

26 May 2023

**Reference: FOI 466 Freedom of Information request**

Thank you for your emails, which we received on 6 April 2023 and 27 April 2023. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

**You asked us:**

For information on what was wrong with the old Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) website.

**Our response:**

We have searched our records and we hold the requested information. A copy of the information that you requested is enclosed with our response.

**You asked us:**

For information on the specification of the new website intended to correct what was wrong with the old PPO website and to provide the budget for it.

**Our response:**

Following a search of our records, the information you requested is not held by us. We suggest you contact the Ministry of Justice, as they may be able to provide this data, and their details are as follows:

Disclosure team  
Postal Point 10.25, Floor 10  
102 Petty France  
London SW1H 9AJ  
United Kingdom

Alternatively, their email address is [data.access@justice.gov.uk](mailto:data.access@justice.gov.uk)

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.

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/>

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]  
Sent: Wednesday, May 10, 2023 10:14 AM  
To: R [Redacted]  
Subject: FOI 466 - [Redacted] OneNote website notes

Findings overview

[Redacted]

Stakeholder survey feedback: majority of stakeholders are looking for FII reports, Learning lessons reports, annual reports. Majority found this information easily.  
User feedback survey - users had negative experience on website and the majority of those were comping to make a complaint.

Research recommendations

[Redacted]

- 7. Understanding how to better serve families - [Redacted] Review video as it is not accessible.
- 8. Simplify what the PPO does - use the homepage to give a snapshot of what we do, who we can help and what impact we have.
- 9. Terms of Reference - [Redacted] Can we create a user friendly plain english version and add to a HTML page rather than a PDF.
- 10. About us section - restructure this section and to reduce number of pages.

[Redacted]

