reviews complaints, but as we explained above at tier 2, the reviews are undertaken by centralised teams in each business area, none of which are based at Tothill Street.

3. You also asked if the Ombudsman has the power to overturn DWP benefit decision. The Ombudsman does not deal with legislative matters – these are the remit of HM Courts and Tribunals Service. If you wish to challenge a benefit decision, you should do so through the [review and appeal](#) route.