



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

DfE Customer Service Complaints Procedure



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Introduction

The Department for the Economy (the Department) is committed to providing the highest standard of service to all its customers. However, if you are unhappy about the quality of the service you have received please tell us and we will do our best to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

The Department has separate complaint procedures in place for any dealings you may have with the [Insolvency Service](#) and for the handling of access to information requests under the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Data Protection Act 1998. These procedures can be found on the DfE website.

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What is a Complaint?

The Customer Service Complaints procedure does not cover challenging substantive decisions made by the Department with which you disagree or disagreements over the implementation of Departmental policy and legislation.

This complaints procedure is designed to address any specific concerns our customers have about the quality of customer service provided by our staff. For example this might include:

- Avoidable delays, for example in receiving information or responses
- Difficulty in contacting the correct office
- Incorrect information or guidance issued by the Department
- Attitude and conduct of our staff
- Failure to follow the appropriate administrative processes
- Disagreement with a decision where the customer cannot use another procedure (for example an appeal) to resolve the matter

A complaint is not:

- A routine first time request for a service
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal
- Disagreement with a decision where a statutory right of appeal or other procedure for review exists
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- Matters of policy or legislation

If your complaint falls into the above categories we will redirect it to the appropriate business area to respond in line with its procedures.

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How do I complain?

You can make a complaint as follows:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is easier to resolve issues if you notify them quickly and directly to the service concerned. We therefore ask you in the first instance to contact the member of staff with whom you were dealing or their manager. They will aim to resolve your issue within 5 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If however you have already pursued this route and you remain dissatisfied you can raise a formal complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Your complaint will be investigated by a senior member of staff within the appropriate business area. You can make a formal complaint:

By email: DfEmail@economy-ni.gov.uk

In writing: Complaints (Information Management Unit)
Department for the Economy
Netherleigh
Massey Avenue
Belfast
BT4 2JP

By phone: 028 9052 9256

Text Relay: 18001 028 9052 9900

In person: Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm at the above address (excluding bank holidays).

If you require assistance putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format such as large font, or Braille, please tell us in person using any of the contact details above.

We will need you to provide us with:

- Your full name and address and/or email address for correspondence;
- As much as you can about the complaint;
- How you want us to resolve the matter;

We will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days;
- Where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand what outcome you are looking for;
- Carry out a thorough investigation;
- Give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 15 working days;
- Tell you if our investigation will take longer than 15 working days;
- Apologise if we have made a mistake or if a problem has been caused by us; and
- Let you know of any planned actions or changes in systems as a result of your complaint.

Stage 3 – Departmental Complaints Officer

If you remain dissatisfied with the Department's response you can write to the Departmental Complaints Officer giving full details of your customer service complaint and why you remain dissatisfied. The Departmental Complaints Officer will provide an independent review of how your complaint was handled. Contact details and timescales are as set out above at **Stage 2 – Formal Complaint**.

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Making a complaint about Top Management

If you are a member of the public or an external stakeholder and your complaint is about a staff member in Top Management of the Department there is a different procedure for making a complaint.

Top Management in the NI Civil Service and its agencies means the Head of the Civil Service, Permanent Secretaries, and anyone at Grade 3/Deputy Secretary position or equivalent.

Find out more about how to make a [complaint about Top Management](#).

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NI Public Services Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied with our final decision or the way we dealt with your complaint you can ask the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO) to look at your case. You should note that the Ombudsman will generally expect you to have used all of the steps of the Department's internal complaints procedure before accepting your complaint. You will need to contact the NIPSO within six months of the date of the department's final response to you about your complaint. Contact details are set out below.

Website: nipso.org.uk/nipso/

By Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Complete the NIPSO on-line complaints form available at:

nipso.org.uk/nipso/making-a-complaint/online-complaints-form

In writing: Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Freepost: Freepost NIPSO

By Phone: Freephone 0800 34 34 24

Switchboard 028 9023 3821