



Health Service Commissioners Act 1993

1993 CHAPTER 46

Information and consultation

15 Confidentiality of information. **U.K.**

- (1) Information obtained by ^[F1]the Commissioner] or his officers in the course of or for the purposes of an investigation shall not be disclosed except—
- (a) for the purposes of the investigation and any report to be made in respect of it,
 - ^[F2](aa) for the purposes of ^[F3]a matter] which is being investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner or a Local Commissioner (or both),]
 - (b) for the purposes of any proceedings for—
 - (i) an offence under the Official Secrets Acts 1911 to 1989 ^[F4]or sections 1 to 4 or 18 of the National Security Act 2023] alleged to have been committed in respect of information obtained by virtue of this Act by ^[F1]the Commissioner] or any of his officers, or
 - (ii) an offence of perjury alleged to have been committed in the course of the investigation,
 - (c) for the purposes of an inquiry with a view to the taking of such proceedings as are mentioned in paragraph (b), ^{F5}. . .
 - (d) for the purposes of any proceedings under section 13 (offences of obstruction and contempt) ^[F6]or
 - (e) ^[F7]where the information is to the effect that any person is likely to constitute a threat to the health or safety of patients]as permitted by subsection (1B).]
- ^[F8][Subsection (1B) applies where, in the course of an investigation, ^[F10]the ^{F9}(1A) Commissioner] or any of his officers obtains information which—
- (a) does not fall to be disclosed for the purposes of the investigation or any report to be made in respect of it, and
 - (b) is to the effect that a person is likely to constitute a threat to the health or safety of patients.]
- (1B) In ^[F11]a case within subsection (1)(e)] the Commissioner may disclose the information to any persons to whom he thinks it should be disclosed in the interests of the health and safety of patients ^[F12]; and a person to whom disclosure may be made may, for

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instance, be a body which regulates the profession to which the person mentioned in subsection (1A)(b) belongs or his employer or any person with whom he has made arrangements to provide services.]

(1C) If ^{F13}the Commissioner] discloses information as permitted by subsection (1B) he shall—

- [where he knows the identity of the person mentioned in subsection (1)(e),
^{F14}(a) inform that person that he has disclosed the information and of the identity of any person to whom he has disclosed it, and
(b) inform the person from whom the information was obtained that he has disclosed it.]]

(2) Neither ^{F15}the Commissioner] nor his officers ^{F16}nor his advisers] shall be called on to give evidence in any proceedings, other than proceedings mentioned in subsection (1), of matters coming to his or their knowledge in the course of an investigation under this Act.

^{F17}(3) The reference in subsection (2) to ^{F18}the Commissioner's] advisers is a reference to persons from whom the Commissioner obtains advice under paragraph 13 of Schedule 1 ^{F19}....]

^{F20}(4) Information obtained from the Information Commissioner by virtue of section 76 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 shall be treated for the purposes of subsection (1) as obtained for the purposes of an investigation and, in relation to such information, the reference in paragraph (a) of that subsection to the investigation shall have effect as a reference to any investigation.]

