

Independent Case Examiner's Office

# Our Service

*'Judging the issues without taking sides'*



Independent  
Case Examiner

## What do we do?

The Independent Case Examiner's Office provides a free service to look at complaints from people who feel dissatisfied with the way they have been dealt with or treated by:

- Child Support Agency
- Jobcentre Plus (including most Work Provider services)
- The Pension Service
- Disability and Carers Service
- Debt Management
- The Financial Assistance Scheme
- Northern Ireland Social Security Agency
- The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division (Northern Ireland)

## How are we independent?

The Independent Case Examiner is not a civil servant and acts independently of the Department for Work and Pensions. We examine complaints on behalf of the Independent Case Examiner.

## What complaints can we deal with?

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

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

## What can't we deal with?

We can't deal with complaints that:

- have not had a final response from the relevant Agency or Business (this gives the Agency or Business the opportunity to settle the complaint first).
- we receive more than six months after the final response from the Agency or Business.
- 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, subject to legal proceedings; or
- are about how the Agency or Business fulfils its responsibility as an employer.

We cannot act as your representative. If you need help, you may wish to contact an organisation such as Citizens Advice Bureau.

## How to complain to us

We accept complaints in writing, by email or by telephone.

If you want general advice or help in making a complaint, please ring us on 0845 606 0777. If you are calling from abroad you should dial +44 151 801 8800.

It does not cost you anything to make a complaint to the Independent Case Examiner, and the service is open for anyone to use. You should not need to employ professional or other representatives to help you, but you can do so if you want, at your own expense. We are happy to deal with your professional or personal representative when asked, but we would not usually ask the Agency or Business to pay their fees or other expenses.

# How will we deal with your complaint?

- 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 or Business about day to day matters while we are looking into your complaint.
- We will aim 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 you reach an agreement with the relevant Agency or Business on how to resolve your complaint.
- In some cases, we will need to request and examine Agency or Business documents before we can try to resolve your complaint. We will also examine any relevant documents you may have.
- If an agreement between you and the Agency or Business can be reached, we will send you a letter explaining what has been agreed. This will include dates by which the agreed actions should be completed.
- If an agreement is not possible, we will issue a formal report that sets out our findings about each part of your complaint. If appropriate, it will include recommendations for what needs to be done to put matters right.

Whilst we are dealing with your complaint we:

- will regularly keep you updated on our progress, either by telephone or in writing
- may pass on to the relevant Agency or Business any information you send us
- will hold Agency or Business records temporarily for the sole purpose of investigating your complaint. If you want access to these papers, you should ask the relevant Agency or Business.

## What you can expect from us

We will:

- be polite and friendly
- treat you fairly
- try to accommodate any special requirements you may have
- provide a high level of customer service
- answer the telephone during our normal business hours within six rings. If your call is not answered, you will be able to leave a message and we will return your call by the next working day
- send written communications that are clear and easy to understand
- keep you updated on our progress, by telephone or in writing
- arrange a convenient time to call you back and keep our promise
- aim to meet our current standards of service which are available on an insert to this leaflet. This explains the timescales within which we aim to take various actions when handling complaints.

## What will your complaint lead to?

Our involvement in your complaint may lead to:

- identifying failings in the services, procedures or systems of the relevant Agency or Business.
- an explanation of what needs to be done to put matters right.
- a recommendation to the relevant Agency or Business to provide redress – for example, an apology or a consolatory payment or a payment to restore financial loss.
- identifying failings in the system or procedures that need to be reviewed to try to avoid similar problems for others.
- a finding that the Agency or Business has met its service standards.

## Will our findings be accepted?

The Agencies or Businesses we deal with have agreed to accept our findings and implement our recommendations in all but exceptional circumstances.

If they do not do so, we will want to know why and we will let you know the reasons.

## We welcome feedback

After we have dealt with your complaint, we will ask for your views about the service you received from us. We are always looking for ways to improve our services.

Some improvements that we have implemented in response to your comments are the way in which we deal with recorded delivery post and an extension to the time allowed to agree our clarification of complaints.

If you feel we have done something well or have a suggestion about how we could do better, please let us know. If you inform us that we have got it right for you, you may help us to get it right for other people.

## If you are unhappy with our service

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

If you remain unhappy with the outcome of your complaint about our service, you can ask your MP to consider referring your concerns to:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman,  
Millbank Tower, Millbank,  
London SW1P 4QP

Telephone: 0345 015 4033 (local rate)

Email: [phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk)

If your initial complaint to us was about the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division (Northern Ireland) or Northern Ireland 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

Email: [ops@dndni.gov.uk](mailto:ops@dndni.gov.uk)

## How to contact us

The Independent Case Examiner  
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Telephone: 0845 606 0777 (local call rate) or  
+44 151 801 8800 if calling from abroad  
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Website: [www.ind-case-exam.org.uk](http://www.ind-case-exam.org.uk)

Please be aware that emails you send us, and those that we may send to you, are not secure, as email messages can be intercepted.

If you telephone us, we will offer to call you back immediately to keep your call costs low. 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 by the next working day.

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.



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