



# Cork County Public Participation Network (PPN) Grievance Procedure (P8)

## 1. What is this procedure for

This document sets out the ways in which the PPN handles grievances from:

- staff or volunteers, and
- external parties e.g. PPN Member Groups, members of the public or separate organisations

The PPN is committed to ensuring a safe and happy work environment for volunteers and staff., and to providing the best possible service in line with our Constitution. This Procedure aims to resolve grievances that arise in a fair, prompt and impartial manner.

## 2. What and who does it apply to

**Part I** of this Procedure applies to all PPN staff and volunteers who have a grievance about any condition of their work.

*It is important to note that PPN staff are employed by Cork County Council (the Council) and are subject to Council policies and procedures. This Procedure is intended to complement these policies and not to contradict them.*

**Part II** of the Procedure is for any individual or organisation not qualifying as PPN staff or volunteer to raise a complaint about the operation the PPN.

If the PPN receives a complaint about something that is not within its control (e.g. issues relating to grant applications or appeals to the Council), it will inform the complainant and advise them to the best of our ability how to make their concerns known.

## 3. What is a grievance

A grievance is considered to be any complaint about something believed to be wrong or unfair.

## 4. Principles for addressing grievances

- All grievances should aim to be resolved in an informal basis with the person involved, if possible.
- Any proceedings should be conducted honestly, fairly and without bias.
- Proceedings should not be unduly delayed.
- Any person(s) against whom a complaint is made should have the opportunity, and be given a reasonable time, to put forward their side of the event/s before resolution is attempted.

## 5. Grievances Log

The Secretariat Staff Liaison Committee (or, if not in place, the Secretariat) will ensure a log of grievances 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, this Log will provide data about any trends emerging in relation to complaints that may require to be addressed such as increasing numbers or types of grievances. This Log will be kept confidential and be updated by the Secretariat Staff Liaison 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 grievances will not be reported and all information will be held subject to data protection regulations.

## PART I –Grievances of Staff or Volunteers

### 5.0 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. The staff member/ volunteer should attempt to resolve the complaint with the individual(s) with whom they have the grievance.

If the staff member/ volunteer does not want to deal directly with the individual(s) with whom they have the grievance, they should discuss it with their direct line manager, or the Secretariat Staff Liaison Committee.

### 6.0 Formal procedure

If informal resolution is not possible, the PPN Staff member/ volunteer should raise the matter with their direct line manager or the Staff Liaison Committee of the Secretariat immediately in writing. If the matter relates to a staff member's immediate line manager, the grievance should be taken to the Staff Liaison Committee of the Secretariat or the HR Department of the Council.

The written notification of the complaint should include:

- the substance of the grievance
- the remedy sought
- a clear statement that this is a formal grievance notification

The individual making the complaint must keep a copy of the complaint.

#### 6.1 Mediation

If the Staff Liaison Subcommittee consider it an appropriate intervention at this stage, they may offer mediation.

- 6.1.i Mediation is a confidential, neutral and voluntary approach to conflict resolution in which parties can engage without prejudice. If a PPN Worker/ Volunteer wishes to take up the offer of mediation as a means to resolve a situation, then the mediator must have declared any connection with any of the parties and be acceptable to all parties involved. The mediator must be fully trained, accredited and insured. The PPN will cover reasonable costs for provision of mediation. [The Secretariat Committee handling the grievance can sanction mediation costs to a limit of €500.00 beyond which it must seek approval from the full Secretariat.]
- 6.1.ii If the parties involved agree to mediation, the Staff Liaison Subcommittee will make the necessary arrangements. The mediation itself will be governed by an agreement to mediate that will be by all involved parties before the mediation proceeds. It is understood that the outcomes and process of mediation will be confidential between the parties involved in the process, unless they agree otherwise (for example, in making recommendations for changes in PPN procedures, or requesting agreement to elements of the agreement by the Secretariat).
- 6.1.iii If the issues(s) cannot be resolved through mediation, the mediator will notify the Secretariat Staff Liaison Committee only that the mediation has not been successful and that Committee will then initiate-a formal grievance hearing.

#### 6.2 Grievance Hearing

If the grievance cannot be resolved through mediation, or the parties are not willing to go engage in mediation, then a grievance hearing will be initiated.

- 6.2.i The Staff Liaison Committee will request the formation of a Complaint Committee to hold the grievance hearing. A Secretariat Complaint Committee is formed as required to consider complaints. It is made up of 3 Secretariat members, ideally one from each PPN College but never all from one College. Once it has completed its deliberations on the allegation which it was created to consider, the Complaint Committee will disband. Members of the Complaint Committee cannot also be members of the Staff Liaison Committee, must be without a conflict of interest, and cannot be involved in the complaint in any way.
- 6.2.ii The Complaint Committee will gather all available evidence, and arrange a meeting with the PPN staff member or volunteer who has raised the grievance.
- 6.2.iii If the grievance involves another PPN staff member or volunteer, then the grievance hearing will meeting with the parties separately.
- 6.2.iv If the individual raising the grievance has questions for another PPN staff member or volunteer, these should be put in writing and will be notified to the party concerned in advance of the hearing.
- 6.2.v If both/all parties (PPN staff workers or volunteers) agree, a combined meeting may also be undertaken.
- 6.2.vi The decision as to what method is most appropriate for the resolution of the grievance will be that of the Complaint Committee.
- 6.2.vii The individual taking the grievance has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative.
- 6.2.viii Where the grievance involves another PPN staff member or volunteer, they will be requested to attend the grievance hearing and advised that they may bring a colleague or trade union representative.
- 6.2.ix The grievance hearing will be arranged at a time that facilitates attendance by all the parties involved and held in a timely manner but with sufficient notice to allow them to arrange to be accompanied where they wish this.
- 6.2.x All parties will be given time in the grievance hearing to explain their views and to respond to those of the other party/ies.
- 6.2.xi If no consensus can be reached on a resolution through the grievance hearing process, then the Complaint Committee will make a decision as to the outcome of the grievance. They will notify all parties involved of their decision and of the process for appeal.
- 6.2.xii The following sanctions are available:
  - a) a written warning, to a party or parties involved
  - b) removal of a Representative from their role (where relevant)
  - c) request to the Member Group to which the individual belongs, for an alternative representative to attend and participate in PPN activities, making clear that the individual concerned can no longer engage with the PPN (for volunteers)

