

# Tourism Northern Ireland

## Complaints Policy

(Version 2.0)



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## 1. Introduction:

- 1.1 Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism 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. We want to know when an issue has arisen so that we can put it right and learn from the experience.
- 1.2 If you have any reason to be unhappy with our service, we want to know about it so that we can put things right in the most appropriate manner and as quickly as possible.
- 1.3 Your feedback is important to us, whether positive or negative. Not only does it allow us to improve our individual service to you, but it also helps us to enhance our services for other customers.
- 1.4 This Tourism NI Complaints Procedure refers only to complaints you have in relation to services you have received directly from Tourism NI.
- 1.5 If we think that your complaint should be dealt with by another organisation, we will tell you as soon as possible. Where we can, we will also tell you who that other organisation might be, **but we cannot forward a complaint on your behalf.**
- 1.6 All complaints are dealt with professionally and in confidence. All comments & feedback is welcomed and will in no way affect future Tourism NI support decisions or customer relationships.
- 1.7 Tourism NI staff have a commitment to behave in a professional manner and treat all customers with courtesy, respect and dignity at all times.

## 2. What is a complaint?

- 2.1 For Tourism NI, a complaint is:

***“An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf” (NIPSO)***

- 2.2 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; and / or*
- *When you have an issue with the service provided by a member of our staff.*
- *Conduct, treatment by, or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves)*

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

### 3. What is not a complaint:

3.1 The following will not be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure:

- *A routine first-time request for a service;*
- *An information request;*
- *Appeals under a funding scheme; and / or*
- *Appeals of a business decision.*

3.2 Such requests will be dealt with as routine business issues, and you should contact the relevant business area.

### 4. What types of complaint are covered by this policy?

4.1 This Complaints Policy is designed to address any specific concerns our customers have about the quality of service provided by our staff. For example, this might include:

- Avoidable delays, for example, in receiving information or responses;
- Difficulty in contacting the correct team or unit;
- Incorrect information or guidance issued by Tourism NI;
- Attitude and / or conduct of our staff;
- Failure to follow the appropriate administrative processes; and / or
- Disagreement with a decision where the customer cannot use another procedure (for example, an appeal) to resolve the matter.

4.2 This Complaints Policy can also apply to any complaint against Tourism NI for which no other appeal method is available, with the exception of:

- A routine first-time request for a service;
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal;
- Disagreement with a decision where a statutory right of appeal or other procedure for review exists; and / or
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision.

4.3 If your complaint falls into the above categories, we will redirect it to the appropriate business area to respond in line with its procedures.

## 5. Who can make a complaint:

- 5.1 Anyone who receives, requests, or is directly affected by Tourism NI's services, or a service contracted or commissioned by Tourism NI, can make a complaint. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with Tourism NI's service.

## 6. How to make a complaint:

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 Often an issue can be resolved quickly and easily by contacting the person with whom you have been dealing with. You can do this in person, by telephone, by e-mail or by correspondence / letter.
- 6.3 If you wish to make a complaint you can do so via the Tourism NI website at: [Contact Us | TNI](#). This page includes a drop down under the Enquiry section titled '*Complaints about services directly provided by Tourism NI*'. Alternatively, please complete the form below (**Appendix 1**) and return to Tourism NI.
- 6.4 To help us deal effectively with any issues raised, please tell us:
- Who you dealt with;*
  - What happened?;*
  - Where & when it happened; and*
  - Why you were dissatisfied with Tourism NI.*
- 6.5 All personal details and information will be handled according to Tourism NI's Privacy Notice available at: [Privacy Policy | Tourism NI](#)
- 6.6 Tourism NI have a commitment to investigate anonymous complaints where it is appropriate to do so. Factors relevant to the consideration of anonymous complaints include whether there is enough information in the complaint to enable further enquiries. If an anonymous complaint raises serious issues, these should be dealt with in a timely manner under relevant procedures

## 7. How we respond to Complaints:

### • Stage 1 – Informal resolution:

- 7.1 It is easier to resolve issues if you notify Tourism NI quickly and directly to the service area concerned. We therefore ask you, in the first instance, to contact the member of staff with whom you were dealing or their manager. They will aim to resolve your issue within five working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

7.2 However, if you have already pursued this route and you remain dissatisfied, you can raise a formal complaint.

- **Stage 2 – Formal complaint:**

7.3 You can raise a formal complaint for up to six months either after an event occurred or after you become aware of an issue, unless exceptional circumstances apply which allow Tourism NI to extend this time limit.

7.4 If you need help putting your complaint in writing, need this information in another language or format, (such as large font, or braille) or have other accessibility or supportive requirements, please tell us using any of the contact details above.

