

2.10. Scripted responses to unreasonable arguments

Statement or conduct	Possible responses
<p><i>This is a very serious issue. So you think my issue/complaint isn't important enough?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It may well seem that way ... followed by an appropriate explanation.</i> • <i>It's not about your issue being unimportant. It's a question of whether our office/organisation can achieve a substantial outcome in this situation/whether your matter is one that our office/organisation can help you with. From our perspective, we can't/it isn't.</i> • <i>Unfortunately, we don't share your view that this issue needs to be investigated/taken further by our office/organisation.</i> • <i>All issues of concern/complaints are carefully assessed according to our policies and procedures. Sometimes we receive complaints we can't/don't have the powers to take up.</i> • <i>It's clear that this issue is important to you. However, we do have certain requirements that must be addressed before an issue/complaint can be taken on by our office/organisation. These include that the issues raised are Unfortunately, your matter doesn't meet this threshold.</i> • <i>We've considered the information relating to your issue and we don't believe that there is a practical purpose in pursuing it further.</i> • <i>As we've explained, we don't think that there are clear reasons for us to take action on this issue. Perhaps you should consider raising it in another more appropriate forum.</i> • <i>When did you start thinking that we weren't/I wasn't taking you seriously?</i> • <i>When did you start thinking that we aren't concerned about your situation?</i>
<p><i>Why are you discouraging me from pursuing my issue/complaint?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My intention isn't to discourage you. I'm trying to be as realistic as possible with you now so that you are not disappointed later on</i> • <i>It's unfortunate that you feel that way. I simply don't want to see you spending even more time pursuing this when there may not be any organisation that can help you with this issue.</i> • <i>It would be very easy for me to pass you on to another organisation/person and let you think that they can help you, even though they probably can't. But I don't want to give you false hope.</i> • <i>The reality of the situation is that our office/organisation is unable to help you with your issue/complaint because ... I'm not discouraging you from taking your issue/complaint elsewhere if you think another organisation can help you.</i>
<p><i>They're corrupt.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People often feel that a certain person/organisation has caused a problem for them. We need clear evidence to support what you're saying before we can follow it up. Examples of clear evidence would include</i> • <i>I'd really like to help you, because it's clear that your issue/complaint is important to you. But for me to be able to do this I need you to provide us with solid evidence that supports what you're saying – for example Until we get this type of evidence we won't be able to move ahead with your issue/complaint.</i>

Statement or conduct	Possible responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I accept that your opinion is that ... We have a different view. We can't do what you're asking because</i> • <i>I can see that you think this is the worst thing that could happen. Perhaps we could have a closer look at how it is</i> • <i>Sometimes people have a different view on the same situation/issue. You and I clearly have a different view on</i> • <i>I accept that ... is your view. I've taken a different view. My view is For these reasons I won't be taking any further action on your issue/complaint/or will take the following action</i> • <i>I understand that ... is your view. However, on assessing the information that has been submitted to this organisation, our view is that</i> • <i>Your view is Is there any possibility that there could be another/different view?</i>
<p>The police are listening to my thoughts/recording me/following me.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is it possible there might be an innocent explanation for ...?</i> • <i>You must be worried about being followed/recorded by the police. I can't help you with that, but if you can tell me about ... then I can help you with that.</i> • <i>I can't do anything about an event that hasn't yet happened.</i> • <i>Some of the things you're asking about are hypothetical. I can only respond in detail to an actual event.</i> • <i>If ... happens in the future, you can ring me then.</i> • <i>I know you will understand that we can't act on an allegation without evidence.</i> • <i>I appreciate that you've put a lot of thought into this issue and you have a lot to say about it. However, discussing [irrelevant issue] won't help us to focus on those things that our organisation can deal with which are</i> • <i>I'd really like to help you, but what's lacking in your allegation is the evidence to support what you're saying. Without it I won't be able to follow up your claim.</i> • <i>Ask a series of questions – What would make the situation better? What are you hoping to achieve by contacting us? What did you hope we could do for you? [and then manage expectations].</i>
<p>The legislation says that your office must ... /I'm entitled to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I appreciate that you have a certain opinion about how the legislation/document is to be interpreted, but our office/organisation takes the position that it should be applied like this.</i> • <i>It's clear that we have different views about how this policy/legislation should be interpreted and applied. We've given you clear reasons to explain our position and there is nothing else that we can add to it.</i> • <i>Sometimes people have a different view on the same situation/issue. You and I clearly have a different view on</i> • <i>I accept that ... is your view. I've taken a different view. My view is For these reasons I won't be taking any further action on your matter/will take the following action</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued...</i></p>

