

# Complaints procedure

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A guide to Invest NI feedback



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## Complaints procedure

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### Complaint procedure

Invest NI is committed to providing a high quality service to all our customers. However there may be occasions when problems arise and you do not receive the service you expect.

If you have any reason to be unhappy with our service we want to know about it, to enable us to put things right in the most appropriate manner and as quickly as possible.

A complaint could be about any aspect of our services for instance:

- When we do not deliver a service on time
- When we give you the wrong information
- When you receive a poor quality service
- When you have a problem with the service provided by a member of staff.

Complaints received by Invest NI will be treated seriously and will be thoroughly and objectively investigated in a timely manner.

However the following issues will not be dealt with under our complaints procedure:

- A request for a service
- An information request
- Appeals to a tribunal
- Appeals of business decisions

Such requests will be dealt with as normal business issues.

Issues related to Invest NI staff that are personal in nature or not specific to the work they do on behalf of Invest NI will not be considered within the process.

A report on complaints from our customers will be drawn to the attention of our Executive Leadership Team on a quarterly basis and to our Board of Directors on an annual basis.

### How to complain

We are keen to ensure that all complaints about our services are dealt with in a satisfactory way and are resolved as quickly as possible.

Often an issue can be resolved quickly and easily by contacting the person with whom you have been dealing. You can do this in person, by telephone, email or letter.

If you would rather not deal with the member of staff concerned or if you are not sure who is responsible for the service about which you are complaining, you can complete our customer complaint form which is attached, alternatively you may wish to use the enquiry form on our website which you can access via the link below.

If you have a complaint about a member of the Complaints Team, or there is a perceived conflict of interest, that member of staff will recuse themselves from the complaint investigation process.

When completed, the form should be sent to the Complaints Manager who will raise the issue directly with the manager responsible for that service.

**E-mail:** [complaints.feedback@investni.com](mailto:complaints.feedback@investni.com)

**Address:** Bedford Square  
Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7ES

**Website:** [www.investni.com/contactus](http://www.investni.com/contactus)

To help us deal effectively with any issues raised please tell us:

- What the issue is
- When it happened
- Who you dealt with

**All complaints are dealt with professionally and in confidence where required. All feedback is welcomed and will in no way affect future Invest NI support decisions or relationships.**

### Our response

#### Complaint in person/by telephone

If the problem cannot be resolved informally it will be logged and investigated.

Where possible, please provide details of your complaint in writing. This will ensure we address all issues that are of concern to you and maintain accurate records.

When we have fully established the nature of the complaint we will write back to you within 10 working days telling you the result of the investigation and what we intend to do.

#### Complaint in writing

We will acknowledge your complaint within 1 working day and will provide an initial response within 10 working days.

If it is not possible to provide a full response within 10 working days we will advise you of the progress of our investigation, indicating the likely timescale in which it will be completed.

We may be in contact at any stage during the investigation to obtain further information or clarification.

### What to do if you are not satisfied with our initial response

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of our initial response you can refer the matter to our Chief Executive's Office.

Again, an acknowledgement will be issued within 1 working day advising that your complaint has been received and is being investigated.

You will be contacted within 15 days from issue of the acknowledgement and advised of progress or, if the investigation has been completed, we will advise you of the outcome and what we intend to do.

Again, we may contact you at any stage during the investigation to obtain further information or clarification.

# What happens if you are still not satisfied with Invest NI's response?

If you still consider that Invest NI has not dealt with the matter either properly or fairly, you can refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman is entirely independent of government and deals with any complaint of maladministration (i.e. poor administration) or of rules being applied wrongly. The Ombudsman does not normally investigate policy – rather it is how policy has been implemented that is considered.

The Ombudsman will normally expect you to have given Invest NI the opportunity to investigate the matter before referral.

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

By phone: 0800 34 34 24  
(this is a free phone number)

Or

028 90 233821

By text phone: 028 90 897789

By e-mail: [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

By writing to: Northern Ireland Public Services  
Ombudsman  
Progressive House  
33 Wellington Place  
Belfast  
BT1 6HN



# Privacy notice

## People who make a complaint to us

When we receive a complaint from a person we open a file containing the details of the complaint. This normally contains the identity of the complainant and any other individuals involved in the complaint.

We will only use the personal information we collect to process the complaint and to check on the level of service we provide. We do compile and publish statistics showing information (for instance on the number of complaints we receive), but not in a form which identifies anyone.

We usually have to disclose the complainant's identity to whoever the complaint is about. This is inevitable where, for example, the accuracy of a person's record is in dispute. If a complainant doesn't want information identifying him or her to be disclosed, we will try to respect that. However, it may not be possible to handle a complaint on an anonymous basis.

