



29 December 2025

Reference: FOI 715 Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your email, which we received on 28 November 2025. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You asked us:

To provide the number of upheld complaints made to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) about accommodation, equality and food, as referred to in the annual report for 2024/25.

Our response:

We have searched our records and we hold the requested information on the above question. Please find below a table detailing the number of upheld and partially upheld complaints that we completed during the financial year 2024/25 for accommodation, equality and food.

Complaint type	Number of upheld complaints
Accommodation	15
Equality	6
Food	9
Total	30

You asked us:

To provide full copies of these complaints and the PPO's response to them.

Our response:

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

Some information cannot be disclosed as exemptions exist.

Where some of the information has been withheld because an exemption applies, the exemption and reason are described below.

The exemption applied (under the Freedom of Information Act) is:

- Section 40 (2) 'Personal Information'.

This exemption applies because the full copies of these complaints and our responses contain personal information about living individuals, which must be stored securely in line with the Data Protection Act. We consider that disclosing this information would constitute a breach of one or more principles in the Data Protection Act 1998 referred to in FOIA 2000.

However, anonymised summaries of the information that you requested is enclosed with our response.

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.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

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/>

FOI-715 Complaints Summaries

(I) Food

Complaint A

The complainant complained that they were entitled to receive weekly gluten-free food packs due to a medical condition but reported repeated failures, including missing items and incorrect contents, over an extended period. The investigation found that staff had raised concerns about these issues, which were not resolved before the complainant's transfer to another establishment.

The complaint was partially upheld, acknowledging failures in providing correct dietary packs. The matter was referred to senior management to ensure improvements in future provision.

Complaint B

The complainant complained that they received incorrect meals despite severe allergies to nuts, gluten, wheat, and fish. The investigation found that dietary needs were known but communication and distribution errors persisted, and that there were repeated failures to provide correct meals despite clear medical risks.

The complaint was upheld, and the matter was referred to senior management to reinforce the need for accurate communication and adherence to dietary requirements.

Complaint C

The complainant complained that they were served food outside their religious dietary requirements. Investigation evidence showed the kitchen replaced the meal immediately.

The complaint was partially upheld, finding that the prison's investigation process was flawed. An apology was provided to the complainant.

Complaint D

The complainant complained that their weekly lactose-free pack was stopped, despite having a documented history of lactose intolerance. The investigation reviewed the complainant's health records, which contained multiple entries about lactose intolerance and related symptoms.

The complaint was upheld in principle. The investigator requested that the prison arrange a lactose-intolerance test and consider reinstating lactose-free provisions pending confirmation.

Complaint E

The complainant complained that they were unable to collect their evening meal because the servery closed earlier than the published regime and raised concerns about the handling of their complaint. The investigation confirmed that the official regime stated meals were available between 4.30pm and 5.00pm, but one wing closed earlier due to operational needs. While the complainant may have attended late, this could not be verified. The investigation found that complaint responses contained minor inaccuracies and that there was a delay in processing the appeal.

The complaint was partially upheld for poor complaint handling and delay, but not for the servery timing issue, as sufficient time was available to collect meals.

Complaint F

The complainant complained that food portion sizes were inadequate and meals were often cold. They suggested that if hot food was unavailable, external suppliers should be used. The investigation reviewed national policies, inspection reports, and monitoring records. Independent bodies had previously raised concerns about food quality and quantity, prompting action plans to improve catering standards, increase portion sizes, and introduce self-catering facilities. Regular monitoring and audits are now in place to ensure compliance.

The complaint was upheld, acknowledging historic issues with food provision. No further recommendations were made as corrective measures have already been implemented.

Complaint G

The complainant complained that they received incorrect meals despite assurances that their dietary requirements would be met. The investigation found that meals were sealed and labelled due to mental health considerations, but confusion in the kitchen led to errors. Staff were reminded of the correct process, and monitoring was introduced. Additional training was identified as necessary to ensure replacement diet chefs understood individual needs.

The complaint was upheld, acknowledging failures in meal provision. No further action was taken as corrective steps were implemented and the complainant had since transferred.

Complaint H

The complainant complained that they raised repeated concerns about not receiving full meals at prison. Despite several complaints and appeals, responses were inconsistent and failed to address the root cause. The investigation reviewed policies, staff accounts, and local practices, finding that the prison did not adequately investigate or resolve the issue.