- d) referral to Council staff disciplinary procedure (for staff). In the event of this sanction being applied, the procedure and any appeal will be managed by the Council under their disciplinary procedure

6.2.viii In most instances, the PPN would expect the Secretariat's Complaint Committee's decision to be final and to be a close to the grievance. However, the PPN staff member or volunteer who raised the complaint, has the right to appeal the decision if they still feel aggrieved.

## 7.0 Appeals

- 7.3.i If a PPN staff worker or volunteer wishes to appeal against a grievance decision they must request an appeal in writing within 5 working days from receipt of official correspondence. The appeal should contain the original formal grievance notification.
- 7.3.ii The written request for an appeal should be addressed to the Complaint Committee who issued the grievance decision. The Complaint Committee will then notify the Staff Liaison Committee who will establish an Appeal Committee.
- 7.3.iii The PPN staff member or volunteer who appeals a grievance decision is entitled to representation by a colleague, trade union representative or professional body. Other parties to the appeal are entitled to be accompanied in the same manner.
- 7.3.iv The Appeal Committee is made up of 3 Secretariat members, ideally one from each PPN College but never all from one College. Members of the Appeal Committee cannot also be members of the Staff Liaison Committee or the Complaint Committee that has considered the grievance, they must be without a conflict of interest, and cannot be involved in the complaint in any way. (If there are insufficient Secretariat members, PPN Representatives and/ or Linkage Group Facilitators may serve on the Appeal Committee.) Once it has completed its deliberations on the allegation which it was created to consider, the Complaint Committee will disband.
- 7.3.v The Appeal Committee will call an appeal meeting that may involve the parties involved, including the Complaint Committee, meeting together or in separate sessions as the Appeal Committee considers most appropriate. All parties will be informed of the date and time of the appeal meeting, with reasonable effort made for them all to attend and for the PPN staff workers or volunteers involved to bring a colleague or trade union representative.
- 7.3.vi The party bringing the appeal will be asked to provide verbal and/or written reason(s) for the appeal. The Complaint Committee will be asked to provide reasons for their decision. Any other party involved may be asked to contribute by the Appeal Committee if needed.
- 7.3.vii The Appeal Committee will discuss the matter in private and has the right to seek further information from either party.
- 7.3.viii The Appeal Committee will reach a decision and inform the party making the appeal of this decision in writing.
- 7.3.ix The decision of the Appeal Committee is final.

## PART II: Grievances of External Parties<sup>1</sup>

The PPN aims to deal effectively with any complaints about our operation. If we get something wrong, we will apologise and, where possible, we will try to put things right. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve.

### 8.0 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.

### 9.0 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 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.

### 10.0 What you should 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. In addition, you should include the following information:

- 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 PPN staff if you include extra information and/or copies of relevant documents.

### 11.0 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.

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<sup>1</sup> External parties may include PPN Member Groups, members of the public or separate organisations, that do not qualify as PPN staff members or volunteers.

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.

## 12.0 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 on behalf of the PPN and get back to you. In more complex or serious cases, a Secretariat Complaint Committee will be established to look into it and respond to you on our behalf. 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.

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.

## 13.0 Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication, for example by letter or email. 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.

## 14.0 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.

## 15.0 Appeal

If we formally investigate your complaint and you are not satisfied with the outcome you may lodge an appeal. A request for an appeal must be made in writing and received by the PPN within 5 working days of the outcome being received. The request for an appeal should contain details of the reason why you are not satisfied with the outcome of the formal investigation.

An Appeal Committee will be established to consider your submission on the reasons for the appeal, and the original outcome of the investigation. The Appeal Committee will not include any persons involved in the original handling of your grievance.

The Appeal Committee will decide on whether to uphold the original investigation outcome or propose a different outcome. Their decision will be communicated to you promptly using your preferred form of communication.

The decision of the Appeal Committee is final.

## 16.0 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.

## 17.0 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.

## 18.0 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.

## 19.0 Confidentiality

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

**Date approved by Plenary:** 23/04/2026

# Cork County PPN Complaints Form (P8a)

## 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? *(they will need to sign below that they are willing for you to make this 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person on whose behalf you are making this complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Co-ordinator  
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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Date approved by Plenary: \_\_\_\_\_ 23/04/2026 \_\_\_\_\_