



Northern Ireland
Public Services
Ombudsman

Your Complaint ~ Our Decision

We provide a free, independent, and impartial service for handling complaints about public services in Northern Ireland.

Our role is to make a decision on each case by taking into account all the available facts and evidence. We do this by carefully considering the views and opinions of both the person making the complaint and whoever is being complained about.

Our aim is to help public services improve through our investigations and reports. We also help to put things right if you have experienced injustice because a public service in Northern Ireland has delivered a service badly or has failed to provide a service. We are not an advocacy agency (an agency that acts in favour of a particular cause, idea or policy), but we do make sure that the rights of people who complain are respected.

The types of complaints we receive are many and varied. We focus our resources where we judge these to be most effective. In doing so we consider the complaint being raised and its impact on the individual and the delivery of the public service complained of.

In asking us to consider your complaint, you accept the way in which we work and our authority to come to a final decision in the matter being complained of. We will work with you, and those you have complained about, to make sure the facts of your complaint are accurate. However, it is for us to interpret the facts and the available evidence and come to a judgement about your complaint.

Asking for a review

You can ask for a review of our decision:

- not to accept your complaint or issue of complaint for investigation.
- in relation to your complaint or an issue of complaint which we have investigated and reported on.

Please note you cannot use this procedure if we have decided not to accept your complaint for investigation on the basis that we believe we do not have the legal authority to consider your complaint.

How do you seek a review of a decision not to accept your complaint for investigation?

If you are seeking a review of our decision not to accept your complaint or an issue of complaint for investigation, you should write to the Director of Investigations- ASSIST within 20 working days of the date of the decision on your case. If the Director of Investigations- ASSIST was directly involved in the decision, your case will be passed to another Director of Investigations to be dealt with.

We aim to give you a response to your request for a review within 20 working days of receiving your request. The response will let you know whether the original decision has been upheld or whether it has been decided to accept your complaint for investigation.

How do you seek a review of a decision in relation to a complaint we have investigated?

If you are seeking a review of our decision about your complaint or an issue of complaint which we have investigated and reported on you, should write to the Deputy Ombudsman within 20 working days of the date of the decision on your case. The Deputy Ombudsman will usually ask a Director of Investigations not previously directly involved in your case to deal with your request.

The grounds on which you can ask us to review our decision on your case are limited. We will not accept a request for a review on the basis that you simply disagree with the outcome of your case.

Asking for a review

You can only ask for a review on the following grounds:

- You feel the decision was based on important evidence which contains facts that were not accurate, and you can show this using readily available information.
- You feel you have new and relevant information that was not previously available and which affects the decision. (In this case you should provide an explanation of where and when you obtained this information and why it was not made available to the Ombudsman prior to the conclusion of the investigation).

In setting out how you feel your case meets either or both of the grounds detailed above, you should also refer to the specific aspects of the decision you disagree with.

We aim to give you a response to your request for a review within 20 working days of receiving your request. The response will let you know whether your request is eligible for review. If it is, we will tell you whether the original decision has been upheld or whether it has been decided to reopen the investigation of your complaint. Where a case requires to be reopened, the Director of Investigations dealing with your request will inform you of the target timescale for completion of the investigation.

If you are still unhappy we will only consider your case if we decide it is necessary to do so, based on the facts you provide. If you want to challenge our decision again, you will only be able to do this through judicial review proceedings. Judicial review is a form of court proceeding where a judge reviews whether a decision or action made by a public body or holder of public office is lawful. You may wish to take legal advice before deciding whether this is appropriate in your case.

Contact Details

You can contact us in the following ways:

Freepost: Freepost NIPSO

or
The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
BELFAST
BT1 6HN

Telephone: 028 9023 3821 or **Freephone:** 0800 34 34 24

Text Phone: 028 9089 7789

Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

or
By calling, between 9.00am & 5.00pm, Monday to Friday,
at the above address.