



# **Complaints Procedure**

## Introduction

The Parades Commission for Northern Ireland ('the Commission') is an Arms Length Body established by the Public Processions (NI) Act 1998. The Commission is comprised of a Chair and 5 Commissioners.

The Commission is supported by a small secretariat who are authorised to engage with stakeholders and gather information and evidence on behalf of the Commission. The secretariat carries out the administrative and 'on the ground' functions on behalf of the Commission and are often the first point of contact for any queries or complaints in relation to a parade or parade related protest. However, it is the Commission who considers the evidence, hears any representation and ultimately makes the decisions on whether a determination imposing conditions on the organiser of a parade or parade related protest should be issued.

## Purpose

This purpose of this policy is to advise members of the public on how to raise a complaint about the standards of service provided by, or on behalf of, the Commission.

This policy does not deal with complaints about Commission Decisions in relation to specific parades. If you wish to seek a review of a Commission decision in relation to a parade, please refer to 6.1 of the Parades Commissions Procedural Rules (details on the website or provided by hard copy on request) which states 'the Commission may review its final decision in light of fresh information or representation received'. If you wish to seek a review please contact the Commission providing details of the grounds for review.

The Parades Commission aims to provide a quality, efficient and effective service. However there may be occasions when problems arise and you do not receive the service you expect. We want to know when an issue has arisen so that we can put it right and learn from your experience. We promise to take your complaint seriously. Our aim is to deal with each complaint as quickly and easily as possible, preferably informally, at point of contact. If this is not possible a full investigation will be undertaken, by capable well-trained staff, and a response given within the time frames specified.

The Commission aims to resolve complaints wherever possible, although accepts that this may not be possible in all cases.

## Definition of a Complaint

- A complaint is 'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the organisation's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the organisation'.



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Parades Commission, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Andras House, 60 Great Victoria Street, Belfast BT2 7BB. Tel: 028 90895900, E mail: [info@paradescommissionni.org](mailto:info@paradescommissionni.org).

Examples of complaints may include:

- If we give you the wrong information.
- If you receive a poor standard of customer care.
- the manner or timeliness with which your notification has been processed;
- concerns about a policy or procedure;
- the actions or attitude of a member of the Commission or its Secretariat.

## **Redress**

In the majority of cases redress may include:

- Apology
- Explanation
- Correction
- Undertaking service improvement
- Change in a policy or procedure

## **How to contact us:-**

Telephone: 028 9089 5900.

E mail: [info@paradescommissionni.org](mailto:info@paradescommissionni.org)

In writing: Parades Commission,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Andras House,  
60 Great Victoria Street,  
Belfast  
BT2 7BB

## **What we expect from you**

If you wish to raise a complaint we ask you to follow these guiding principles:

- Provide adequate details of your complaint
- Set out clearly the cause for dissatisfaction
- Provide accurate details and supporting correspondence or other relevant supporting evidence



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- If there has been a delay in submitting your complaint explain the cause of that delay
- Explain what you believe to be a satisfactory outcome
- Treat our staff with good manners, politeness and civility at all times
- Accept that we will act fairly and promptly in dealing with your complaint
- Be reasonable and open minded and listen to reasonable explanations
- Be realistic it may not always be possible to achieve the outcome you look for.

## **How we will handle your complaint**

### **Stage 1 – Front line response**

Our complaints procedure is designed to address your complaint quickly and in the most appropriate way possible. The first point of contact, usually a member of the Secretariat, will aim to resolve your complaint. In most circumstances mistakes or misunderstandings can be resolved effectively and informally.

If your complaint has been submitted in writing, or you have requested a written reply, an acknowledgement receipt of your complaint will be forwarded within five working days and a full response will be sent to you within ten working days, of us receiving your initial complaint, or sooner if possible.

If your complaint has been made by telephone and cannot be resolved immediately, it will be passed to the relevant Case Worker. We may ask you to put your complaint in writing to ensure that we have all the details. You will receive a verbal response within five working days, or sooner if possible and if appropriate we will follow this up in writing within ten working days, after receiving your initial complaint, or sooner if possible.

If it is not possible to resolve your complaint straight away or the matter is a complex one, you will be referred to the relevant Case Worker, Deputy Secretary or the Secretary and your complaint will be escalated to Stage 2 of this procedure. Complaints may also be brought to the attention of the Commission for either information or consideration.

### **Stage 2 - Investigation**

An investigation will be instigated by the relevant Case Worker, Deputy Secretary or Secretary and brought to the attention of the Commission when:

- Your complaint is more complex or serious. If this is the case, we will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and provide a full response as soon after the Commission meeting as possible; or
- You are not satisfied with the frontline response and it has been escalated to Stage 2.



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If necessary we will contact you to clarify the main points of your complaint and the outcome you are seeking.

Whether your complaint was submitted by telephone or in writing we will still aim to respond within 10 days. In our response our aim will be to inform you:

- What action is being taken
- Who is dealing with your complaint
- If your complaint requires a response from the Commission and the date of the next Commission meeting
- When you can expect a full reply, if the Commission meeting exceeds the 10 days.

If you are still dissatisfied with the response received, your complaint can be forwarded to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. Their contact details are:

Website: <https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/making-complaint>

Phone: 0345 015 4033



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