7.5 We will need you to provide us with:

- Your full name and address for correspondence;
- As much as you can about the complaint; and
- How you want us to resolve the matter.

7.6 We will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within **three working days**;
- Where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand what outcome you are looking for;
- Carry out a thorough investigation;
- Give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within **20 working days** or tell you if our investigation will take longer than **20 working days**;
- Apologise if we have made a mistake or if a problem has been caused by us; and
- Let you know of any planned actions or changes in systems as a result of your complaint.

- **Stage 3 – Review of formal complaint:**

7.7 If you are dissatisfied with Tourism NI's response issued at Stage 2 of this policy, you can write to the Director of Corporate Services within 20 days of receiving that response (unless exceptional circumstances apply which may allow Tourism NI to extend this time limit) giving full details of your complaint and why you remain dissatisfied. The Director of Corporate Services will arrange for an independent review of how your complaint was handled to be conducted.

7.8 The contact details and timescales are as set out above at '**Stage 2 – Formal complaint**'.

7.9 Stage 3 is the final stage of this procedure.

- **Making a complaint about top management in Tourism NI:**

7.10 If you are a member of the public, or an external stakeholder, and your complaint is about a staff member within the top management of Tourism NI, please address your complaint to:

**Board of Directors  
Tourism Northern Ireland  
Floor 12  
Linum Chambers  
Bedford Square, Bedford Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 7ES**

**Telephone:** (028) 90 231221

**Website:** [Contact Us | TNI](#)

7.11 An acknowledgement will be issued within **03** working days advising that your complaint has been received and is being investigated.

7.12 You will be contacted within **20** working 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.

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

## **8. What to do if you are dissatisfied with our response**

8.1 If you still consider that Tourism NI has not dealt with the matter either properly or fairly, you can refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman ([NIPSO](#)).

8.2 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 but rather how policy has been implemented.

8.3 The Ombudsman will normally expect you to have given Tourism 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) 9023 3821

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

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

**Website:** <https://www.nipso.org.uk/>

**9. Accessibility:**

- 9.1 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 customers access and use our services.
- 9.2 If you require assistance putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please tell us in person, contact us on (028) 9023 1221 or e-mail us at: [complaints.feedback@tourismni.com](mailto:complaints.feedback@tourismni.com).

**10. How we use personal information in relation to complaints:**

- 10.1 When investigating a complaint Tourism Northern Ireland takes care that it respects the rights and freedoms of all those involved. How we handle any personal information we receive in respect to those rights and freedoms is described in our Privacy Notice: <https://www.tourismni.com/tni-privacy-notice/>.
- 10.2 When we receive a complaint, we open a file containing the details of the complaint. This normally contains the personal information and identity of the complainant and of other individuals involved in the complaint.
- 10.3 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 that identifies anyone or individuals.

- 10.4 When we receive a complaint, we are required to notify all those individuals involved that we have received a complaint and that we are processing their personal information for that purpose only.
- 10.5 We usually have to disclose the complainant's identity to whomever the complaint is about. This is inevitable where, for example, the accuracy of a person's record is in dispute. If a complainant does not want information identifying them to be disclosed, we will try to respect that. However, it may not be possible to handle a complaint on an anonymous basis.
- 10.6 We will keep personal information contained in complaint files in line with our Retention & Disposal Schedule. This means that information relating to a complaint will be retained for **five years** from closure. It will be retained in a secure environment and access to it will be restricted.
- 10.7 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.

## **11. Policy Monitoring & Review:**

- 11.1 This policy will be updated as needed if there are any changes in the business or regulatory environment. It is scheduled for a formal review by 2027.
- 11.2 Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Business Planning and Improvement Team with the support of business unit managers.
- 11.3 A lessons learned register that covers all complaints handled by Tourism NI will be continually reviewed to understand trends in customer complaints, and to ultimately improve service delivery and customer satisfaction. The register will also inform updates to this policy, and any requirements for the training of staff in handling complaints.

<b>Tourism NI Complaints Form:</b>
<i>Please complete in capital letters and in black ink</i>

<b>SECTION 1 – About You:</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	
<b>Forename(s):</b>	
<b>Surname:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Telephone Number: (Daytime)</b>	
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	

<b>SECTION 2 – Details of Complaint:</b>
<u><b>Who did you deal with?</b></u>
<u><b>What happened?</b></u>
<u><b>Where &amp; when did it happen?</b></u>

Date: Time: Location:	
<b><u>Why were you dissatisfied with Tourism NI?</u></b>	
Signed:	Date:

**Please e-mail or post completed form or leave it at the Tourism NI Reception.**

**Attach additional sheets if required.**