

Informal Resolution

A simple and quick way to deal with complaints which are less serious.



The Police Ombudsman's Office deals with complaints from members of the public about the conduct of police officers and certain other people* employed by the PSNI.

Your complaint is very important to us and we would like to resolve it in the best way possible.

Some complaints can be resolved informally by helping you and the police officer or civilian employee* you have complained about to reach an agreement about the best way forward.

If an informal resolution works it can mean we may avoid having to hold a lengthy investigation, which may involve hearings before a court and a tribunal.

*The Police Ombudsman's Office deals with complaints about some, but not all, civilian employees of the police. This may include people performing custody or escort duties for the police.

How does Informal Resolution work?

We will look at your complaint and decide within three days whether it will be suitable for informal resolution. If it is, we will ask you if you would like to try and resolve it in this way. If you agree we will ask the police to appoint a senior police officer or suitable member of staff to meet you and hear your complaint. That officer/staff member will also talk to the police officer or the police civilian employee* you have complained about. He or she will then try to reach a solution which is acceptable to you both.

What kinds of solution are possible?

- The police officer or the police civilian employee* you have complained about might apologise to you.
- You might be given an explanation about why things happened the way they did.
- You might be told about what the police/the person's employer plan to do to make sure that what happened to you does not happen again.
- You may agree that a senior police officer or suitable member of staff should speak to the police officer or civilian employee about what happened.
- The police officer or civilian employee you have complained about might be told about how he or she should behave in the future.
- You might receive a letter of apology from a senior police officer or suitable member of staff.

Do you have to agree to Informal Resolution?

No, but we can clear up some things very quickly using this procedure. It is very simple. If you do not agree, the Police Ombudsman will decide whether your complaint should be investigated formally.

Can all complaints be informally resolved?

No. Only less serious complaints can be informally resolved. These are usually complaints which, in the view of the Police Ombudsman, if proven would not constitute a criminal offence or warrant any form of disciplinary action being recommended.

Can you change your mind and ask us to investigate your complaint formally?

Yes. If at any time prior to the conclusion of the Informal Resolution process you change your mind, you should tell us or the police and the process will end. We will then decide whether your complaint should be investigated formally.

What if informal resolution does not work?

The senior police officer handling your case will tell us and we will decide whether your case can be investigated informally.

What if the complaint is not as simple as it first seemed?

If there are more serious issues than you knew about originally, tell us and the informal resolution will stop. We will then decide whether your complaint should be investigated formally. If the police officer who is trying to resolve your complaint informally becomes aware that the issue is more serious than it seemed at first, he or she will stop the Informal Resolution and refer the issue back to the Police Ombudsman's Office. We will then consider a formal investigation by his office.

The outcome

When the Informal Resolution is finished, we will write to you, officially recording its outcome. That letter will contain details of:

- what you complained about;
- what happened in the Informal Resolution;
- your satisfaction with the outcome of the Informal Resolution; and
- your right to have a copy of the record of your Informal Resolution if you ask for one within three months of the matter being resolved.

Reviewing how the police informally resolve complaints

After each informal resolution, we will review the case to make sure it was handled properly. If we find any problems, we will talk to the Chief Constable about them to make sure your problems are being dealt with.



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