

Complaints Policy

Contents

1.	How to Complain to SIB.....	1
1.1	Our Commitment.....	1
1.2	Our Principles.....	1
1.3	What is a Complaint?.....	1
1.4	What is not Considered a Complaint?	1
1.5	How to Complain to SIB.....	2
1.6	How we will Deal with your Complaint.....	2
1.7	The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman	3
1.8	Response Times.....	3
1.9	Unacceptable behaviour	3
1.10	Comments.....	3
2.	How SIB Deals with a Complaint.....	4
2.1	If Staff Receive a Complaint.....	4
2.2	If Staff are Asked to Deal with or Respond to a Complaint.....	4
2.3	Response Times.....	4
2.4	Recording, Reporting and Learning	5
2.5	Reporting to SIB Audit and Risk Committee.....	5

DOCUMENT CONTROL

The Information and Compliance Manager is the owner of this document and is responsible for ensuring it's distribution. The document will be reviewed/updated annually or sooner if required.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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We hope that all your dealings with SIB are satisfactory. However, if you are dissatisfied, this document explains how to submit a complaint. The first section explains SIB's policy and sets out how you can complain. The second section – “How SIB Deals with a Complaint” sets out SIB's internal complaints policy so you can see how we will deal with your complaint. The Appendix also has a quick guide visual to the process.

1. How to Complain to SIB

1.1 OUR COMMITMENT

We aim to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible
- We treat complaints seriously
- We deal with complaints promptly and in confidence
- We learn from complaints and use them to review and improve our services

1.2 OUR PRINCIPLES

SIB respects the standards for handling complaints as set out by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. These aim to provide consistency in approach to, and accountability for, complaint handling across Government. Our principles for handling complaints effectively are:

- Accessible and simple
- Fair and impartial
- Timely, effective and consistent
- Accountable
- Delivering continuous improvement

1.3 WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

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

It can be about anything and could include:

A complaint is distinct from a service request (where you are asking us to do something) and from a request for information. If you are unsure, please contact us and we will help you to identify the right process.

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

1.4 WHAT IS NOT CONSIDERED A COMPLAINT?

Some matters have their own separate processes and are not normally handled under this Complaints Policy. Where that applies, we will explain why and signpost you to the appropriate route.

- Raising a concern (whistleblowing) – see our Raising a Concern Policy
- Employee matters such as recruitment decisions, pay/terms and conditions, or grievances (staff) – these are dealt with under HR policies

- Requests for information (including Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests). If you are unhappy with how an FOI/SAR request was handled, we will explain the relevant review/appeal route.
- Procurement issues where a specific statutory or contractual remedy applies
- Service requests or enquiries (for example, asking us to provide information or take an action) – we will still help you, but these are not recorded as complaints unless you tell us you are dissatisfied with our service
- Any other matter where there is an applicable specific formal remedy process (for example, an appeal, review or statutory complaints process)

1.5 HOW TO COMPLAIN TO SIB

If you wish to make a complaint you can contact us in any of the ways listed below. Please provide as much information as possible to allow us to properly investigate your complaints.

In writing to: The Information and Compliance Manager
Strategic Investment Board Limited
The Kelvin
4th Floor, 17-25 College Square East
Belfast
BT1 6DH

By e-mail: contact@sibni.org

By telephone: 028 9025 0900

1.6 HOW WE WILL DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT

We will manage complaints through a two-stage process in line with current NIPSO complaints standards: Stage 1: Frontline Response and, where necessary, Stage 2: Investigation.

If you remain dissatisfied after Stage 1: Frontline Response, you can ask for your complaint to be considered at Stage 2: Investigation.

When Stage 2: Investigation is complete, if you remain dissatisfied, we will signpost you to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

1.6.1 What happens next

We will log your complaint and acknowledge it where appropriate.

- We may contact you to clarify the issues raised and the outcome you are seeking.
- We will tell you which stage your complaint is being handled under and the expected timescale for our response.
- Our response will explain what we found, any decision reached, and any actions we have taken or will take. Where we get something wrong, we will apologise and explain what we will do to put things right.
- If you remain dissatisfied after Stage 1: Frontline Response, you can ask for Stage 2: Investigation.
- If you remain dissatisfied after Stage 2: Investigation, you may contact the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman with your concerns.

If you need this process explained in a different format or require support to make or progress a complaint, please let us know.

1.7 THE NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

You can contact the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman in several ways:

Online:	https://www.nipso.org.uk/make-complaint/how-make-complaint
By Telephone:	0800 343424
In Writing:	Freepost NIPSO
By Email:	nipso@nipso.org.uk
In Person at:	The Ombudsman's Office Progressive House 33 Wellington Place Belfast, BT1 6HN

The Ombudsman will not normally investigate a complaint unless the internal complaint procedure has been exhausted.

