



### Identifying High Risk / Priority Complaints

High risk/priority complaints are usually identified by the Director Access and Resolution at the initial screening phase using the [Checklist for High Priority/High Risk Complaints](#). However, a complaint may become high risk or priority at any time and the case officer should advise a more senior officer if they believe a complaint should be escalated to high risk or priority. This change must be approved by an Assistant Ombudsman.<sup>1</sup>

All complaints identified as potentially high risk or priority are referred to an Assistant Ombudsman who determines their status. These decisions are checked by the Deputy Ombudsman who may decide to involve the Ombudsman.

High risk or priority cases may be de-escalated if the factors or conditions that made the complaint high risk or priority no longer apply. These cases will then continue to be managed by the case officer in the usual way.

### Process for handling priority complaints

Where a case is identified as priority but not high risk, approvals for correspondence will be in accordance with the normal delegations, unless otherwise specified on the checklist by the Assistant Ombudsman.

However, these cases will be expedited until the issues that gave rise to their priority are addressed.

### Process for handling high risk complaints

Correspondence relating to high risk complaints requires approval by a senior officer. This may be an Assistant Ombudsman, the Deputy Ombudsman or the Ombudsman. The relevant approving officer will be indicated on the [Checklist for High Priority/High Risk Complaints](#) and in Resolve when the Assistant Ombudsman identifies the complaint as high risk. High risk complaints may be dealt with by way of assessment, early resolution or standard investigation.

### High risk complaints managed by an Assistant Ombudsman

#### ▪ Process

- Once a complaint is identified as being high risk, a red dot will be placed on the case file. Additionally, the complaint will be identified and managed in Resolve as a high risk complaint.
- The Assistant Ombudsman will then have a case management role and will provide direction to staff about how to deal with the complaint.
- This may involve case conferencing at critical stages; requiring a complaint resolution plan, an investigation plan, and/or an issues paper to test the evidence.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Assistant Ombudsman Complaint Resolution or the Assistant Ombudsman Child Death Review if the risk involves the well being of a child.

- The Deputy Ombudsman may also at any stage place requirements on the process applicable to individual complaints, such as who will review letters before they are sent.
  - The level of involvement of the Assistant and/or Deputy Ombudsman may vary depending on the degree of risk.
- **Quality checking**
    - The Assistant Ombudsman must approve all outgoing letters.
    - The Assistant Ombudsman must approve any complaint resolution plan or investigation plan.
    - All other quality assurance is performed by the Assistant Ombudsman.
    - Where the delegations are set higher than the Assistant Ombudsman (for example, preliminary views with proposed recommendations require Ombudsman approval) these remain the same.

### **High risk complaints managed by the Deputy Ombudsman or the Ombudsman**

- **Process**
  - As above, once a complaint is identified as being high risk, a red dot will be placed on the case file.
  - The Deputy Ombudsman or the Ombudsman will become the case manager and will provide direction to staff about how to deal with the complaint.
  - The case may be transferred to a Principal Investigating Officer – Team Leader. In these circumstances, the original case officer may continue to form part of a team involved in investigating the complaint.
  - The Deputy Ombudsman or Ombudsman may call upon high level strategic advice from a range of sources and regular meetings may be held to discuss the progress of the case.
- **Quality checking**
  - The Deputy Ombudsman or Ombudsman must approve all outgoing letters and any complaint resolution plan or investigation plan.
  - These do not need to be first approved by the Assistant Ombudsman (or the Deputy Ombudsman for cases that are handled by the Ombudsman).