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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE



CMS 89746

What do we do?

The Independent Case Examiner is not a civil servant and acts independently of the Department. The Independent Case Examiner's office provides a free complaints examination service for people who feel dissatisfied with the way in which they have been dealt with or treated by:

- Child Support Agency
- Jobcentre Plus
- The Pension Service
- Disability and Carers Service
- The Rent Service
- Debt Management
- The Financial Assistance Scheme
- Northern Ireland Social Security Agency
- Northern Ireland Child Support Agency

What complaints can we deal with?

We deal with complaints about how a case has been handled, such as:

- failure to follow procedures;
- delays;
- poor customer service.

What we cannot deal with

We cannot deal with complaints that:

- the Agency has not given its final response to. (This allows the Agency the opportunity to settle the complaint first, avoiding the need to take matters further);

- we receive more than six months after the Agency's final response;
- concern matters of law or Government policy;
- have been or are being considered by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman or the Northern Ireland Ombudsman;
- are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings;
- are subject to a fraud investigation. Such complaints may be resubmitted should you remain dissatisfied once the fraud action has been concluded;
- are about how the Agency/Business discharges its responsibility as an employer.

How to complain to us

We accept complaints in writing or by telephone. You can also complain using the attached form. If you want help in making a complaint or general advice, please ring us on 0845 606 0777.

How will my complaint be dealt with?

- If we cannot accept your complaint, we will tell you why.
- If we accept your complaint, you should continue to deal direct with the relevant Agency/Business while we are looking into your complaint. We cannot act as your representative. If you need help, you may wish to contact an organisation such as Citizens Advice.
- Our first step is usually to talk to you to identify what your complaint is about, and agree with you a way forward.
- We will see if we can help in reaching an agreement with the relevant Agency or Business on how to address your complaint.
- In some cases, it will be necessary to request and examine all relevant Agency/Business documentation before we can attempt to address your complaint.

- If an agreement between you and the Agency/Business can be reached, we will send you a letter explaining what has been agreed, which will include dates by which the agreed actions should be completed.
- If an agreement is not possible, we will issue a formal report, which sets out our findings in respect of each element of your complaint. If appropriate it will include recommendations on what needs to be done to put matters right.

Whilst we are dealing with your complaint:

- we may pass on information you send to us, to the relevant Agency or Business;
- we hold Agency/Business records on a temporary basis for the sole purpose of conducting our investigation into your complaint. Any requests for access to such papers should be directed to the relevant Agency/Business.

What will my complaint lead to?

Our involvement in your complaint may lead to:

- the identification of service failure/s on the part of the relevant Agency/Business;
- an explanation of what action (if any) needs to be taken to put matters right;
- clear indication of whether the relevant Agency/Business needs to take action to provide redress, for example in the form of an apology or compensation (any such consideration must be in line with the relevant Departmental guidance);
- the identification of system or procedural failings, which need to be reviewed to try to avoid similar problems for others in the future;
- a decision that the Agency has met its service standard obligations, and we will take no further action.

The Agencies/Businesses we deal with have agreed to accept our findings and recommendations in all but exceptional circumstances. If they do not do so, we will want to know why.

Standards of Service

We will:

- treat you fairly;
- provide you with a helpful and efficient telephone service;
- respond promptly to telephone calls;
- send written communications that are clear and easy to understand;
- keep you updated on our progress, either by telephone or in writing;
- acknowledge new complaints within 2 working days of receipt;
- tell you within 10 working days of receiving a new complaint if we can accept it;
- respond to letters within 10 working days of receipt;
- on average, complete a case within 34 weeks;
- when we close a case, remind you of your right to approach the appropriate Ombudsman if you are unhappy with the outcome of our examination.

If you are pleased with our service or have a suggestion

After we have dealt with your complaint, we will send you a questionnaire about the service you received from us. We are constantly looking for ways to improve the service we offer. If you feel that we have done something well, or have a suggestion about how we could do better, please let us know.

If you are unhappy with our service

If you are unhappy with our service or you think we have got something wrong, please let us know. A telephone call will usually allow us to put matters right. However, if a written response is required we will:

- acknowledge your complaint within two 2 days of receipt;
- send you a full response within 10 working days. If a reply is going to take longer, we will let you know within 10 days and tell you why.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome of your complaint about our service:

- you can ask your Member of Parliament to refer your concerns to: The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP. Telephone: 0207 2174163 or 0845 0154033 (local rate).
- if your initial complaint to ICE was about the Northern Ireland Child Support Agency or Social Security Agency, you should write to: The Permanent Secretary, Department for Social Development, Lighthouse Building, 1 Cromac Place, Gasworks Business Park, Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 2JB. Telephone: 02890 829203

How to contact us

The Independent Case Examiner
PO Box 155
Chester
CH99 9SA

Telephone: 0845 606 0777 (local call rate)

Minicom: 0151 801 8888

Fax: 0151 801 8825

E-mail: ice@ukgov.demon.co.uk

Website: www.ind-case-exam.org.uk

If you telephone us, there will normally be someone to take your call, Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays), between 8am and 5pm. If no one is free to take your call, you will be able to leave a recorded message. Someone will return your call at the earliest opportunity.

If you have speech or hearing difficulties you can contact us, via Typetalk text direct on 18002 0151 801 8800. If you use this service and we accept your complaint, we will ask you for authority to allow us to deal with your enquiries in this way.

Please let us know if you require this leaflet in Braille, large print or another language.