

SPORT NORTHERN IRELAND

Complaint Procedures

DOC. REF:	Complaints Procedures
LINKED DOC:	Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Procedures Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures Wrongdoing Procedures
OWNER:	A Doherty
DATE:	November 2021
Date of Next Review	November 2023
APPROVED	February 2022

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Date	Reason for Update
1.1	17/08/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarification on how complaints should be made – Section 3.3• Inclusion of section on what should be included in a complaint – Section 3.4• Appendix I has been removed – Section 3.4 has replaced this

Complaints Procedure

Complaints about Sport Northern Ireland

What to do if you want to complain about the work of Sport Northern Ireland

- 1.1 Sport Northern Ireland understands the importance of excellence in the delivery of its services. We are committed to creating and developing a positive approach to the services we deliver in which we strive to consistently exceed expectations of our stakeholders. We aim to create an environment within which excellence is seen as essential to the management and delivery of services. We are committed to continual improvement. This includes handling complaints carefully in an open and courteous way by investigating the matters raised thoroughly and replying as quickly as possible.
- 1.2 Sport Northern Ireland has an internal two-stage complaints process. We will do all we can to resolve your complaint at the first stage, but if you are not satisfied with our response or you are unhappy with the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed. How to complain and details of our procedure are set out below along with how you can expect us to handle your complaint.
- 1.3 We will treat an individual or organisation making a complaint impartially, in confidence and with respect and courtesy. No individual or organisation will be adversely treated because they have found cause to complain about our service.

Informal Complaints

- 2.1 If you are unhappy with our treatment of you then please get in touch, as soon as possible, with the Sport Northern Ireland staff member who has responsibility for the work. They are best placed to sort out most problems. If you are still not satisfied, or feel unable to raise the matter with that person, then please raise a formal written complaint, following the procedures outlined below.

Formal Complaints

What do we consider to be a complaint?

- 3.1 Sport Northern Ireland regards a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction made to us about a perceived failure to carry any aspect of

our service. We want to know so that we can try to put things right in the most appropriate manner, and make longer-term improvements.

Who can complain?

- 3.2 Anyone who comes into contact with Sport Northern Ireland and is unhappy or dissatisfied can complain. For example, you could be a member of the public or an employee of a body associated with Sport Northern Ireland.

Who do I complain to?

- 3.3 There are two ways by which you can complain.

You can make a complaint in writing which should be sent to the Chief Operating Officer (using the address below) who will raise the issue directly with the Manager responsible for that service.

Chief Operating Officer
Sport NI
House of Sport
2a Upper Malone Road
Belfast
BT9 5LA

Or if you prefer you can email your complaint to complaints@sportni.net

What should I include in my complaint?

- 3.4 The following is a guide to the detail that should be included in your complaint:

1. You should include information about yourself including name, address, telephone number, email address etc.
2. You should include information about the issue to be raised e.g.
 - Which Sport Northern Ireland service does this complaint relate to? *Include the name of the relevant staff member(s) you were dealing with – if appropriate*
 - What issue would you like to report? *Outline the background to the issue, when it occurred and give a brief description of what you think Sport Northern Ireland failed to do, or did wrongly*
 - How has it affected you? *Describe how this has affected you or your interests*
 - What would you regard as a reasonable remedy to the matter?
 - If there has been a delay in telling/informing us about the issue, please state why.

3. Have you raised this issue previously with Sport Northern Ireland? (If yes, and if possible, please provide a copy of the response you received or alternatively provide some details).

Is there a time limit for complaining?

- 3.5 We will do all we can to look into your complaint. In order to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly, we will not usually accept complaints that are made more than 12 months after the event being complained about or being brought to your attention.

Are there any types of complaint that this procedure cannot consider under this process?

- 3.6 If you wish to comment on the performance or behaviour of an organisation associated or funded by Sport NI, you should raise it with that organisation, using its own complaints procedure.
- 3.7 Complaints that Sport Northern Ireland has failed to meet its obligations to disclose information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and to deal with requests in accordance with statutory procedure are subject to a distinct formal process. If your complaint relates to **Freedom of Information**, please write to:

Sport NI Information Manager
Sport NI
House of Sport
2a Upper Malone Road
Belfast
BT9 5LA

- 3.8 If a complaint is vexatious and/or repetitious, we may bring the communication to a close.
- We define vexatious as: a complaint instituted without sufficient grounds and serving only to cause annoyance to the receiver of the complaint; an oppressive complaint (with unjust severity); or otherwise an abuse of the procedures for dealing with complaints or conduct matters.
 - We define repetitious as: a complaint that is substantially the same as a previous complaint (whether made by or on behalf of the same or a different complainant); contains no fresh allegations which significantly affect the account of the previous complaint; or no fresh evidence, being evidence which was not reasonably available at the time the previous complaint was made, is tendered in support of it.

What happens to my complaint? (Stage One)

- 3.9 Once you have made a complaint to Sport Northern Ireland in writing to the Chief Operating Officer, we will send you an acknowledgement within **three**

working days of receipt. That acknowledgement will provide an indication as to who will be responsible for responding to you and when you can expect to receive a reply. If we cannot investigate your complaint, we will write to you explaining why. If possible, we will suggest another organisation that may be able to help you if we cannot.

- 3.10 We expect to respond to the majority of complaints within **15** working days of the complaint arriving with us. The time taken to respond will vary depending on the complexity of the complaint. However if we are unable to respond within this deadline because, for example, the matters you raise require more detailed investigation, we will let you know.
- 3.11 We will give serious consideration to the issues you raise. Where we identify mistakes in our approach we will acknowledge those and this may include providing an apology, setting out details of other steps we think are necessary in the circumstances, and explaining what we will do to prevent the problem occurring again.

What happens if I disagree with the outcome, or how my complaint was handled? (Stage Two)

- 3.12 We will make every effort to satisfactorily resolve your complaint in the first instance. However, if you are not satisfied by our response or by the way that your complaint was handled, you should contact the Chief Executive's Office. You will need to outline why you are dissatisfied with the initial response.
- 3.13 We will acknowledge the complaint within **three** working days of receipt and the Chief Executive will arrange for the case to be reconsidered by a member of staff who was not previously involved in handling your complaint. This stage will involve a full independent review of the handling of your complaint and all associated papers. The outcome of this review will be communicated to you in writing within **15** working days of the receipt of the complaint, however if for any reason there is a problem with collating the response, we will inform you of the reason for a delayed response and will inform you of the expected date of reply.

What can I do if I am still dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage Two?

- 4.1 If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage Two, you may contact the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's Office (NIPSO) as Sport Northern Ireland falls under Schedule 3 to the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.
- 4.2 The NIPSO will expect you to exhaust our internal complaints process before they will accept your complaint. In addition your contact with the Ombudsman's Office must be done within six months from the completion of

our process, although they may investigate a complaint outside this time limit if there are special circumstances that would make it proper to do so.

You can contact the Ombudsman in any of the following ways:

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

Telephone: 02890 233821

Text Phone: 02890 897789

Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

Freepost: Freepost NIPSO

Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Further details are available from the NI Public Services Ombudsman's website:

<https://nipso.org.uk>

Equality and Diversity

4.3 We want our services to be accessible to all our stakeholders, regardless of age, disability, race or any other factor that may cause a disadvantage. To this end we strive to ensure that our services are accessible to all. This includes:

- Providing wheelchair access in all our offices
- Arranging to visit you in your home if you cannot visit our offices
- Arranging to make available interpretation or other communicative services if required

Reporting of Complaints

5.1 The receipt of complaints will be reported to the Sport NI Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.