**COSICA**

**Complaints Policy**

**and**

**Procedure**

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| Version | 1 |
| Date approved by Accounting Officer | 1 November 2022 |
| Date of next review | 1 November 2023 |

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| **Date of Review**  | **Amendments** |
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| INTRODUCTION |

The Office of the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA) is committed to ensuring that everyone who engages with us is treated appropriately and with respect. We recognise however, that we can sometimes make a mistake. To address this, we have the following Complaints Policy and Procedure for members of the public, and for staff to follow when a complaint is received.

We recognise that when receiving a complaint, it can help us to identify where we may improve, so please do let us know when you feel we may have made a mistake, or when you have experienced an issue you have found to be unsatisfactory. Even if you do not think your particular concern amounts to a ' formal complaint' we would still like to hear from you.

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| STANDARDS |

When addressing a complaint, the Commissioner’s office will follow the standards that have been developed around the [0188-Principles-of-Good-Complaint-Handling-bookletweb-1.pdf (nipso.org.uk)](https://nipso.org.uk/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/0188-Principles-of-Good-Complaint-Handling-bookletweb-1.pdf) Good complaint handling means:

1. Getting it right;
2. Being customer focused;
3. Being open and accountable;
4. Acting fairly and proportionately;
5. Putting things right; and
6. Seeking continuous improvement.

Appendix 1 sets out in detail the standards which:

* provide a measure to assess ourselves against, demonstrating improvement;
* help to raise standards and reduce unacceptable variations in quality;
* enable members of the public to understand the level of quality they are entitled to and provide an opportunity to discuss and act upon any concerns they may experience; and
* enable staff and the wider public sector to communicate effectively in helping members of the public access services.

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| HOW TO COMPLAIN  |

**STEP 1: CONTACTING US**

The first step is to talk to a member of staff. This can be arranged informally by telephone in the first instance.

Usually, the best staff member to talk to will be the person who originally dealt with the matter you are concerned about, as they will be in the best position to help you quickly, aiming to rectify any issues you wish to raise. If the member of staff is not available, or you would prefer to approach someone else, then ask for their relevant line manager.

We will aim to resolve your concern with immediate effect if we can. If we are unable to do this, for example, because information we need to consider is not to hand, then we will take a record of your concern and arrange the best way and time to get back to you. This will normally be within five working days, or we will make some other arrangement acceptable to you.

**STEP 2: TAKING YOUR COMPLAINT FURTHER**

If you are still unhappy and feel that the matter is still unresolved and wish to make a formal complaint, this should be put in writing to, Secretary to the Commissioner, setting out the details and explaining what you think went wrong and what you feel would put things right. The email address for the Secretary to the Commissioner is Tara.Cunningham@cosica-ni.org and the address for correspondence is detailed below.

If you are not happy about writing a letter or sending an email, you can always ask a member of staff to take notes of your complaint. We will ask you to agree with what has been recorded and ensure you are provided with your own copy for reference. This record will be passed promptly to the Secretary to the Commissioner to address. Once a written complaint is received, it is to be fully investigated.

Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within five working days of receiving it and the letter will state 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). When this is the case, you will be informed on what action is being taken and when we expect to provide you with a full response.

**STEP 3: THE NEXT STAGE**

If you are not satisfied with the investigation, you can take your complaint to the Commissioner.

All materials relating to your complaint and to the investigation will be passed to the Commissioner for consideration. The Commissioner will inform you within seven working days that she has received your complaint and will confirm when you should expect a full response.

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| CONTACT DETAILS  |

COSICA’s address and contact details:

 Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse

5th Floor South

56-66 Upper Queen Street

Belfast

BT1 6FD

Email: admin@cosica-ni.org

Telephone: 028 9054 4985

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| 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 Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. Their contact details are as follows:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Progressive House

33 Wellington Place

Belfast

BT1 6HN

Telephone: 028 9023 3821

Text Phone: 028 9089 7789

Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Should your complaint relate to the Commissioner this can be taken directly to the Executive Department which sponsors COSICA:

The HIA Implementation Branch

The Executive Office

Block 2, Knockview Buildings

Stormont Estate

Belfast BT4 3SL

Email: HIAImplementationBranch@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Telephone: 028 9076 5703

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| Appendix 1 - STANDARDS FOR COMPLAINT HANDLING IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE |

**STANDARD 1 – GETTING IT RIGHT
•** Acting in accordance with the law and relevant guidance, and with regard for the rights of

those concerned.

• Ensuring that those at the top of the public body provide leadership to support good complaint management and develop an organisational culture that values complaints.

• Having clear governance arrangements, which set out roles and responsibilities, and ensure lessons are learnt from complaints.

• Including complaint management as an integral part of COSICA’s design.

• Ensuring that staff are equipped and empowered to act decisively to resolve complaints.

• Focusing on the outcomes for the complainant and the public body.

• Signposting to the next stage of the complaints procedure, in the right way and at the right time.

**STANDARD 2 – BEING CUSTOMER FOCUSED**

**•** Having clear and simple procedures.

• Ensuring that complainants can easily access the individual addressing complaints and informing them about advice and advocacy where appropriate.

• Responding to complainants promptly and sensitively, bearing in mind their individual circumstances.

• Listening to complainants to understand the complaint and the outcome they are seeking.

• Responding flexibly, including co-ordinating responses with any other bodies involved in the same complaint, where appropriate.

**STANDARD 3 – BEING OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE**

• Publishing clear, accurate and complete information about how to complain, and how

and when to take complaints further.

• Publishing standards for handling complaints.

• Providing honest, evidence-based explanations and giving reasons for decisions.

• Keeping full and accurate records.

**STANDARD 4 – ACTING FAIRLY AND PROPORTIONATELY**

**•** Treating the complainant impartially, and without unlawful discrimination or prejudice.

• Ensuring that complaints are investigated thoroughly and fairly to establish the facts of

the case.

• Ensuring that decisions are proportionate, appropriate and fair.

• Ensuring that complaints are reviewed by someone not involved in the events leading to

the complaint.

• Acting fairly towards staff complained about as well as towards complainants.

**STANDARD 5 – PUTTING THINGS RIGHT**

• Acknowledging mistakes and apologising where appropriate.

• Providing prompt, appropriate and proportionate remedies.

• Considering all the relevant factors of the case when offering remedies.

• Taking account of any injustice or hardship that results from pursuing the complaint as

 well as from the original dispute.

**STANDARD 6 – SEEKING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

**•** Using all feedback and the lessons learnt from complaints to improve COSICAs design

 and delivery.

• Having systems in place to record, analyse and report on the learning from complaints.

• Regularly reviewing the lessons to be learnt from complaints.

• Where appropriate, informing the complainant about the lessons learnt and changes

 made.

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| COMPLAINT FORM |

**Name:** Click here to enter text.

**Address:** Click here to enter text.

**Telephone:** Click here to enter text.

**Email Address:** Click here to enter text.

**Name of the member of staff complained about, if applicable:** Click here to enter text.

**Details of the complaint, giving as much detail as you can:**

Click here to enter text.

**What would you like us to do to make things right?**

Click here to enter text.

**List of enclosures (do not send originals):**

Click here to enter text.

Signed: Click here to enter text. Date: Click here to enter text

COSICA’s address and contact details:

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56-66 Upper Queen Street

Belfast

BT1 6FD

Email: admin@cosica-ni.org

Telephone: 028 9054 4985