

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Please contact us if you would like this information in an alternative format such as large print, audio, Braille, disk, in an alternative language or if an interpreter is required.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

VISION - FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY FOR ALL

The Commission's vision is simple - we want to see a society in Northern Ireland where there is **fairness and equality for all.**

MISSION

To improve people's lives through the responsible and effective use of our powers.

OUR VALUES

We adhere to the following values:

- We challenge inequality actively, with impartiality, independence and integrity.
- We act on a strong evidence base, ensuring an expert, relevant and responsive service to all.
- We are open, honest and accountable in our work with others
- We are both leaders and partners in driving positive change

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland works hard to provide the best possible service, but things can sometimes go wrong. If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the service provided by us, or by any practice we adopt, we want to hear from you straight away. We welcome this as an important aid to improving what we do.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you are not satisfied with a decision we have made or work we have done.

This procedure covers complaints about:

- The standard of service provided by the Equality Commission.
- The behaviour of the Equality Commission or staff.
- Any action or lack of action by Equality Commission staff affecting an individual or group.

This procedure does NOT cover:

- Dissatisfaction with the Equality Commission's policies or decisions about individual cases or funding.
- Matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure.
- Anonymous complaints.

Doing our Best

OUR STANDARDS FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS:

- We will treat all complaints seriously, whether they are made by telephone, letter, fax or email.
- You will be treated with courtesy and impartiality.
- We will treat your complaint in confidence within the organisation.
- We will deal with your complaint promptly. We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 2 working days and we will send you a full reply within 15 working days. If we cannot send a full reply within one month we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full.
- We will arrange a meeting to discuss your complaint with you if you feel this would be helpful.
- We will publish information in our Annual Report on the numbers and categories of complaints we receive.

If the Equality Commission has been in the wrong, you will receive an apology. This leaflet tells you what to do if you want to make a complaint or raise a concern.

TIME LIMITS FOR RAISING COMPLAINTS

To help us resolve your complaint or concern please tell us what it is as soon as possible. The normal time limits we apply for raising complaints are:

- Within 6 months of the incident giving rise to the problem: or
- Within 6 months of becoming aware that you have a cause for complaint, providing it is not more than 12 months after the incident giving rise to the problem.

We will be flexible and extend these limits if there are good reasons why you did not contact us earlier.

HELP US DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT

You may know the name of the person in the Equality Commission you wish to contact. If not:

- Be as clear as possible about the nature of your complaint or concern so that you may be put in touch with the best person to respond to you.
- Tell us why you are unhappy and what you think we should be doing.
- Try to be specific, giving details of dates, names and subjects, where this is appropriate.

How to complain

The Equality Commission has a 3 stage complaints procedure. Please let us have any documentation, by post or email, as soon as possible. We would hope too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings with Equality Commission at all times.

STAGE 1

In the first instance, you should try and resolve your complaint with the relevant officer or the manager of the section concerned. You can contact them by telephone, in writing or by using the complaints form. If you need assistance in obtaining the name of the manager, please speak to the Complaints Co-ordinator. The Manager will investigate the complaint and will try to resolve the problem as quickly as possible. The Manager will keep you informed of how long the investigation is likely to take.

STAGE 2

If you are unhappy with the outcome of Stage 1, you can raise your complaint with the Complaints Co-ordinator who will notify the relevant Head of Division. You can do this either by telephone, in writing or by using the complaints form. The Head of Division will then arrange a review of your complaint.



STAGE 3

If you are still unhappy with the situation, you can ask for your complaint to be referred to the Chief Executive of the Equality Commission. You can do this by writing to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will arrange for a further review of your complaint to be carried out.

CONTACTING OUR COMPLAINTS CO-ORDINATOR

If you have any comments or queries please do not hesitate to contact our Complaints Co-ordinator.

Frank McWilliams
Complaints Co-ordinator
Equality Commission for NI
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP

Tel: 02890 500 600
Textphone 02890 500 589
Email: fmcwilliams@equalityni.org

THE OMBUDSMAN

You may choose to ask the Northern Ireland Ombudsman to investigate your complaint. The Ombudsman will normally only deal with your complaint after you have gone through our complaints system. We will co-operate fully with the Ombudsman throughout his investigation. Contact:

The NI Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Tel: 02890 233 821
www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk

Alternative formats

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COMPLAINTS FORM

Name:

Address:

Telephone/Textphone:

Email Address:

Name of the officer complained about, if applicable:

Details of the complaint. Please give as much detail as you can:

What would you like us to do to make things right?

List of enclosures (do not send originals):

Signed:

Date:

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Please send the completed form to:

Frank McWilliams,
Complaints Co-ordinator,
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland,
Equality House,
7-9 Shaftesbury Square,
Belfast,
BT2 7DP.

Tel: 028 90 500 600

Fax: (028) 90 331 544

Textphone: 028 90 500 589

Website: www.equalityni.org

Email: fmcwilliams@equalityni.org

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