



Northern Ireland

Public Services

Ombudsman



Ombudsman About our service



An Ombudsman is someone independent who looks into your complaint. This service is free to everyone.

About the Ombudsman service



At the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsmen we look at complaints about public service providers.

Public service providers are government services for everyone.



We hope to help put things right. We make public services better by looking into complaints and writing reports.



We do not take sides. We make sure that the rights of people who complain are respected.



We get lots of different types of complaints. When we look at complaints we think about

- What the complaint is
- How the person has been affected
- How the public service was delivered.



We give more time to complaints where we can make the biggest difference.



If you ask us to look at your complaint you must understand

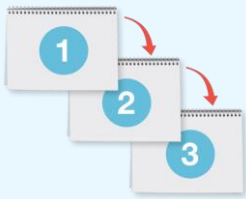
- how we work
- and know that our job is to make a final decision. This means it is the last decision.

How we look at your complaint



We cannot look into every complaint we get.

If we don't look into your complaint we will let you know why.



There are 3 stages to looking into a complaint.

1. First Assessment
2. Assessment
3. Investigation

Assessment means looking at your complaint to see if we will investigate it.

An investigation is when we look into your complaint.

1. First Assessment



First we check the law to see if we are allowed to look into your complaint.



We look at the law to help us make this decision and explain why we have made it.

2. Assessment



We will look at

- your complaint
- and the information you have given us to show your complaint is real.



We will ask the service you have complained about for

- more information
- and ideas to sort the problem out.



We will decide if your complaint

- is right to take forward
- would bring about a good result
- and could help others.



This will help us decide if we will look into your complaint.



We only look into complaints with information to support them.

We do not look at complaints that make little or no difference to people.



We may share copies of your complaint and our decision. These copies will not have any names in them or anything that could identify you.



We share complaints to help people understand what we do and why.

3. Investigation

If we decide to look into your complaint we will put together an Investigation Team.



Their job is to find out

- the truth
- if we can prove your complaint
- if the service has broken the rules.



We will get more information by writing letters to everyone involved or by having interviews.



When we finish looking at your complaint we will let you know what we found out. We will send you a report.



We may share our report. We will not have any names in it or anything that could identify you.



We will ask everyone involved in the complaint about whether we should share the report. This will help us make our decision.

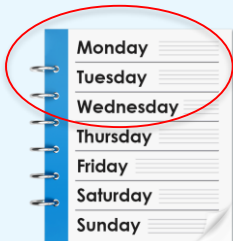
Our Service Standards



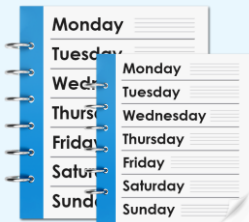
Our **Service standards** tell you what we will do and how we will do it.



When we look at your complaint we will try to do these things.



We will tell you that we have got your complaint within **3 working days**.



We will tell you if the first assessment of your case has been done within **2 weeks**.



We will interview you by phone or face to face if we think it is helpful.



We will tell you if we will look into your complaint within **10 weeks**.



We will let you know if things take longer than we said and why. We will give you a new date for us to contact you by.



We will give you information on what to do if you are unhappy with our decision.



If we investigate your complaint we will try to do these things.



We will let you know what is happening with your case by phone, email or letter every **8 weeks**.



We will make a draft report that says what we have found out and what we think about it within **50 weeks**. 50 weeks is nearly a year.



We will give you a copy of the draft report so you can tell us what you think.



We will always try to treat you politely and with respect.

What you need to do



Fill in our complaint form.
You can ask for help with this.



When you make your complaint tell us what has still not been sorted out. Tell us why you don't accept what the service has said about your complaint.



Give us good information to support your complaint.



Tell us what you want to happen to make things better.



Tell us if you want to take your complaint to court or have already started to take it to court.



Listen to what you are told about why something has happened.



Be polite to our staff and treat them with respect.

How your information is looked after and used



We collect your personal information when we look into your complaint. We protect all of the information we have.



Our investigations are private.



For more information

- You can read our Privacy Notice and Information Promise. This is on our website.
- You can contact our Office.



Complaints about our service



If you feel that we have not done our job well please contact us.

We will give you information about our 'Service standards complaints procedure'.



This leaflet has useful information in it.

Please keep it until your complaint with us is finished.

Get in touch with us

**The Northern Ireland
Public Services
Ombudsman's Office**
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
BELFAST
BT1 6HN



Telephone
028 9023 3821



Freephone
0800 34 34 24



Website
www.nipso.org.uk

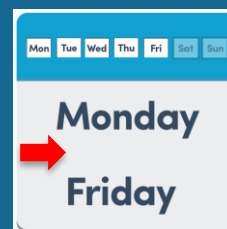


Email
nipso@nipso.org.uk



If you write to us and
put '**Freepost NIPSO**'
on the envelope you
don't need a stamp.

How to find us



You can visit us from 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