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 15(1) substituted (1.4.2006) by [Public Services Ombudsman \(Wales\) Act 2005 \(c. 10\)](#), s. 40, [Sch. 6 para. 47\(2\)](#) (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F2** S. 15(1)(aa) inserted (1.8.2007) by [The Regulatory Reform \(Collaboration etc. between Ombudsmen\) Order 2007 \(S.I. 2007/1889\)](#), arts. 1(1), [11](#)
- F3** Words in s. 15(1)(aa) substituted (1.4.2008) by [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(c. 28\)](#), s. 245(5), [Sch. 12 para. 15\(2\)](#); S.I. 2008/917, art. 2(1)(n) (with art. 6(5))
- F4** Words in s. 15(1)(b)(i) inserted (20.12.2023) by [The National Security Act 2023 \(Consequential Amendments of Primary Legislation\) Regulations 2023 \(S.I. 2023/1386\)](#), reg. 1(2), [Sch. para. 11](#)
- F5** Word in s. 15(1)(c) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1996 c. 5, ss. 11(2), 13, [Sch. 2](#); S.I. 1996/970, [art. 2\(1\)](#)
- F6** S. 15(1)(e) and preceding word “or” inserted (1.4.1996) by 1996 c. 5, s. [11\(2\)](#); S.I. 1996/970, [art. 2\(1\)](#)
- F7** Words in s. 15(1)(e) inserted (1.10.1999 for E.W., 1.3.2000 for S.) by 1999 c. 8, s. [43\(2\)](#); S.S.I. 2000/38, [art. 2](#)
- F8** S. 15(1A)-(1C) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1996 c. 5, s. [11\(3\)](#); S.I. 1996/970, [art. 2\(1\)](#)
- F9** S. 15(1A) repealed (1.10.1999 for E.W., 1.3.2000 for S.) by 1999 c. 8, ss. 43(3), 65, [Sch. 5](#); S.I. 1999/2540, [art. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#); S.S.I. 2000/38, [art. 2](#)
- F10** Words in s. 15(1A) substituted (1.4.2006) by [Public Services Ombudsman \(Wales\) Act 2005 \(c. 10\)](#), s. 40, [Sch. 6 para. 47\(3\)](#) (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F11** Words in s. 15(1B) substituted (1.10.1999 for E.W., 1.3.2000 for S. otherwise *prosp.*) by 1999 c. 8, s. [43\(4\)\(a\)](#); S.I. 1999/2540, [art. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#); S.S.I. 2000/38, [art. 2](#)
- F12** Words in s. 15(1B) repealed (1.10.1999 for E.W., 1.3.2000 for S. otherwise *prosp.*) by 1999 c. 8, ss. 43(4)(b), 65, [Sch. 5](#); S.I. 1999/2540, [art. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#); S.S.I. 2000/38, [art. 2](#)
- F13** Words in s. 15(1C) substituted (1.4.2006) by [Public Services Ombudsman \(Wales\) Act 2005 \(c. 10\)](#), s. 40, [Sch. 6 para. 47\(3\)](#) (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F14** S. 15(1C)(a)(b) substituted (1.10.1999 for E.W., 1.3.2000 for S. otherwise *prosp.*) by 1999 c. 8, s. [43\(5\)](#); S.I. 1999/2540, [art. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#); S.S.I. 2000/38, [art. 2](#)

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- F15** Words in s. 15(2) substituted (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 47(3)** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F16** Words in s. 15(2) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1996 c. 5, s. 11(4); S.I. 1996/970, art. 2(1)
- F17** S. 15(3) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1996 c. 5, s. 11(5); S.I. 1996/970, art. 2(1)
- F18** Words in s. 15(3) substituted (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 47(4)(a)** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F19** Words in s. 15(3) repealed (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 47(4)(b), Sch. 7** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F20** S. 15(4) inserted (30.1.2001) by 2000 c. 36, ss. 76(2), 87(2)(b), **Sch. 7 para. 5** (with ss. 56, 78)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 15 excluded by 1974 c. 7, s. 34M(7)(b) (as inserted (1.10.2010) by Health Act 2009 (c. 21), s. 40(1), **Sch. 5 para. 2**; S.I. 2010/1863, art. 2)

16 Information prejudicial to the safety of the State. U.K.

- (1) A Minister of the Crown may give notice in writing to [^{F21}the Commissioner] with respect to any document or information specified in the notice that in the Minister's opinion the disclosure of the document or information would be prejudicial to the safety of the State or otherwise contrary to the public interest.
- (2) Where such a notice is given to [^{F21}the Commissioner], nothing in this Act shall be construed as authorising or requiring him or any of his officers to communicate to any person or for any purpose any document or information specified in the notice.
- (3) References above to a document or information include references to a class of document or a class of information.