The complaint was upheld, and recommendations were made for an independent investigation to ensure sufficient food provision, proper portion control, and availability of special diets.

Complaint I

The complainant complained that they did not receive an evening meal at prison. Initial responses were inadequate and failed to acknowledge the issue. The investigation confirmed that some meals went missing during service and that an appropriate alternative was not offered.

The complaint was upheld, and while corrective steps have since been taken (including staff guidance and process improvements), no compensation was recommended.

(II) Accommodation

Complaint A

The complainant complained that the high-risk visits hall was poorly cleaned and that they had received inadequate responses to their complaint forms.

The complaint was partially upheld, finding that the responses did not address the main issue and failed to comply with policy requirements for complaint handling. While photographic evidence was inconclusive, the investigation concluded that the floor was likely below acceptable standards at the time. A reminder was sent to the prison about cleanliness and proper complaint handling.

Complaint B

The complainant complained that a chemical descaler, used in a communal area, caused them a skin irritation. They said the product was left on surfaces without being rinsed, causing discomfort. The investigation confirmed the descaler is a category 2 skin irritant and should only be left for two minutes before rinsing. While the product is necessary for sanitation, steps were taken to reduce exposure, including ceasing its use in the complainant's area and considering alternative cleaning agents.

The complaint was partially upheld, acknowledging the complainant's sensitivity and confirming measures were implemented to prevent recurrence.

Complaint C

The complainant complained that there had been prolonged heating failures and that the same officer responded to both complaint stages. The investigation confirmed boiler faults caused heating issues, which were being addressed by contractors. Vulnerable individuals, including the complainant, were prioritised for portable

heaters and extra bedding. The duplication of responses at both complaint stages was acknowledged as an error, and a written apology was offered.

The complaint was upheld, recognising the inconvenience caused and the procedural oversight. No further recommendations were made as remedial steps were already in place.

Complaint D

The complainant complained that the toilet flush in their segregation cell was broken for an extended period, requiring them to flush manually with water from the same tap used for drinking and washing. They claimed this caused illness. The investigation revealed delays in logging the repair request, poor communication between staff and contractors, and inconsistent responses about whether the repair was completed. Complaint responses were also outside policy timeframes.

The complaint was upheld, and recommendations included inspecting the toilet, improving communication processes, and issuing a formal apology for delays and inadequate handling.

Complaint E

The complainant complained that there was inadequate ventilation at the prison. The investigation confirmed the problem remains unresolved despite repeated maintenance requests and acknowledgment in an Independent Monitoring Board report.

The complaint was upheld due to the delay, but no specific recommendation was made because the matter was complex and lacked a clear resolution timeline.

Complaint F

The complainant complained that their PTSD diagnosis was not properly considered during a cell sharing risk assessment (CSRA). The investigation reviewed medical records and confirmed recent mental health interventions. An updated CSRA was recommended and completed, resulting in the complainant being assessed as unsuitable for sharing a cell.

The complaint was partially upheld because the initial assessment lacked sufficient consideration of healthcare needs.

Complaint G

The complainant complained that they had been denied a kettle after moving wings, despite having purchased one previously. The prison initially stated kettles were only issued during induction and suggested buying another, which was not possible due to the complainant's regime status.

Following IPCI intervention, the prison agreed to provide a kettle to avoid duplicate payment.

Complaint H

The complainant complained that they had been moved from one prison wing to another wing without explanation or consideration of their mental health. The investigation confirmed the move was a security decision for good order and discipline, which was permitted under policy. However, inappropriate language was used by an officer during the move, and an apology was issued belatedly.

The complaint was partially upheld for the officer's conduct, but no further action was deemed necessary.

Complaint I

The complainant complained that there was inadequate ventilation in wing showers at prison. The investigation confirmed that ventilation issues had previously existed but were addressed through recent refurbishment and contractor work. Engineers inspected the showers and reported that ventilation was functioning correctly.

The complaint was upheld because the issue was acknowledged and resolved, and the prison committed to further improvements.

Complaint J

The complainant complained that a full list of globally approved phone numbers was not available on their wing at prison. The investigation confirmed that only a one-page list was displayed, contrary to policy.

The complaint was upheld, and the prison has since ensured that the complete list is available on all wings.

