



**The  
Independent  
Assessor**

# **Referring a Complaint to the Independent Assessor of Complaints for the Public Prosecution Service**

*Delivering an Independent and Confidential Service*

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR?

The Independent Assessor plays an important role in the complaint handling arrangements of the Public Prosecution Service (PPS). The Independent Assessor oversees not only the process itself, but also the development of guidelines and protocols relating to complaint handling. She can also comment on the procedures used and how they were applied, including quality of service, and can make recommendations for improvement to the Director of Public Prosecutions as Head of the PPS.

The Independent Assessor can investigate your complaint only after that complaint has been investigated by the PPS, and once that has been concluded, you are still not satisfied. An overview of the PPS complaint handling arrangements is presented at [Annex A](#).

The Independent Assessor will not act as your advocate and cannot enforce your rights. Her role has to do with determining whether or not a complaint was handled fairly, thoroughly and impartially by the PPS, and also to influence the adoption of best practice in dealing with complaints. The PPS is obliged by its policies to aim for the highest standards in all that it does, including the handling of complaints.

As well as handling complaints properly referred to her, the Independent Assessor reviews and audits a proportion of all complaints made to the PPS. The purpose of this is to identify any patterns or trends and to obtain a clearer picture of the types of complaints being raised.

The Independent Assessor is required to report annually to the Director, and may also make recommendations. The Director is obliged to respond to these recommendations.

**Marian Cree** has been appointed as the Independent Assessor (from 1 July 2025).

### WHICH COMPLAINTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR INVESTIGATION?

The Independent Assessor may investigate all complaints, with the exception of those which are mainly prosecutorial in nature; that is, where they are primarily in relation to a decision by the PPS to prosecute or not to prosecute in a particular case. Such matters, including all requests for a review of a prosecutorial decision, should be directed to the PPS (see Annex A).

The types of complaints investigated by the Independent Assessor may include:

- The effectiveness / efficiency of the work of the prosecution service (for example, the time taken to process a case, or the promptness of payment of witness expenses).
- The manner in which a person was treated by a member of staff of the PPS, or by someone acting on behalf of the PPS.
- Any failure to adhere to the PPS's [Code for Prosecutors](#) which incorporates a Code of Ethics.

Any person who has had contact with the PPS in whatever capacity can make a complaint. A complaint can be made directly by an individual or through their nominated representative (for example a family member, solicitor or public representative).

### HOW LONG WILL THE PROCESS TAKE?

The Independent Assessor will take a maximum of eight weeks to investigate, progress and conclude your complaint. At the outset of the investigation, you will be told the likely timetable for your case and will be kept up to date on any changes in the original estimates for the time required.

### HOW DO I SUBMIT A COMPLAINT?

You should submit your complaint normally *in writing*. This might simply be by letter, providing an outline of your complaint, or you may submit it by email, on tape, in Braille or other media, or in a language other than English.

The Independent Assessor has discretion to meet with you and / or your representative in person, but will not normally do so. In the event that she wishes to meet with you, she will contact you to make the necessary arrangements.

### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

The scheme is free to complainants. You do not need independent or legal advice when making a complaint to the Independent Assessor.

### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETED?

When the Independent Assessor has completed the investigation of your complaint, she will write to you about her findings.

### WHAT REMEDIES ARE AVAILABLE TO THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR?

The Independent Assessor may make recommendations to the PPS. The Director is obliged to consider these, and to respond to the Independent Assessor. However he is not obliged to implement the recommendations.

The Independent Assessor cannot award costs or compensation of any kind.

### WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR'S SERVICE?

#### *Advantages*

- It is private to the complainant.
- It is independent of the PPS.
- It can result in a complaint being further investigated.
- It can result in improvements in the way the PPS provides its services to the public.
- It can result in improved ways of handling complaints.
- It is free.

#### *Disadvantages*

- It is not binding on the PPS; the Independent Assessor may only make recommendations.
- It provides no financial redress.
- The conclusion of the Independent Assessor is the final step in the complaint handling process. However, please note there may be other routes to achieving a resolution.

### HOW DO I CONTACT THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR?

Please contact the Independent Assessor as follows:

#### *By letter:*

Marian Cree  
Independent Assessor of Complaints for the PPS  
PO Box 928  
Belfast BT1 9AN

#### *By email:*

[independent.assessor@ppsni.gov.uk](mailto:independent.assessor@ppsni.gov.uk)

# ANNEX A:

## PPS COMPLAINT HANDLING ARRANGEMENTS

The PPS has a three tier process for handling complaints, as follows:

### Step 1

If you wish to make a complaint about the PPS, this can be done in a number of different ways, including by letter, by email, telephone or text phone. When at court, a complaint may also be made by speaking to any member of staff of the PPS.

Where it is possible to resolve an issue informally at the time of reporting, the matter may not need to go further.

### Step 2

Most complainants are satisfied at the initial investigation stage. However where this is not possible, you may refer your complaint in writing to the PPS's Head of Policy and Information (see contact details below).

### Step 3

If you are still dissatisfied, you may bring your complaint to the Independent Assessor.

It should be noted that separate arrangements apply for anyone wishing to ask the PPS for reasons for a decision not to prosecute or wishing to have such a decision reviewed. If you wish to request reasons or a review, please contact the Head of Policy and Information via the address below.

Full details of the complaint handling procedures are set out in the PPS's complaints guidance, '[How to Give Feedback or Make a Complaint to the Public Prosecution Service](#)'. Information is also available on the PPS website at [www.ppsni.gov.uk](http://www.ppsni.gov.uk). Alternatively, you can get in touch with the PPS's Information Management Team:

**Information Management Team  
Policy and Information Unit  
Public Prosecution Service  
Belfast Chambers  
93 Chichester Street  
Belfast BT1 3JR**

**Tel: (028) 90 897100**

**Text Phone: (028) 90 897011**

**Email: [info@ppsni.gov.uk](mailto:info@ppsni.gov.uk)**

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