

Signposting to the Ombudsman – a guide for public authorities

All listed authorities within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction have a statutory obligation to signpost complainants to the Ombudsman's office where the listed authority's complaints handling procedure is exhausted.

Section 25 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 states:

- 25.—**(1) This section applies where a listed authority's complaints handling procedure is exhausted.
- (2) The authority **must**, within 2 weeks of the day on which the complaint handling procedure is exhausted give the person aggrieved a written notice stating –
- (a) that the complaints handling procedure is exhausted, and
 - (b) that the person aggrieved may, if dissatisfied, refer the complaint to the Ombudsman.
- (3) A notice under subsection (2) **must** –
- (a) inform the person aggrieved of the time limit for referring the complaint to the Ombudsman; and
 - (b) provide details of how to contact the Ombudsman.

Below is an example of how this statement can be worded:

You have now completed our internal complaints procedure and this is our final response. If you remain dissatisfied you may refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about public service providers in Northern Ireland.

NIPSO's contact details are:

Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6HN or Freepost NIPSO. The Freephone number is 0800 342424 or you can email to nipso@nipso.org.uk.

Please note you must normally make your complaint to the Ombudsman within 6 months of the date of this letter.