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| Author | Human Resources |
| Date revised | December 2018 |
| Date: SMT Meeting | 26 February 2019 |
| Date: CE Approval | 14 February 2019 |
| Date: Board Meeting | 18 February 2019 |
| Next review date | January 2020 |
| Target Audience | All Staff & for Public Information |

**WARNING:** Always ensure that you are using the most up to date policy or procedure document. If you are unsure, you can check that it is the most up to date version by checking with the HR Officer.

**To be completed when reviewing an existing policy.**

If the policy has been reviewed without change this information will still need to be recorded although the version number will remain the same.

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| **Version** | **Date** | **Brief Summary of Change** |
| 5.0 | Dec 18 | Update on processes |
| 4.0 | Mar 18 | Revised in line with GDPR |
| 3.0 | Aug 16 | Review and update as per schedule and to reflect current NIPSO legislative requirement as well as most recent principles on good complaints handling. |
| 2.0 | Dec 14 | Revised in line with OFMDFM standards for complaint handling in the Public Service. |
| 1.0 | Apr 12 | Original Document |

**Introduction**

NICCY is committed to providing high quality services to all our stakeholders and especially to children, young people and their parents or carers. We recognise however, that we sometimes get things wrong or make mistakes.

NICCY does not look on complaints as unwanted. They help us to see where our services or procedures might be improved. So please do let us know where you feel we have made a mistake or done something which you found unsatisfactory or unacceptable. Even if you do not think your particular concern amounts to a 'complaint' we would still like to know about it. You may help us to deal with something we would otherwise overlook.

**Standards**

When dealing with a complaint, NICCY will ensure that it follows the standards that have been developed around the [NI Ombudsman’s Principles of Effective Complaints Handling (2009)](http://www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk/niombudsmanSite/files/94/94a67a87-bb5d-4392-9e6a-359a438596b6.pdf). These aim to provide consistency in approach to, and accountability for, complaint handling and are;

* Accountability;
* Accessibility;
* Supporting the Complaints Process;
* Investigating the Complaint;
* Responding to the Complaint;
* Learning and Improvement; and
* Monitoring.

Appendix 1 sets out in detail the standards which;

* give NICCY a measure to assess ourselves against and to demonstrate improvement;
* help raise the standard of service and reduce unacceptable variations in quality;
* enable members of the public to understand what quality of service they are entitled to and provide the opportunity for them to help define and shape the quality of services provided; and
* enable NICCY and the wider public sector to communicate effectively in helping members of the public access services.

**HOW TO COMPLAIN**

**STEP 1: CONTACTING US**

The first step is to talk to a member of NICCY staff. This can be done quite informally, either directly or by telephone.

Usually, the best staff member to talk to will be the person who dealt with the matter you are concerned about, as they will be in the best position to help you quickly and to put things right. If they are not available, or you would prefer to approach someone else, then ask for their relevant line manager.

We will try to resolve the problem on the spot if we can. If we can't do this, for example, because information we need is not to hand, then we will take a record of your concern and arrange the best way and time for getting back to you. This will normally be within five working days or we will make some other arrangement acceptable to you.

**STEP 2: TAKING YOUR COMPLAINT FURTHER**

We hope you will only feel the need to make a formal complaint as a last resort and that you will complain to the person dealing with the matter first to give them a chance to put things right. However, if you are still unhappy, the next step is to put your complaint in writing to the Chief Executive of NICCY, setting out the details, explaining what you think went wrong and what you feel would put things right. The email address for NICCY’s Chief Executive is [mairead@niccy.org](mailto:mairead@niccy.org), and the address for writing a complaint to is detailed below.

If you are not happy about writing a letter or sending an email, you can always ask a member of staff to take notes of your complaint. You should make sure you agree with what they have recorded and that they provide you with your own copy for reference. This record will be passed promptly to the Chief Executive to deal with. Once the Chief Executive receives a written complaint, she will arrange for it to be fully investigated.

Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within five working days of receiving it and the letter will say when you can expect a full response. This should normally be within three weeks unless the matter is very complicated (for example, where other organisations need to be contacted). Where this is the case, we will still let you know what action is being taken and tell you when we expect to provide you with a full response.

Should your complaint relate to the Commissioner this can be taken directly to the Department for Communities (DfC).DfC can be contacted by utilising their website which is [www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk) and completing the feedback form on the website.

**STEP 3: THE NEXT STAGE**

If you are not satisfied with the Chief Executive's investigation you can take your complaint to the Commissioner.

All materials relating to your complaint and to the Chief Executive's investigation will be passed to the Commissioner. The Commissioner will let you know within seven working days that she has received your complaint and tell you when to expect a full response from her.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Our address and contact details are;

The Chief Executive

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

Equality House

7 - 9 Shaftesbury Square

Belfast

BT2 7DP

Telephone: 028 9031 1616

Fax: 028 9031 4545

Minicom: 028 9031 6393

**TAKING YOUR COMPLAINT OUTSIDE THE ORGANISATION**

If you are not satisfied with the Commissioner's response, you can seek advice from outside the organisation. You can contact the Office of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman. Their contact details are as follows:

The Ombudsman's Office

Progressive House

33 Wellington Place

Belfast

BT1 6HN

Telephone: (028) 9023 3821

Fax: (028) 9023 4912

Email: [ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk)

**Appendix 1 - STANDARDS FOR COMPLAINT HANDLING IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

**STANDARD 1 – ACCOUNTABILITY**

Government departments, their agencies and arms length bodies (ALBs) will ensure that there are clear lines of accountability for the handling and consideration of complaints within their organisations.