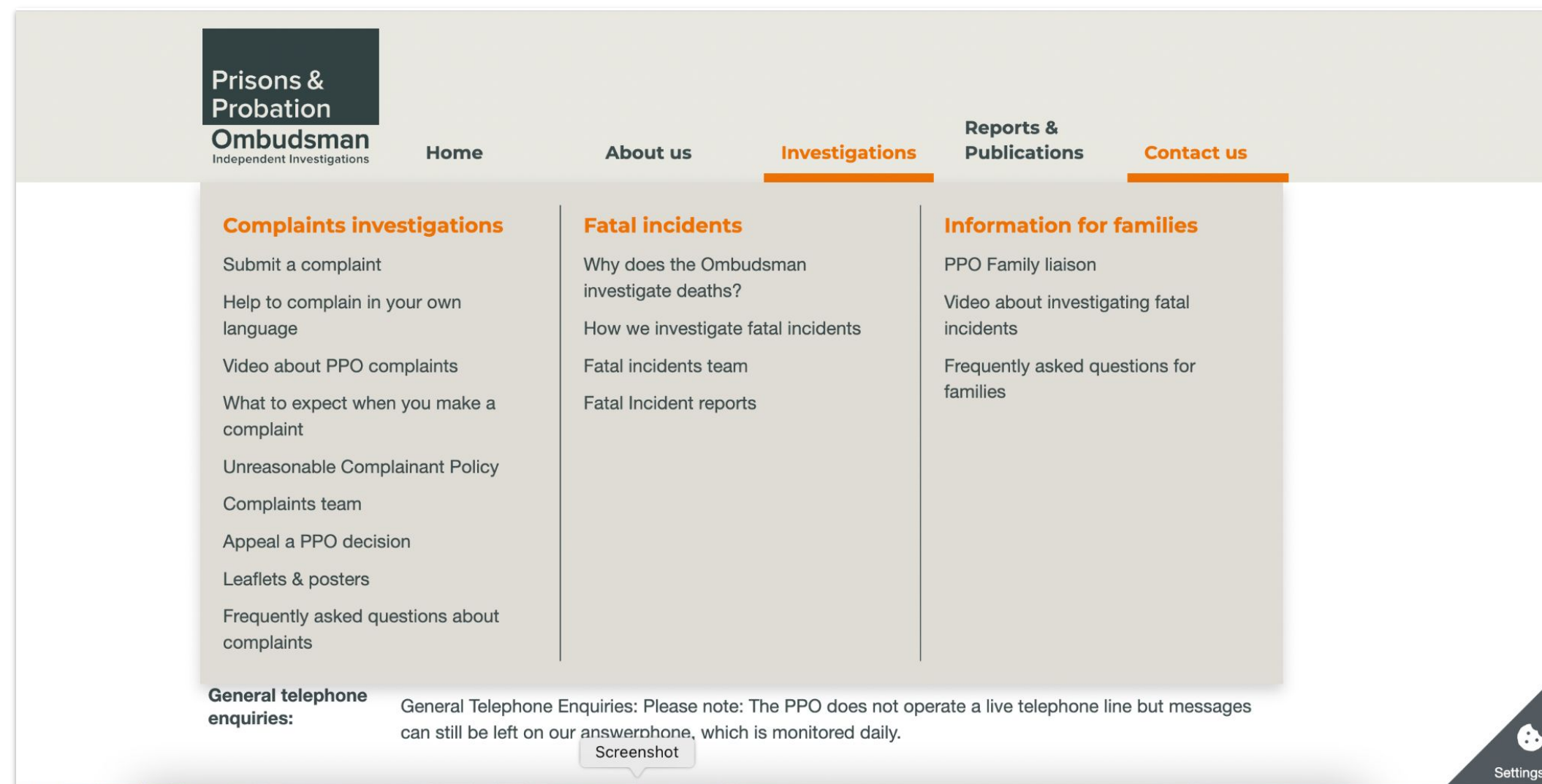


[Redacted]  
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

Address 3<sup>rd</sup> floor | 10 South Colonnade | London | E14 4PU  
Working patterns Monday to Friday  
Preferred pronouns [Redacted]

[www.ppo.gov.uk](http://www.ppo.gov.uk) | [Subscribe to our mailing list](#) | Twitter: [@PPOmbudsman](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

# Current PPO site structure and navigation



- lots of pages listed under each section - could be overwhelming
- some duplication of links
- some pages have low page views and could be combined with other content

**These are extracts from the PPO website: Stakeholder interviews High-level findings, 14th July 2022 document. The extracts focus on the high-level insights gained from PPO stakeholder interviews.**

---

## **Key**

(-) Negative insight

(+) Positive insight

(+/-) Desire

## **1. Homepage**

(-) The existing website was described as “basic”, “clunky”, “over descriptive” and “confusing”.

(-) Participants felt the existing website could do better to explain who the PPO are, and what they do. They said a lot of the information on the website was repeated or buried within, making it difficult to find the information you are looking for. It was also deemed important to communicate that the PPO are independent from the prison service.

(-) It was felt that the existing website could be more humanised and less corporate, e.g. with the introduction of imagery including people

(-) A couple of participants suggested it would help understanding to have a picture of the Ombudsman and a description of what they do.

(+/-) One participant said it would be useful to be able to update content on a regular basis: e.g. campaigns or updates on the homepage.

## **2. Site wide/ generic**

(-) It was felt that there is an opportunity to improve the awareness of the website.

(-) Participants felt there were too many headings within the top navigation bar which could be adding to the users confusion.

(-) Participants felt it was unclear what each section of the website was about and a lot of information is buried or repeated. They felt the user would benefit from a summary description on each page.

- New PPO leaflets and posters were mentioned as a good source of information to inform these summaries

(-) The existing website was described as "not very visual or attractive and needs to be more engaging". Participants felt updating the imagery, and colour palette would make a difference to improving the overall look and feel.

(+/-) Of those who we spoke to who do use the website, it was found they mostly interacted with the website by navigating via the four boxes on the homepage - Complaints/ Investigations, Fatal Incidents, Learning Lessons, Corporate Information.

### **3. 'About us'**

(-) Corporate documents section was deemed useful, but is a repeated sub navigation heading

(-) Participants said they did not access 'Ombudsman speeches and presentations' and were unsure what the purpose of the section is

(+/-) Explaining who and what the PPO does is an important part of having a website. It was felt that it is important to highlight what is and isn't in the remit of the PPO

- Some participants were unclear what constitutes a 'special investigation' and what the difference is, if there is a difference, between special investigations and high profile cases

(+/-) Participants spoke of the benefit to publishing Freedom of Information responses, which could reduce the amount of time the team spends finding and sending repeat responses.