Textual Amendments

- F21** Words in s. 16(1)(2) substituted (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 48** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)

17 Use of information by Commissioner in other capacity. E+W+S

- (1) This section applies where [^{F22}the Commissioner] also holds ^{F23}... the office of Parliamentary Commissioner (an "additional office").
- (2) Where—
 - (a) a person initiates a complaint to the Commissioner as the holder of the additional office, and
 - (b) the complaint relates partly to a matter with respect to which that person has previously initiated, or subsequently initiates, a complaint to the Commissioner in his capacity as such,information obtained by the Commissioner or his officers in the course of or for the purposes of the investigation of that other complaint may be disclosed for the purposes of carrying out his functions in relation to the complaint initiated to him as the holder of the additional office.

^{F24}(3)

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Textual Amendments

- F22** Words in s. 17(1) substituted (1.4.2006) by [Public Services Ombudsman \(Wales\) Act 2005 \(c. 10\), s. 40, Sch. 6 para. 49\(2\)\(a\)](#) (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F23** Words in s. 17(1) repealed (1.4.2006) by [Public Services Ombudsman \(Wales\) Act 2005 \(c. 10\), s. 40, Sch. 6 para. 49\(2\)\(b\), Sch. 7](#) (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F24** S. 17(3) repealed (1.4.2006) by [Public Services Ombudsman \(Wales\) Act 2005 \(c. 10\), s. 40, Sch. 6 para. 49\(3\)](#) (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C2** S. 17 extended (1.7.1999) by [S.I. 1999/1351, art. 17\(5\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 1998/3178, art. 3](#)

18 Consultation during investigations. **E+W+S**

- (1) Where [^{F25}the Commissioner], at any stage in the course of conducting an investigation, forms the opinion that the complaint relates partly [^{F26}or wholly] to a matter which could be the subject of an investigation—
- ^{F27}(a)
- (b) by the Parliamentary Commissioner under the ^{M1}Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967,
- [^{F28}(ba) by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 [^{F29}or the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019],]
- (c) by a Local Commissioner under Part III [^{F30}or 3A] of the ^{M2}Local Government Act 1974, [^{F31}or]
- (d) [^{F32}by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman under the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002], ^{F33}...
- ^{F33}(e)
- he shall consult about the complaint with the appropriate Commissioner [^{F34}or ^{F35}... Ombudsman] and, if he considers it necessary, he shall inform the person initiating the complaint of the steps necessary to initiate a complaint to that Commissioner [^{F34}or ^{F35}... Ombudsman].
- (2) Where [^{F36}the Commissioner] consults with another Commissioner [^{F37}, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman] or ^{F38}... [^{F39}the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales] in accordance with this section, the consultations may extend to any matter relating to the complaint, including—
- (a) the conduct of any investigation into the complaint, and
- (b) the form, content and publication of any report of the results of such an investigation.
- (3) Nothing in section 15 (confidentiality of information) applies in relation to the disclosure of information ^{F40}... in the course of consultations held in accordance with this section.

Textual Amendments

- F25** Words in s. 18(1) substituted (1.4.2006) by [Public Services Ombudsman \(Wales\) Act 2005 \(c. 10\), s. 40, Sch. 6 para. 50\(2\)\(a\)](#) (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)