**Rationale:**

NICCY will demonstrate that it has in place, clear accountability structures to ensure the effective and efficient investigation of complaints and provide a timely and effective response to the complainant.

1. Managerial accountability for complaints rests with the Chief Executive;
2. NICCY must provide assurances on an annual basis in relation to complaint handling arrangements;
3. All staff must be aware of, and comply with, the requirements of the complaints procedure within their area of responsibility; and
4. All information relating to complaints will be appropriately managed in line with relevant information governance requirements

**STANDARD 2 – ACCESSIBILITY**

Complainants will have open and easy access to NICCY’s complaints procedure and the information required to enable them to complain about any aspect of service.

**Rationale:**

Those who wish to complain will be treated impartially, in confidence, with respect and courtesy and will not be adversely affected because they have found cause to complain. Making a complaint must be a straightforward process, and one that is respectful of the diverse needs of those who may wish to use it.

1. Complaints are welcomed and are recognised as an important source of learning;
2. Arrangements about how to make a complaint are publicised, simple and clear;
3. Arrangements for making a complaint are open, flexible and easily accessible to complainants;
4. Flexible arrangements are in place so that complaints can be raised in a variety of ways and in ways in which the complainant feels comfortable; and
5. As far as reasonably practicable, arrangements will be made to accommodate the specific needs of complainants with information made available, where appropriate, in a variety of formats and languages

**STANDARD 3 – SUPPORTING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

Complaints will be dealt with through an efficient and effective process.

**Rationale:**

Complaints will be recorded, treated confidentially, taken seriously and dealt with in a timely manner.

**Criteria:**

1. NICCY must ensure that relevant staff are fully aware of the complaints policy, procedure and process;

2. Staff are aware of their responsibility to protect the confidentiality of complainant information; and

3. Complaints and their outcomes are appropriately recorded.

**STANDARD 4 - INVESTIGATING THE COMPLAINT**

All investigations will be conducted promptly, thoroughly, openly, honestly and objectively.

**Rationale:**

NICCY will establish a clear system to ensure an appropriate level of investigation. A thorough, documented investigation will be undertaken including, where appropriate, a review of what happened, how it happened and why it happened.

**Criteria**

1. Investigations are robust and proportionate and the findings are supported by the evidence;
2. People with appropriate skills, expertise and seniority are involved in the investigation of complaints, according to the substance of the complaint; and
3. All correspondence and evidence relating to the investigation will be retained in line with relevant information governance requirements

**STANDARD 5 - RESPONDING TO THE COMPLAINT**

Complaints will be responded to as promptly as possible and all issues raised will be addressed.

**Rationale:**

Complainants have a right to expect a prompt and comprehensive response, with an apology where appropriate.

**Criteria:**

1. The timescales for acknowledging and responding to complaints are in line with NICCY’s agreed target timescales;
2. Where any delays are anticipated or further time required NICCY will advise the complainant of the reasons and keep them informed of progress;
3. Responses will be clear, accurate, balanced, fair and easy to understand;
4. All issues raised in the complaint will be addressed and, where appropriate, the response will contain an apology;
5. In the response, complainants should be informed of any change (or intended change) in systems or of practice that has resulted from their complaint; and
6. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she should be clearly advised of the options that remain open to them.

**STANDARD 6 - LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT**

Government departments, their agencies and ALBs will promote a culture of learning from complaints so that, where necessary, services, processes & practices can be improved.

**Rationale:**

The complaints process must provide a framework whereby learning from complaints is incorporated into organisational governance arrangements. Complaints are viewed as an important source of learning; are an integral aspect of customer service and will help organisations to continue to improve the quality of their services.

**Criteria:**

1. Organisations will conclude their investigation of each complaint with an assessment of the learning and the potential for improvement at organisational level;
2. Learning identified will be communicated at the appropriate level e.g. individual, team and organisational;
3. Improvement identified should be implemented, where practicable, and as soon as possible;
4. Where appropriate, learning and improvements will be shared across the organisation; and
5. Organisations will monitor the nature and volume of complaints so that trends can be identified and acted upon.

**STANDARD 7 - MONITORING**

NICCY will monitor the effectiveness of their complaint handling and responsiveness.

**Rationale:**

Monitoring performance is essential in determining effectiveness. It will also ensure that organisations have incorporated improvements where appropriate.

**Criteria:**

1. Organisations must ensure that they have in place the necessary systems to record and monitor complaints and outcomes; and
2. Organisations must keep under review their arrangements for complaints handling and responsiveness.

**Name:** Click here to enter text.

**Address:** Click here to enter text.

**Telephone:** Click here to enter text.

**Email Address:** Click here to enter text.

**Name of the officer complained about, if applicable:** Click here to enter text.

**Details of the complaint, giving as much detail as you can:**

Click here to enter text.

**What would you like us to do to make things right?**

Click here to enter text.

**List of enclosures (do not send originals):**

Click here to enter text.

Signed: Click here to enter text. Date: Click here to enter text.