### **4. 'Investigating deaths'**

(-) It was felt the website could do better in explaining processes, specifically the process of how the prison and PPO investigate deaths when creating a fatal incident report. It was felt more explanation would help to better manage family and friends expectations, re: steps and timeframe.

#### **'Investigating complaints'**

(-) It was felt that one core user journey when using the website would be for someone to gather information about who can and how to complain. Participants said they would like users to be able to do this "efficiently" and the existing website doesn't currently allow them to do so.

- They also said it would be helpful to give an idea of timeframes (although this can vary on a case by case basis).

### **5. Reports**

(-) Special investigations don't take place often, and less so these days. Some participants deemed the 'special investigations' section of the website as irrelevant given the age of the reports.

(-) The majority of participants who said they would use the website to access reports said they would do so by either using the search function, or through accessing the call-to-action on the homepage labelled 'Anonymised reports added in the last 7 days'.

### **6. Learning lessons**

(+/-) Learning Lessons are less accessed on the website in comparison to FII reports. It was felt there should be more emphasis given to these write ups in order to "shout about trends and learnings" for the prisons to adopt when thinking about making improvements.

(+) All participants liked the idea of Learning Lessons being a more prominent section on the website, as it was felt it is important to promote them and highlight the impact the PPO has on the prisons

(-) Participants said it was important to ensure the learning lessons content is up to date.

## **7. News**

(+/-) Participants felt news content should be more prominent for the users to engage with the new content. Currently the latest news is positioned below the fold on the homepage, and may go unnoticed.

## **8. Contact Us**

(-) It was felt that content should be clear about who could lodge a complaint as this would be more efficient.

(+/-) Users arriving on the website will have different queries, and therefore should be directed to different contacts - PPO team members spend a lot of their time passing queries on

(+/-) Participants said it would be useful for friends and family members of those in prison who would like to complain, so felt it would be useful to sign post these users

(-) One participant said the 'contact us' page "could look a lot nicer". They said the page is text heavy, and a more clean layout and style would be more helpful for the user, so they could easily find where to go or who to speak to.



From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Tuesday, May 17, 2022 5:13 PM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: B [REDACTED]  
Subject: FW: Website redesign project update

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I know that [REDACTED] was using our website as part of her research as she contacted us about finding reports on our website so will certainly be able to talk about the difficulties she had. She only had to contact us for the information because the search facility on the FII reports page did not enable her to do the relevant search. We could ask the web team whether the FII reports can be added to the new website in a format that would enable the content to be searched – that would mean less FOI requests because people can search the reports and also means we can carry out research internally easier as well.

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 13 May 2022 11:36  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Website redesign project update

1. The MoJ reviewed our website to understand how it is being used and where there are opportunities to improve user experience. They did an audit of our content and looked at:
  - a. The type of content on there
  - b. User journeys
  - c. Evaluation of each page
  - d. Page analytics (looking at the analytics for a period of 1 month)
2. They are currently carrying out a user research overview which looks to:
  - a. Understand who the users are and how they use the website
  - b. Identify issues with our current website
  - c. Migrate and redesign the website, informed by the user research

[REDACTED]

5. Interestingly, although 61% of users found it 'quite easy' to find what they were looking for on our website (feedback from the general stakeholder survey), 43% had a very negative experience on it, with another 61% not being able to find what they were looking for. The last two figures are from the website's feedback form. Again interestingly, most of these people wanted 'to make a complaint'. Most of the people that access our website will not be eligible complainants (third parties), therefore it explains why they can't find what they were looking for.
6. Another goal is to simplify the complaints pages information. We/ they can revise content, move pages around and make it visually simpler.
7. Same with FII – but we also said we want to revamp the reports search function too. They also want to understand how the site can better serve families so we can get [REDACTED] involved in this.
8. We have agreed that all videos should be removed as they are outdated.

[REDACTED]

10. They suggested we create a plain English version of the terms of reference, and also to insert the ToR into the page as HTML, rather than having to open it as a PDF
11. Annual statistics summary – I have asked them to incorporate this into the annual reports page