



Commissioner for **Older People**
for Northern Ireland

Policy on Complaints Handling

Reviewed by:	Catherine Hewitt
Date Reviewed:	13.10.17
Approved by the Chief Executive:	<i>Catherine Hewitt</i>
Date:	20.11.17
Approved by the Accounting Officer:	<i>E. Lynch</i>
Date	10/11/17
Periodic Review Date:	10/11/20
Version	3



Commissioner for **Older People**
for Northern Ireland

Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure

COPNI is committed to providing high quality services to all our users and especially to older people, their carers and their families. We recognise that sometimes we can get things wrong and make mistakes. To deal with this we have the following complaints procedure.

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 concerns 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 time limits if there are good reasons why.

We will deal with your complaint

We will take all complaints about our service or procedures seriously. By contacting us with your concerns we are able to make improvements.

How to complain

Step 1: Contacting Us

The first step is to talk to a member of COPNI staff. This can be done quite informally, either directly or by telephone.

Usually the best staff member to talk to will be the person who dealt with the matter you are concerned about, as they will be in the best position to help you quickly and put things right. If they are not available or if you would prefer to deal with someone else, then ask for their line manager.

We will try and resolve the problem as quickly as possible. It may be the case that we cannot resolve the problem on the spot, for example, because we need to get more information or speak to the staff member who previously dealt with the matter. In this case we will take a record of your concern and agree the best way and time to come back to you. This will normally be within five working days or as otherwise agreed with you.

Step 2: Taking your complaint further

If having followed Step 1 you remain unhappy, the next step is to put your complaint in writing to the Chief Executive of COPNI, setting out the details, explaining what you

think went wrong and what you feel would put things right. Once the Chief Executive receives a written complaint, he/she will arrange for it to be fully investigated.

Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within five working days of receiving it and the letter will say when you can expect a full response. This should normally be within three weeks unless the matter is very complicated (for example, where other organisations need to be contacted). Where this is the case, we will let you know what action is being taken and tell you when we expect to provide you with a full response.

Step 3: The next stage

If you are not satisfied with the Chief Executive's investigation you can take your complaint to the Commissioner. This is the most senior person in COPNI.

All information relating to your complaint and to the Chief Executive's investigation will be passed to the Commissioner. The Commissioner will let you know within seven working days that he has received your complaint and tell you when to expect a full response from him.

Taking your complaint outside the organisation

If you are not satisfied with the Commissioner's response, you can seek advice from outside the organisation. You can contact the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. Its contact details are as follows:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Telephone: (028) 9023 3821 or 0800 34 34 24
Textphone: (028) 9089 7789
Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Our address and contact details are as follows:

COPNI
Equality House
7-9 Shaftsbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP

Telephone: (028) 9089 0892
Textphone: (028) 9050 0589
Email: info@copni.org