Statement or conduct	Possible responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I understand that ... is your view. However, on assessing the information that has been submitted to this office, our view is that</i> • <i>Your view is Is there any possibility that there could be another/ different view?</i>
<p>You/your organisation/they are biased/corrupt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do you have evidence to support this allegation?</i> • <i>[Organisation/person] has made a professional judgement and we have seen documentation explaining the reasons for their decision.</i> • <i>I understand you're annoyed/sceptical/angry about The evidence we've gathered suggests the conduct is not unreasonable/may be unreasonable warranting action on our part.</i> • <i>I need to give [organisation/person] a chance to explain their side of the story. If I'm not satisfied, I'll take it further.</i> • <i>Simply because you disagree with my/our/their decision doesn't necessarily mean that we've been biased towards you. Do you have evidence to support your allegation?</i> • <i>I understand that you think that there has been bias in this situation. I've made my own assessment of these claims and, after looking at your concerns and checking the information that has been provided to me, I don't consider that there has been bias.</i> • <i>You may believe this to be the case, but we are satisfied that</i> • <i>I appreciate that this is your view. The evidence in this case suggests</i> • <i>We rely on good documentary evidence to make our decisions. Any biases, misconduct, shortcomings or other discrepancies usually become apparent during our inquiries and reviews of documents. So far, we haven't found any evidence to support that ... has occurred in this situation.</i> • <i>Often there can be many good reasons why a person/organisation doesn't disclose the type of information that you've requested – other than bias like you suggest. There may be confidentiality or privacy issues that they are required by legislation to observe.</i>
<p>You're taking their word for it or You're colluding with them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No, that's not correct. I have sought documentation reports/files notes/correspondence to assess the decision-making process and reasons for the organisation's/staff member's conclusions.</i> • <i>It seems you think that, because I haven't agreed with your allegation/claim, I'm simply accepting their word. In fact, my job is to hear and consider both sides of a story and then to decide whether there is sufficient evidence that something has gone wrong.</i> • <i>[Where relevant] I'm independent of both parties and I'm not here to take sides.</i> • <i>My role is to consider allegations/complaints impartially and not to advocate for either side.</i> • <i>That's not the case. I have looked at the documentation and I can't see any evidence to contradict our position.</i> • <i>I've asked them to explain the situation and I'm satisfied with their explanation.</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued..</i></p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may think that. I have to make my own assessment of the matter. After looking at your concerns/checking out the relevant policies/ seeking information from the [organisation/person] I consider there is nothing for us to take up. The fact that you disagree with their decision doesn't mean they have been unreasonable. What do you base this claim on? I understand you're disappointed with my decision/view and I must say I'm sorry you see it this way. My role is to be impartial. Based on the evidence available to me, I can't see that the [organisation/person] has acted wrongly.
<p>Why won't you do it for me? You did it for my friend/someone I know.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each case is different. Perhaps we can get back to your situation. I'm not sure how your friend's situation applies here. Let me explain how we came to our conclusions about your situation.
<p>I thought your organisation was interested in fairness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You're right. We are very interested in what is fair and reasonable. We have carefully looked at your matter and we have decided that there does not appear to have been any unfairness in your case.
<p>They're lying to you/ manipulating you/ pulling the wool over your eyes and you can't see through them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may believe this. However, I'm satisfied with their response. Unless you can give me evidence to prove that they've deliberately misled or misinformed me, my decision stands. I'm very aware of the way responses are made to me. I can assure you that I get copies of reports and documents to substantiate what I'm being told. I appreciate that is your view. However, the evidence in this case is So far I have no reason to believe this. I certainly welcome any evidence you can give me that supports your assertion. I have considered your evidence as well as the evidence provided to us by the organisation/their staff and I can't agree with your assertion, though I do acknowledge that this is your view.
<p>They think they can get away with anything</p> <p>or</p> <p>So the law doesn't apply to them/they're above the law?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are required to abide by the law/policy/procedure that is relevant to them. They have had to explain their actions to us. I consider that they have reasonably explained their conduct/decision. Well no, they're not. The issue here is about an issue you have brought to our organisation. Our role is to see whether there may be any evidence that something went wrong. Having looked into/at your matter, I have formed the opinion that there isn't any evidence to demonstrate that. The organisation has to conduct their business and has legitimate authority to make their decisions. We haven't found evidence that they are acting unreasonably in doing this.

Statement or conduct	Possible responses
<p>It's all your/their fault. How could you let this happen?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I can't take responsibility for what has happened in the past. However, I would like to help you with Can you tell me about ...?</i> • <i>I understand that your experience with ... was/has been difficult for you and that you're still quite upset. However, for me to be able to help you with your current complaint, we need to focus on</i> • <i>I'm sure that you can understand that I'm not to blame for So why don't we focus on what I can help you with now</i> • <i>I recognise that you believe ... is responsible for But perhaps there is another explanation</i> • <i>Is it possible that there might be some other reason why ... has occurred?</i> • <i>For me to do, you will need to do ... otherwise, we'll have to close your file.</i> • <i>I'm sorry you've had trouble, but I can help you with [explain].</i>
<p>Resistant to explanation</p>	<p><i>Some people are resistant to explanation and unwilling to consider views other than their own. To determine if a person will be receptive to your explanations/point of view, you may ask the following types of questions as they may give you an indication of whether it will be productive to continue your discussion with them:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Your view is Is there any possibility that there could be another/ different view?</i> • <i>You say ... is the case. Is this necessarily so?</i> • <i>You seem to be saying ... is the case. How is this true?</i> • <i>[To manifestly illogical conspiracy allegations] Is it possible there might be an innocent explanation for ...?</i>