We will keep personal information contained in complaint files in line with our retention policy. This means that information relating to a complaint will be retained for three years from closure. It will be retained in a secure environment and access to it will be restricted according to the 'need to know' principle.

Similarly, where enquiries are submitted to us we will only use the information supplied to us to deal with the enquiry and any subsequent issues and to check on the level of service we provide.

## Vexatious or repetitive complaints

We sometimes receive complaints which can be deemed 'vexatious' or 'repetitive'. Some of these complaints can be costly to handle or responding to them may be a disproportionate use of our staff's time. This is our approach to dealing with complaints which we consider vexatious or repetitive and behaviour which we deem as unreasonable.

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Deciding whether a complaint is vexatious requires us in each case to take into account the context and history of the complaint. For a complaint to be vexatious, we will consider whether there is a proper or justified cause for it. Context may include other complaints/contact made by the applicant to us (regardless of outcome), the number and subject matter of the complaints, as well as the history of other dealings between the complainant and ourselves.

In deciding whether a complaint is vexatious so we will consider the following:

- Could the complaint fairly be seen as obsessive?
- Is the complaint harassing or causing distress to staff?
- Does the complaint appear to be designed to cause disruption or annoyance?
- Does the complaint lack any serious purpose or value, for example is the complaint solely about trivial matters to an extent that is out of proportion to their significance?
- The concern we will address is whether a complaint is vexatious in terms of the effect of the complaint on us and not whether the applicant is personally vexatious.
- We will take into consideration the following factors (which are not an exhaustive list) when determining whether a complaint is vexatious:
  - If the complaint is in respect of issues previously dealt with by Invest NI
  - If the nature and extent of the complainant's correspondence with us suggests an obsessive approach to the issues that have been raised
  - If the tone adopted in correspondence by the complainant is confrontational and/or haranguing and demonstrates that the purpose is to argue and not really to resolve an issue
  - If the correspondence could reasonably be expected to have a negative effect on the health and well-being of our staff

- If the complaint, viewed as a whole, appears to be intended simply to re-open issues which have been disputed several times before, and is, in effect, the pursuit of a dispute by alternative means
- If responding to the complaint would likely entail substantial and disproportionate financial, administrative and/or operational burdens for us
- If it is not an original complaint, but a case of the same complaint having been made repeatedly, or where on repetition, the particulars of the complaints have been varied making it difficult to know exactly what the complainant is seeking and making it less likely that the request can be satisfied
- No single one of the above factors would lead to a finding, by itself, that a complaint was vexatious. It is also important that any future complaints should not be deemed vexatious just because some may have been so previously. However, it is entirely appropriate and necessary, when considering whether a complaint is vexatious, to view that complaint in context. The history and context of a complaint will be important factors in deciding whether it is considered vexatious. For example, if the complaint is part of a wider grievance against Invest NI or is inextricably linked to an individual's desire to hold Invest NI to account for perceived shortcomings.
- Complaints can sometimes become a vehicle for individuals to try to reopen previous issues. Although we recognise that people are not always satisfied with the responses they receive, the raising of complaints is not a panacea for problems that have not been resolved through other channels. Continued complaints after the underlying complaint has been addressed, go beyond the reasonable pursuit of resolution. In such cases Invest NI will not follow the normal timescales or stages relating to the management of a 'new' complaint.

# Unreasonable Behaviour

Our staff have the right to undertake their work free from harassment, or vexatious and repetitive complaints/enquiries. We expect our staff to be treated with courtesy and respect. Invest NI has a duty to protect the welfare of staff and considers that abuse towards staff is unacceptable. Staff are also expected to treat complainants with courtesy, respect and fairness.

- We also consider that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can amount to abusive behaviour. Invest NI staff will bring to an end phone calls if the caller is considered aggressive, abusive or threatening. The complainant will first be told that we consider their language offensive or their behaviour unacceptable and will be asked to stop using such language or behaviour.
- Where complaints are deemed vexatious, the complainant will be notified in writing that no further correspondence will be entered into on the matter in question, however their correspondence will be kept on file.

If you disagree with a decision made by Invest NI to regard your behaviour as unreasonable, you can challenge it by contacting the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, details on to how to do this are provided above.



If you require this document in an alternative format (including Braille, audio disk, large print or in minority languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English) then please contact:

**Invest NI Equality**

**Tel:** 028 9069 8273

**Text Relay Number:** 18001 028 9069 8273

**Email:** [equality@investni.com](mailto:equality@investni.com)



**Bedford Square**  
Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7ES

**T:** 028 9069 8000

**F:** 028 9043 6536

**Text Relay Number:** 18001 028 9069 8000

[investni.com](http://investni.com)