Complaint K

The complainant complained that they were refused a replacement hot water flask despite their original being broken. The investigation reviewed HMPPS guidance, which states that prisoners must be provided with a kettle or flask as part of minimum room furniture and personal kit. It found that the prison's local policy requiring payment for replacements was inconsistent with national standards.

The complaint was upheld, and the prison agreed to issue updated guidance and provide a replacement flask free of charge.

Complaint L

The complainant complained about the absence of CCTV warning signs on a prison wing, arguing this breached Information Commissioner Office guidance. The investigation confirmed that while signs were present in reception, none were displayed on individual wings.

The complaint was upheld because no order for signs had been placed at the time of the complaint. The prison has since ordered signs, including contact details for CCTV queries.

Complaint M

The complainant complained that the prison would not replace a broken hot water flask without charge. The investigation confirmed that national standards required prisons to supply kettles or flasks without cost for replacements when unfit for use.

The complaint was upheld, and the prison committed to issuing updated guidance and providing a replacement flask to the complainant.

Complaint N

The complainant complained that their mattress was unfit for purpose and lacked a noticeboard in his cell. A new mattress was eventually issued after IPCI intervention, but the prison has yet to resolve sourcing noticeboards.

The complaint was upheld, and recommendations were made for an apology, sourcing noticeboards, and installing one in the complainant's cell.

Complaint O

The complainant complained that faulty lighting in their cell negatively affected their mental health. The investigation found that although officers acknowledged the issue, it was never reported to maintenance. Following IPCI involvement, the fault was logged and repairs scheduled.

The complaint was upheld due to the failure to act promptly, and the prison committed to resolving the issue.

(III) Equality

Complaint A

The complainant complained that a male officer was present during a Mandatory Drug Test, violating her rights and Voluntary Agreement. The investigation found that two female officers conducted the test, in line with policy, and that there was no rule prohibiting male staff from being in the vicinity.

The complaint was partially upheld due to poor record-keeping and the prison's failure to review the Voluntary Agreement, which was incomplete and unsigned. Recommendations were made for the prison to review all Voluntary Agreements for transgender prisoners and ensure they comply with policy.

Complaint B

The complainant complained that their care needs were inadequately met following a transfer. They reported that appropriate provisions and adaptations were lacking, despite submitting multiple complaints and referrals. The investigation found that the establishment could not fully meet the complainant's social care requirements due to allocation issues rather than deliberate neglect. Emergency referrals were made, and efforts were taken to provide adaptations within existing limitations.

The complaint was upheld, acknowledging that the required care standards were not met. No further action was possible given the complainant's release.

Complaint C

The complainant complained that a custodial manager had assaulted and discriminated against them. The investigation did not find evidence of assault or discrimination, though the prison had taken action to address the custodial manager's behaviour.

The complaint was partially upheld for inappropriate conduct but not for assault or discrimination. No further recommendations were made as corrective steps had already been taken.

Complaint D

The complainant complained that they had not received an adapted telephone within a reasonable timeframe, leaving them unable to contact family and feeling discriminated against. The investigation confirmed multiple attempts had been made to source a suitable device, but delays were due to supplier issues rather than staff neglect. Temporary arrangements allowed the complainant to use a landing phone with assistance.

The complaint was partially upheld, recognising the inconvenience caused by delays but finding no evidence of discrimination. No recommendations were made as efforts to resolve the issue were ongoing.

Complaint E

The complainant complained that they faced discrimination at the prison, as they had been unable to register more than one religion, which restricted their ability to practice both faiths and obtain associated artefacts. The investigation found that the prison's local policy aimed to prevent perceptions of preferential treatment but confirmed that artefacts for multiple faiths could be allowed under Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 05/2016. The prison agreed to review its Facilities List and consider applications for additional artefacts.

The complaint was resolved following re-investigation and policy clarification.

Complaint F

The complainant complained that they had been denied access to weekly Friday prayers. The investigation reviewed PSI 05/2016, which mandated weekly worship for prisoners, and confirmed that prison had not met this requirement. The prison cited logistical challenges, including limited space, staffing shortages, and lack of a second Imam. Plans were underway to expand facilities and recruit further staff to enable full attendance.

The complaint was upheld. IPCI planned to monitor progress but made no further recommendations.