1.8 RESPONSE TIMES

Stage 1: Frontline Response: we will aim to resolve the complaint or issue a response within 5 working days.

Stage 2: Investigation: we will aim to issue a full response within 20 working days.

If we need more time at either stage, we will explain why, agree a revised response date where possible, and keep you updated.

1.9 UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

We understand that making a complaint can be stressful. We will always treat complainants with respect and we ask that the same courtesy is shown to our staff. Unacceptable behaviour is behaviour that makes it significantly more difficult for us to deal with a complaint or to provide a service.

- Aggressive, abusive or offensive language or behaviour (including discriminatory language)
- Threats (including threats to staff, property, or reputational threats intended to intimidate)
- Repeated or excessive contact that unreasonably hinders progress on the complaint
- Unreasonable demands (for example, insisting on immediate responses or specific staff involvement without good reason)

Where unacceptable behaviour occurs, we may take proportionate steps to protect staff and ensure we can deal with the complaint. This may include issuing a warning, limiting contact to a single channel or person, setting reasonable contact arrangements, or (in serious cases) ending contact. Any threats or behaviour that raises safeguarding or security concerns may be reported to the appropriate authorities. We will still consider the substance of the complaint and will make reasonable adjustments where needed.

1.10 COMMENTS

We are happy to receive any other comments on our service to customers. Please contact us in any of the ways mentioned above. Alternatively, you can email us from the [contact us](#) section of our website.

2. How SIB Deals with a Complaint

This section documents how SIB staff will handle any complaints received.

2.1 IF STAFF RECEIVE A COMPLAINT

SIB manages complaints through a two-stage process aligned to NIPSO complaints standards: Stage 1: Frontline Response and Stage 2: Investigation. Complainants can be received by any member of staff in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. If someone raises a complaint with you, either verbally or in writing, you should do the following.

- If the complaint is verbal (e.g. by telephone or face-to-face), listen carefully, clarify what outcome the person is seeking, and record the key details. Offer to help the person put the complaint in writing if they wish, but do not require this as a condition of accepting the complaint.
- Immediately pass any complaint to the Information and Compliance Manager (the nominated complaints lead) for logging and allocation, noting the required timescales for response.
- The Information and Compliance Manager will consult with the relevant Senior Leadership Team member and agree initial steps, nominating a senior investigating officer if required. The Information and Compliance Manager will communicate with the complainant as appropriate and ensure that timescales are complied with. They will maintain all records and report outcomes of the complaint as required.

2.2 IF STAFF ARE ASKED TO DEAL WITH OR RESPOND TO A COMPLAINT

SIB is committed to dealing with complaints promptly, fairly and consistently, and to learning from complaints. Our procedure is based on NIPSO complaints standards and uses a two-stage process: Stage 1: Frontline Response and Stage 2: Investigation.

In dealing with complaints, staff should focus on early resolution where possible, be open and honest, apologise where appropriate, and ensure outcomes and learning are recorded and acted upon.

- Accessible and simple;
- Fair and impartial;
- Timely, effective and consistent;
- Accountable; and
- Delivering continuous improvement.

The Information and Compliance Manager will coordinate and deal with all complaints to SIB. However, you may be asked to help. For example:

- If the complaint is against you, you may be asked for your side of the story.
- You may be asked to carry out an investigation.
- You may be asked to correct the problem that was complained about; or at least say how it will be dealt with.

In all cases staff should follow the principles set out above.

2.3 RESPONSE TIMES

- Stage 1: Frontline Response: aim to resolve the complaint or issue a response within 5 working days.
- Stage 2: Investigation: aim to issue a full response within 20 working days.
- If an extension is needed, we will explain why, provide a revised response date, and keep the complainant updated until the complaint is closed.

2.4 RECORDING, REPORTING AND LEARNING

All complaints must be logged in a consistent way to support oversight, accountability and improvement. At a minimum, we will record the complaint, the stage it was handled at, key issues raised, outcome, timescales met, and any remedy and learning actions.

We will review complaints information to identify themes and trends and to support service improvements. We will report complaints information (anonymised) to the Senior Leadership Team, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and The Executive Office as part of our governance arrangements.

2.5 REPORTING TO SIB AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

The Information and Compliance Manager will inform the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (normally through the quarterly governance statement and/or periodic complaints reports) about complaints handled under this policy, including themes, outcomes, timeliness, and actions taken to improve services.

Appendix 1: Quick guide to the complaints process