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- F26** Words in s. 18(1) inserted (1.4.2004 for W., 1.4.2006 for E.) by Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 (c. 43), s. 199(1)(4), **Sch. 11 para. 64**; S.I. 2004/480, art. 4(2)(aa) (with art. 6) (as amended by S.I. 2004/1019 and S.I. 2006/345), S.I. 2005/2925, art. 10(2)(j)
- F27** S. 18(1)(a) repealed (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 50(2)(b)** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F28** S. 18(1)(ba) substituted (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 50(2)(c)** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F29** Words in s. 18(1)(ba) inserted (E.W.) (23.7.2019) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 (anaw 3), s. 77(1), **Sch. 5 para. 15**; S.I. 2019/1096, reg. 2
- F30** Words in s. 18(1)(c) inserted (1.10.2010) by Health Act 2009 (c. 21), s. 40(1), **Sch. 5 para. 13**; S.I. 2010/1863, art. 2
- F31** Word in s. 18(1)(c) repealed (14.7.2005 for W.) by Housing Act 2004 (c. 34), s. 270(4)(5)(f), Sch. 15 para. 37(2)(a), **Sch. 16**; S.I. 2005/1814, arts. 1(2), 2(f)(iv)
- F32** Words in s. 18(1)(d) substituted (14.7.2004) by The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2004 (S.I. 2004/1823), arts. 1, **17(9)(a)(ii)**
- F33** S. 18(1)(e) and word repealed (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 50(2)(d)**, **Sch. 7** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F34** Words in s. 18(1) inserted (1.4.1999) by 1998 c. 38, s. 112, **Sch. 10 para. 14(2)** (with ss. 139(2), 143(2)); S.I. 1999/782, **art. 2**
- F35** Word in s. 18(1) omitted (14.7.2004) by virtue of The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2004 (S.I. 2004/1823), arts. 1, **17(9)(a)(iii)**
- F36** Words in s. 18(2) substituted (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 50(3)(a)** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F37** Words in s. 18(2) inserted (14.7.2004) by The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2004 (S.I. 2004/1823), arts. 1, **17(9)(b)**
- F38** Words in s. 18(2) repealed (14.7.2005 for W.) by Housing Act 2004 (c. 34), s. 270(4)(5)(f), Sch. 15 para. 37(3), **Sch. 16**; S.I. 2005/1814, arts. 1(2), 2(f)(iv)
- F39** Words in s. 18(2) substituted (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 50(3)(b)** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F40** Words in s. 18(3) repealed (1.4.1999) by 1998 c. 38, ss. 112, 152, Sch. 10 para. 14(4), Sch. 18 Pt. I (with ss. 137(1), 139(2), 141(1), 143(2)); S.I. 1999/782, art. 2

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C3** S. 18 extended (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/1351, **art. 17(5)(a)**; S.I. 1998/3178, **art. 3**
- C4** S. 18(1)(b) extended (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/1351, **art. 17(5)(b)**; S.I. 1998/3178, **art. 3**

Marginal Citations

- M1** 1967 c. 13.
- M2** 1974 c. 7.

[^{F41}18ZACollaborative working between the Commissioner and other Commissioners **U.K.**

(1) If at any stage in the course of conducting an investigation under this Act the Commissioner forms the opinion that the complaint relates partly to a matter within the jurisdiction of—

- (a) the Parliamentary Commissioner,
- (b) a Local Commissioner, or
- (c) both,

he may, subject to subsection (2), conduct an investigation under this Act jointly with that Commissioner or those Commissioners.

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- (2) The Commissioner must obtain the consent of the person aggrieved or any person acting on his behalf in accordance with section 9(3) before agreeing to a joint investigation referred to in subsection (1).
- (3) If the Commissioner forms the opinion that [^{F42}matters which are the subject of an investigation] by—
- (a) the Parliamentary Commissioner,
 - (b) a Local Commissioner, or
 - (c) both,
- [^{F43}include] a matter within his jurisdiction, he may conduct an investigation [^{F44}of that matter] under this Act jointly with that Commissioner or those Commissioners.
- (4) If the Commissioner conducts an investigation ^{F45}... jointly with another person, the requirements of section 14 (reports) (so far as relating to a case where the Commissioner conducts an investigation under this Act) may be satisfied by a report made jointly with that person.
- (5) Apart from identifying any body or provider investigated, a report prepared by virtue of subsection (4) by the Commissioner and a Local Commissioner shall not—
- (a) mention the name of any person, or
 - (b) contain any particulars which, in the opinion of the Commissioner and the Local Commissioner, are likely to identify any person and can be omitted without impairing the effectiveness of the report,
- unless, after taking into account the public interest as well as [^{F46}the interests of the complainant (if any) and of other persons], the Commissioner and the Local Commissioner consider it necessary to mention the name of that person or to include in the report any such particulars.
- (6) Nothing in subsection (5) of this section prevents a report—
- (a) mentioning the name of, or
 - (b) containing particulars likely to identify,
- the Mayor of London or any member of the London Assembly.]

