



Northern Ireland

Local Government
 Commissioner for Standards

Privacy Notice

How we use your personal information

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 gives the Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards the authority to investigate, and to adjudicate on, complaints that councillors have, or may have, failed to comply with the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors.

This privacy notice tells you what to expect when the Commissioner's Office collects personal data¹ about you in relation to a complaint about a councillor's conduct. It applies to information we collect about:

- visitors to our website²
- individuals who telephone or email us
- individuals who complain to us about a councillor's conduct
- councillors whose conduct is the subject of a complaint made to us
- individuals who may have witnessed conduct that is the subject of a complaint made to us
- individuals who complain to us about the service we have provided

Visitors to our website

When you visit our website (www.nipso.org.uk) a log is produced of the different areas of the site that you have accessed through your computer. We collect this information from all visitors to make improvements to our website. These log files, which are also known as 'cookies', do not contain any personal information about you. Some cookies are required to ensure that the website functions correctly - we may therefore have set these cookies already. Other cookies gather anonymous data about how you are using the website - these cookies will only be set if you give your consent.

1 'Personal data' is information that relates to an individual who can be identified. This not only includes information such as your name and address but also any information about you that is mentioned in the complaint, as well as any expression of opinion about you.

2 This privacy notice applies only to the Commissioner's own website (www.nipso.org.uk); it does not apply to links within that website to other websites. You should always read the privacy statements on the other websites you visit

Individuals who telephone or email us

When you telephone or email us to enquire about the service we provide in relation to complaints about the conduct of a councillor, we will request your personal information. If you agree to provide this information, we will record it on a computer and we may keep a written record of your enquiry on our file. If you decline to provide your personal information, we will simply record that the enquiry was received but will retain no detail of it.

Individuals who have complained to us about a councillor's conduct

When you make a complaint about a councillor's conduct, we need to collect your personal information. We will record this information on a computer and in our file about the complaint.

We will use the information we have collected to help us decide what action we should take on the complaint. In all cases, we will tell the councillor your name and some details of what you have complained about. If we decide to investigate the complaint, we will provide full details of your complaint to the councillor, and in doing so, we may need to share more of the personal information you have given to us. We may also need to share your personal information with individuals who may have witnessed the conduct you have complained about or who may have information relating to the conduct.

When we complete an investigation of your complaint, we will, in all cases, need to inform the chief executive of the relevant council of our finding and, in doing so, we will need to share your personal information. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, we may also publish a report. Any such report may contain your personal information, including your name and details of your complaint.

Councillors whose conduct is the subject of a complaint made to us

When we receive a complaint about your conduct, we need to collect your personal information. We will record this information on a computer and in our file about the complaint.

We will use the information we have collected to help us decide what action we should take on the complaint. In all cases, you will be informed that we have received a complaint about your conduct³ and that we have therefore already collected some personal information about you. If we decide to investigate the complaint, we may need to share this information, and any further personal information about you that we obtain, with the person who has complained about your conduct and with any individuals who may have witnessed that conduct or who may have information relating to it.

When we complete an investigation of a complaint about your conduct, we will, in all cases, need to inform the chief executive of your council of our finding and, in doing so, we will need to share your personal information. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, we may also publish a report. Any such report will contain your personal information, including your name and details of the complaint.

³ We aim to inform a councillor that we have received a complaint about their conduct within three working days of the date we receive it.

Individuals who may have witnessed conduct that is the subject of a complaint

When you are a witness to conduct that is the subject of a complaint made to us, we need to collect your personal information. We will record this information on a computer and in our file about the complaint.

If we decide to investigate the complaint, we may need to share this information, and any further personal information about you that we obtain, with the person who has complained and with the councillor whose conduct is the subject of the complaint.

When we complete an investigation of a complaint about a councillor's conduct, we will, in all cases, need to inform the chief executive of the relevant council of our finding and, in doing so, we may need to share your personal information. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, we may also publish a report. Any such report may contain your personal information, including your name and details of your involvement in the complaint.

Individuals who have complained to us about the service we have provided

When you complain about the service we have provided in relation to a complaint about the conduct of a councillor, we will need to record your personal information. We will record this information on a computer and in our file about the complaint. We will use the information you have provided for the purposes of responding to your complaint.

Other times when we may share your information

Information Commissioner

Where it appears to us that the conduct complained of may relate to the Information Acts⁴ and should be brought to the attention of the Information Commissioner, we have the authority to share with that Office information we have obtained. We will advise you if this situation arises in relation to personal information we have collected about you.

Health and Safety Risk

Where it appears to us that a person is likely to pose a threat to the health and safety of another person, we have the authority to share information we have obtained. For instance, we may share information with a relevant regulatory organisation. We will advise you if this situation arises in relation to personal information we have collected about you.

Public Auditors

The Commissioner can also share information with the Local Government Auditor and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General if, at any stage in the course of considering a complaint or conducting an investigation, the Commissioner forms the opinion that the matter could be the subject of an audit investigation. We will inform you if this information sharing occurs in relation to a complaint about a councillor's conduct.

4 The Data Protection Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and The Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Security of your information

All of our investigations are conducted in private, as required by the legislation governing the work of the Commissioner's Office. This legislation prevents us from disclosing any information we have obtained, except in very limited circumstances, such as for the purpose of undertaking an investigation (or an adjudication) or producing a report on an investigation (or an adjudication). We have put in place strict security measures to protect the personal information we hold.

Retention and disposal of your information

The Commissioner retains information collected by her Office in line with her Retention and Disposal Schedule which is available in the Publications section of our website.

Further Information

This privacy notice provides a brief overview of how we collect and use personal information. If you wish to request further information, including your right to access the information we hold, you may contact the Commissioner's Legal Officer in the following ways:

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

Text phone: 028 9089 7789

Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Post: Freepost NILGCS

or

Northern Ireland Local Government
Commissioner for Standards
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

In Person: by calling, between the hours of 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday, at the Commissioner's Office at Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6HN.