

INDEPENDENT IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

ABOUT THE CONDUCT
OF POLICE OFFICERS

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF POLICE OFFICERS

The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is Mrs Marie Anderson.

The Police Ombudsman's Office provides an independent and impartial service for dealing mainly with complaints about the conduct of police officers.

We look for evidence which will help us determine whether or not police officers have acted properly.

Our decisions are made entirely independently of the police, the government or the people who made the complaints.

THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE DEALS WITH COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF:



Police officers and some others employed by the Police Service of Northern Ireland



Belfast Harbour Police



Belfast International Airport Police



**Ministry of Defence Police
(in Northern Ireland)**



**National Crime Agency officers
(in Northern Ireland)**



**Immigration and Border Agency officials
(in Northern Ireland), serious cases**

THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE DOES NOT DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS ABOUT:



Police operational matters, such as the way police prioritise their work or how they manage their operations or the number of officers assigned to an area



Police officers who are off duty, unless the fact that they are a police officer is relevant, such as if they tell you they are a police officer



Police officers and police employees who have retired, unless the complaint is that they broke the law while working for the police

YOU CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT



By Phone:
0300 123 2989



By Email:
**complaints@
policeombudsman.org**



In writing to our address:
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
New Cathedral Buildings
11 Church Street, BELFAST BT1 1PG



By calling at our offices:
9am- 5pm Monday – Friday


MAKING A COMPLAINT


You must normally make a complaint to us within one year of the incident you are concerned about. However, the sooner you do this the more likely it is that certain types of evidence will still be available.


The Office deals with complaints from people who have reason to be well informed about the facts of an incident, either because they were involved in it or were affected by it, or are acting on behalf of such people.


The Police Ombudsman can investigate a complaint about something that happened more than a year before it was reported to us if she believes the matter to be grave or exceptional.


Try to give us as much information as you can about the incident you are complaining about. Try to include things such as:

-  **the day, time, date and exact location of the incident**

-  **the name, shoulder number and a physical description of the person you are complaining about**

-  **the name, address and telephone numbers of any witnesses**

-  **the registration number of any vehicles involved**

-  **and any other helpful evidence such as photographs or audio or video footage.**

Do not worry if you can only provide some of this information. We will seek to find evidence about the incident in question.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER YOUR COMPLAINT IS MADE

We will treat both the person who has made the complaint and the person who has been complained about with fairness.

Once you have contacted us we will get the details of your complaint and decide how best to deal with it.

We will give you the name of the person we have appointed to progress the matter.

If we believe your complaint could be resolved informally, we may ask for your consent to ask to refer it to the police for them to deal with. If you agree, the police will contact you to discuss the matter and try to reach a solution. We would later check how the police have dealt with your complaint.

We may begin a formal investigation of your complaint. We would seek to gather evidence about what happened, which may include gathering witness statements, video footage, material held by police including police radio transmissions, medical records, forensic evidence and other information.

We will need your continued cooperation throughout that investigation. We may need, for example, to come back to you for further information.

We will give you as much information as we can at each stage of the complaints process.

THE OUTCOME OF YOUR COMPLAINT

The Police Ombudsman can reach a number of different decisions about your complaint about police or other enforcement officers working in Northern Ireland, depending on the available evidence.

She might:

- Recommend that a police officer, police employee or enforcement officer is prosecuted.
- Recommend that a police officer, police employee or enforcement officer should be disciplined.
- Recommend that a police officer, police employee or enforcement officer receive further training.
- Recommend that the police or other enforcement agency improve some of their working practices or,
- Decide there is not the evidence to support your complaint.

It will be for the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide whether to prosecute someone. If the Director decides to prosecute, we will explain how this process works.

Recommendations for discipline are made to the PSNI Chief Constable or the head of the agency in question. If a decision is taken to discipline a police officer, we will explain this process to you.

Whatever the outcome, when we have finished dealing with your complaint we will write to you, telling you the outcome and explaining the Police Ombudsman's decision.

YOUR VIEWS

When we have finished dealing with your complaint, we will send you a questionnaire seeking your views on our service. We would ask that you complete and return this questionnaire. The views of people who have made complaints in the past have led to improvements in the service we provide.

If you are unhappy with the service we have provided for you, you may wish to make a complaint. You should write to Customer Complaints at the address on the back cover of this leaflet .

YOUR INFORMATION

We may be required to share your information with other parties, both in the investigation of your complaint and in order to comply with our statutory obligations. Please see the Privacy Notice on our website for situations when this may happen.



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