

## Cork County PPN Complaints Procedure

### Cork County PPN Complaints Procedure

Cork County Public Participation Network (Cork County PPN) is committed to dealing effectively with any complaints you may have about our service.

If we got something wrong, we will apologise and where possible we will try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

### When to use this Complaints Procedure

When you complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us (e.g. issues relating to your grant application or appeals to the Local Authority) and we will then advise you as best we can about how to make your concerns known.

### Informal Resolution

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things as soon as possible and in the easiest and most direct way. If you have a complaint, raise it with the person you are dealing with as soon as possible. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. However, they may need time to look into it, which can take up to five (5) working days.

If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your complaint, we will bring them to the Secretariat and the Plenary. If the person you dealt with can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for your complaint to be formally investigated.

### How to Complain Formally

You can complain in any of the ways below:

- You can ask for a copy of our complaint form from the person with whom you are already in contact.
- You can get in touch with our Resource Worker on telephone 021 4285340 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- You can use the form on our website at <https://corkcountypn.com/>
- You can e mail us at [ppn@corkcoco.ie](mailto:ppn@corkcoco.ie)
- You can write a letter to us at the following address:

Cork County PPN, County Hall, Cork, T12 R2NC

Copies of this procedure and the complaint form are available on our website <https://corkcountypn.com/> Physical copies of this procedure and the complaint form are available upon request from [ppn@corkcoco.ie](mailto:ppn@corkcoco.ie), , including in large print.

### What Should You Include in Your Complaint?

- Remember to state your name, address and telephone number (and email, if applicable) and whether you are acting on behalf of someone else.
- Briefly describe what your complaint is about stating relevant dates and times, if applicable.
- List your specific concerns starting with the most important concern.
- Be clear about what you are hoping to achieve (for example an apology, explanation, etc.)
- State your preferred method of communication

It will assist the Resource Worker **and our Complaints Committee** if extra information and/or copies of relevant documents are attached to your complaint.

### Dealing with Your Complaint

We will formally acknowledge your complaint within a maximum of five (5) working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.

We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements for example, if you have language difficulties.

We will deal with your complaint in an open and honest way.

We will make sure that your interactions with us in the future do not suffer just because you have made a complaint.

If you are making a complaint on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

### Investigation

We will tell you who will be investigate your complaint. If your complaint is straightforward, we will usually ask a member of staff to look into it and get back to you. In more complex or serious cases, the Secretariat Complaints Subcommittee will look into it and respond to you. In some cases, if the complaint is serious, we may ask someone from outside the PPN to investigate.

We will set out to you our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it is important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 30 working days of the Secretariat meeting that directly follows the receipt of the complaint.

If your complaint is more complex we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take
- give you regular updates every 21 days on any progress made

The person or Committee that is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes. If we do this, we will provide you with all the information to decide whether you wish to follow that option.

When investigating your complaint, we will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your complaint. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any guidance.

### Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or email, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

#### Putting Things Right

If we didn't do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

#### Appeal

If we formally investigate your complaint and you are not satisfied with the outcome you may request an optional local appeal which will be dealt with by persons selected not involved in the original handling of your complaint.

#### Department of Rural and Community Development

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The DRCD is the Government Department responsible for the oversight of Public Participation Networks and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on our part.

The DRCD expects you to bring your complaint to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the DRCD by:

- telephone: 076 106 4900
- email: [ppn@drcd.gov.ie](mailto:ppn@drcd.gov.ie)
- in writing to: Department of Rural & Community Development, Trinity Point, 10-11 South Leinster Street, Dublin 2, D02 EF85

#### Learning Lessons

We take your complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. The Secretariat considers a summary of all complaints on a regular basis as well as details of any serious complaints.

Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

#### What if you need help

Our staff will aim to help you make your complaint known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact your local Citizens Information Centre who may be able to assist you.

#### What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

Everyone involved in a process under this procedure are expected to respect the confidentiality of the matter and of everyone involved throughout the process.

#### Confidentiality

We will deal with your complaint in the strictest confidence and in accordance with data protection legislation.

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## **Internal Structures and Arrangements to Support this Procedure**

### **Secretariat Complaints Subcommittee**

The Secretariat Complaints Committee is a standing committee of the PPN made up of 3 Secretariat members that do not overlap with the Secretariat's Staff Liaison Committee. Members sit on the Committee for a 3 year period normally and stand down in rotation.

### **No Dual Membership of Secretariat Complaints and Staff Liaison Committees**

There will be no cross-over of membership between the Secretariat Complaints and Staff Liaison Committees, to ensure that a grievance procedure that involves the Secretariat Staff Liaison Committee can be overseen by the Secretariat Complaints Committee.

### **PPN Complaints Log**

The Secretariat Complaints Committee (or, if not in place, the Secretariat) will ensure a log of complaints is kept in order to enable periodic assessment of whether these are being handled successfully and, if not, to undertake a process to address this. In addition, it will provide data about any trends emerging in relation to complaints that may require to be addressed such as increasing numbers or types of complaints. This Log will be kept confidential and be updated by the Secretariat Complaints Committee who will also compile a summary of data for the Secretariat periodically as requested (e.g. number of complaints, outcomes, etc.). Personal data relating to individual complaints will not be reported and all information will be held subject to data protection regulations.

### **Standing Secretariat Agenda Item**

Complaints (and Grievances) are a standing item on the Secretariat agenda, so that provision is made to expedite handling of these issues.

### **External Independent Complaints & Grievances Appeals Group**

To support both PPN Complaints and PPN Grievance procedures, the PPN will approach 5 external agencies to agree to nominate a suitable staff member to participate on an external Complaints and Grievances Appeals Group. This Appeals Group will only be asked to meet in the event that a complaint or a grievance cannot be successfully resolved through internal procedures. The agencies concerned will agree to make their staff available to participate in a formal grievance hearing, with the PPN meeting their associated expenses. (The list of external agencies that have agreed to provide staff to make up this Appeals Group are listed at the end of this document.)

Cork County PPN Complaints Form

**A: YOUR DETAILS**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Daytime Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Evening Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please let us know how you prefer to be contacted:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your requirements**

If our usual way of dealing with complaints is difficult for you, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.

**B: MAKING A COMPLAINT ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE**

**Their Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Their Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What is your relationship to them?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Why are you making the complaint on their behalf?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**C: YOUR COMPLAINT (Please use the Notes pages if needed)**

**What do you think we did wrong, or failed to do?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Describe how you, or the person you are representing, suffered or has been affected**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What do you think should be done to put things right?**

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Have you already put your concern to the person responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.

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If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

When you have completed this form, please send it to:

Resource Worker  
Cork County PPN  
County Hall  
Cork  
T12 R2NC

Or send a scanned copy to [ppn@corkcoco.ie](mailto:ppn@corkcoco.ie)

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

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Commented [HE1]: Presuming an electronic option is desirable?