



How to make a Complaint



Unhappy with a **public service**?
We are here to help.

A **public service** helps people in the community.
They give important services like healthcare,
housing and education.

What we do



We look into complaints about **public service providers** in Northern Ireland.



Public service providers are government services for everyone.

This includes:



- Health and Social Care



- Housing



- Education



- Local Councils and Stormont



We are not part of the government and our service is free.



You can complain to us if you think a public service has treated you unfairly and not fixed your complaint.



After we look into your complaint we might decide the public service did nothing wrong.



If we find out they treated you unfairly or gave you a bad service we will ask them to fix the problem.

What you can complain about



We look into complaints about poor service. This is called **maladministration**.



Maladministration includes the following.

- Not being honest.



- Not being careful.



- Taking too long to do something.



- Not following the right rules.



- Being unfair or showing favouritism.



- Giving bad or confusing advice.



- Being rude or not saying sorry for mistakes.

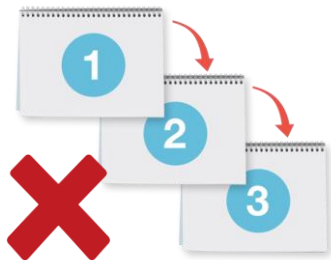


- Handling complaints badly.



We also look at complaints if you are unhappy about a decision made by health and social care workers.

What you cannot complain about



We may not look at your complaint if

- You did not use the service's complaints process first.



- You waited more than 6 months after getting your answer from the service's complaints process.



- You are taking your case to a **tribunal**

A tribunal is like a court, it will try to find something that both you and the service are happy with.



- You have already started legal action.



- Your complaint is about government rules.

How we look at your complaint



Our investigations are private.

We only share information with people who need to know.

Stage 1 Assessment

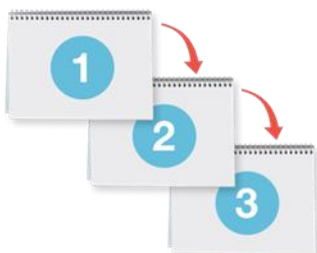


We check

- ✓ if we are allowed to investigate the service you complained about
- ✓ if the service has finished dealing with your complaint.



If we cannot look into your complaint we will write to you and explain what to do next.



If we can investigate we will move your complaint to the next stage.

Stage 2 Investigation



We will look at the evidence you sent us and how the issue made things difficult for you.



We will usually ask the service you complained about for more information.



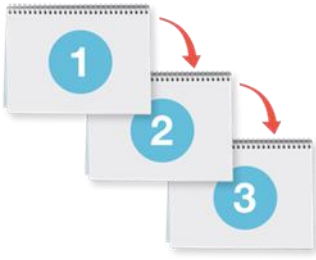
We try to sort complaints quickly. We may ask the service if it can fix the problem itself.



From the evidence we may find the service acted fairly.



If the service did something wrong we will ask it to fix the problem.



Most complaints are sorted out at this stage.

Some complaints may need more investigation before we decide.

Stage 3 Further Investigation



We may ask the service for more information or talk to people who saw what happened.



If your complaint is about a professional decision we may ask an independent expert for advice.



We will check the rules and procedures the service had at the time to see what should have happened.



Our job is to be fair and not take sides.

We will explain our decision in a report sent to you and the service.



If the service made a mistake we may ask it to say sorry or change how it works.



If you lost money because of a mistake then we can ask the service to give your money back.



If the service does not follow our recommendations we can report it to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Sharing our reports



We share our reports on our website and Annual Report to help people understand our work.

These reports do not name people but do include the name of the service

How to make a complaint



STEP 1

Tell the service about your complaint using their complaints process.



STEP 2

If you are still unhappy after they finish you can bring your complaint to us.



The fastest way to tell us about your complaint is by using our online form.



You can also contact us by phone, email, or in writing.



If you want to speak to someone in person, call us to make an appointment.

Contact us



Telephone 028 9023 3821



Freephone 0800 34 34 24



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