Textual Amendments

- F41** S. 18ZA inserted (1.8.2007) by [The Regulatory Reform \(Collaboration etc. between Ombudsmen\) Order 2007 \(S.I. 2007/1889\)](#), arts. 1(1), 6
- F42** Words in s. 18ZA(3) substituted (1.4.2008) by [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(c. 28\)](#), s. 245(5), [Sch. 12 para. 15\(3\)\(a\)\(i\)](#); S.I. 2008/917, art. 2(1)(n) (with art. 6(5))
- F43** Word in s. 18ZA(3) substituted (1.4.2008) by [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(c. 28\)](#), s. 245(5), [Sch. 12 para. 15\(3\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#); S.I. 2008/917, art. 2(1)(n) (with art. 6(5))
- F44** Words in s. 18ZA(3) inserted (1.4.2008) by [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(c. 28\)](#), s. 245(5), [Sch. 12 para. 15\(3\)\(a\)\(iii\)](#); S.I. 2008/917, art. 2(1)(n) (with art. 6(5))
- F45** Words in s. 18ZA(4) repealed (1.4.2008) by [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(c. 28\)](#), s. 245(5), [Sch. 12 para. 15\(3\)\(b\)](#), [Sch. 18 Pt. 14](#); S.I. 2008/917, art. 2(1)(n)(ii)(v) (with art. 6(5))
- F46** Words in s. 18ZA(5) substituted (1.4.2008) by [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(c. 28\)](#), s. 245(5), [Sch. 12 para. 15\(3\)\(c\)](#); S.I. 2008/917, art. 2(1)(n) (with art. 6(5))

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[^{F47}**18A Disclosure of information to Information Commissioner.** **E+W+S**]

- (1) [^{F48}The Health Service Commissioner] may disclose to the Information Commissioner any information obtained by, or furnished to, the Health Service Commissioner under or for the purposes of this Act if the information appears to the Health Service Commissioner to relate to—
- (a) a matter in respect of which the Information Commissioner could exercise any power conferred by—
- [^{F49}(i) sections 142 to 154, 160 to 164 or 174 to 176 of, or Schedule 15 to, the Data Protection Act 2018 (certain provisions relating to enforcement),]
- (ii) section 48 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (practice recommendations), or
- (iii) Part IV of that Act (enforcement), or
- [^{F50}(b) the commission of an offence under—
- (i) a provision of the Data Protection Act 2018 other than paragraph 15 of Schedule 15 (obstruction of execution of warrant etc), or
- (ii) section 77 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (offence of altering etc records with intent to prevent disclosure).]
- (3) Nothing in section 15 (confidentiality of information) applies in relation to the disclosure of information in accordance with this section.]

Textual Amendments

- F47** S. 18A and sidenote inserted (30.1.2001) by 2000 c. 36, ss. 76(2), 87(2)(b), **Sch. 7 para. 6** (with ss. 56, 78)
- F48** Words in s. 18A(1) substituted (1.4.2006) by Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (c. 10), s. 40, **Sch. 6 para. 51** (with s. 38); S.I. 2005/2800, art. 5(1)(3)
- F49** S. 18A(1)(a)(i) substituted (25.5.2018) by Data Protection Act 2018 (c. 12), s. 212(1), **Sch. 19 para. 43(a)** (with ss. 117, 209, 210, Sch. 20 para. 47(1)); S.I. 2018/625, reg. 2(1)(g)
- F50** S. 18A(1)(b) substituted (25.5.2018) by Data Protection Act 2018 (c. 12), s. 212(1), **Sch. 19 para. 43(b)** (with ss. 117, 209, 210, Sch. 20 para. 47(2)); S.I. 2018/625, reg. 2(1)(g)

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 3(1F) inserted by [2006 c. 44 s. 15\(2\)](#)
- s. 7(2)(d) and word inserted by [2006 c. 44 s. 15\(4\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 14(2G)(2H) inserted by [2006 c. 44 s. 15\(7\)](#)
- s. 14(2G)(c) word inserted by [2012 c. 7 Sch. 5 para. 70\(6\)\(a\)](#)
- s. 14(2G)(e) and word omitted by [2012 c. 7 Sch. 5 para. 70\(6\)\(b\)](#)