

The purpose of the Public Health Agency is to protect and improve the health and social wellbeing of our population and reduce health inequalities through strong partnerships with individuals, communities and other key public, private and voluntary organisations.

Given the breadth of our work, it is important that we receive feedback to confirm what we are doing well and identify areas where we need to improve.

Information on our compliments and complaints process is set out below (expand each section for more information).

## **Complimenting the PHA**

You can submit a compliment to the PHA by emailing [compliments.pha@hscni.net](mailto:compliments.pha@hscni.net).

We will share your comments with the relevant staff member and use them to highlight good practice within the organisation.

## **Complaining to the PHA**

### **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the PHA's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the PHA.

### **What you might complain about?**

The complaint's we receive are varied in nature, but by way of example, your complaint could be about:

- a failure or refusal to provide a service;
- inadequate quality or standard of care and treatment, or an unreasonable delay in the provision of care;

- a failure to properly implement or follow policy, procedures and standards;
- a failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services;
- a failure to follow the appropriate administrative process;
- the poor conduct, behaviour or attitude of a member of PHA staff;
- a concern about the actions or service of an organisation who is delivering services on our behalf;
- a disagreement with a decision made by the PHA (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process).

## **What can't be dealt with as a complaint?**

In some cases, we may not be able to handle your concern as a formal complaint. If this happens, we will provide you with information on what other procedures are available to help you resolve your concern.

## **Who can complain?**

Any person who receives, requests or is directly affected by a PHA service, or a service contracted or commissioned by the PHA, can make a complaint

You can also complain on someone else's behalf, although you will generally need their consent.

## **How to complain?**

You can make a complaint to the PHA in a number of different ways:

- **By email** [complaints.pha@hscni.net](mailto:complaints.pha@hscni.net)
- **By letter**  
Complaints Office  
Public Health Agency  
12-22 Linenhall St  
Belfast BT2 8BS
- **By telephone** 0300 555 0114

## **Getting help to make a complaint**

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community.

In line with our statutory equality duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please contact us via the details set out above.

## **What details should you provide?**

To help us progress your complaint, you should provide the following key information:

- your full name and contact details;
- details of who or what you are complaining about;
- where and when the event that caused your complaint happened; and
- where possible, what action you would like us to take.

## **Timeframe for making a complaint**

You should try to complain as soon as possible. The time limits for making a complaint are:

- Within 6 months of the event;
- Within 6 months of you becoming aware that you have cause for complaint.

In exceptional circumstances, these limits can be extended if there are good reasons why you did not complain sooner. The following factors will be considered as part of any decision to accept a complaint beyond the time limits as set out:  
any health or bereavement issues;

- the seriousness of the issue;
- the availability of relevant records and/or the staff involved;
- how long ago the events occurred; and/or
- the likelihood that an investigation will lead to a practical outcome for the service user or useful learning for the PHA.

## **What happens after I complain?**

Complaints within the PHA are managed through a two-stage process, which commences at Stage One.

### **Stage One: Frontline response**

We aim to respond to Stage One complaints within 5 working days.

Where this is not possible, we may rely on an extension of an additional five working days. Where an extension is necessary we will contact you.

If we have not been able to respond to your complaint within 10 working days **and** we have no clear date when a full response will be issued, you can request that your complaint is escalated to Stage Two.

### **Stage Two: Investigation**

Stage Two deals with complaints that have not been resolved at Stage One.

We aim to acknowledge Stage Two complaints within three working days of receipt.

Within 20 working days we will aim to investigate your complaint and provide you with a response. If it becomes apparent that a full response cannot be provided within 20 working days we will contact you to keep you updated with a revised time limits and progress.

## **The role of the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)**

If you remain dissatisfied after receiving our response to your complaint, you can refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)

NIPSO provide a free, independent and impartial service for handling complaints about public service providers in Northern Ireland.

NIPSO's contact details are:

### **The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman**

- 33 Wellington Place,  
Belfast, BT1 6HN

**Tel:** Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

**Email:** [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

**Web:** [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

The **freepost address** is: FREEPOST NIPSO

Complaints can be made online, by telephone and in person.

## **The role of the Patient and Client Council**

Throughout the complaints process you also have a right to seek the help of the Patient and Client Council (PCC).

The PCC is an independent body, set up to represent your interests in Health & Social Care. They can provide free and confidential advice, information and help throughout the complaints process, help with writing letters, making phone calls, supporting you at meetings or assisting with bringing your complaint to the Ombudsman.

Further information about the PCC is available by contacting:

Freephone: (0800) 917 0222

Website: <https://pcc-ni.net/>

Email: online form: <https://pcc-ni.net/advocacy/>

## **Complaining to other organisations**

### **Complaints in relation to Health and Social Care Trusts**

Each Health and Social Care Trust has a formal process in place to govern the management of complaints. Details of each organisation's complaint process will be available via their website.

- [Belfast Health & Social Care Trust](#)
- [Northern Health and Social Care Trust](#)
- [South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust](#)

- [Southern Health & Social Care Trust](#)
- [Western Health & Social Care Trust](#)

## **Complaints in relation to Family Practitioner Services**

If you have a concern or complaint about services provided by family practitioner services such as family doctors, dentists, pharmacists or opticians, you should in the first instance make your complaint to the practice or practitioner for local resolution.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Group has a role as an intermediary or 'honest broker' in complaints regarding family practitioners and can be contacted by email: [complaints.sppg@hscni.net](mailto:complaints.sppg@hscni.net) or phone: 028 9536 3893.

## **Care Opinion**

If you want to share your experience of the PHA's work then you may wish to publish a story on Care Opinion.

Further information on Care Opinion is available via [About Care Opinion | Care Opinion](#).

## **Annual reports**

We publish information on compliment and complaint handling on an annual basis.

Copies of our annual reports are available below:

- [PHA annual compliments and complaints report 2024/2025](#)
- [PHA annual complaints report 2023/2024](#)

[Print](#)