

6th July 2015



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

Promoting Teacher Professionalism

Mr Paul Gill
Clerk to the Ad Hoc Committee On the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Gill,

I am writing to your committee in relation to the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill currently before the Northern Ireland Assembly. In this respect, I am making a submission seeking an amendment to Schedule 3 'Listed Authorities' – 'Education and Training' to have 'The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland' (the Council) listed as a body which comes under the remit of the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill.

The Council was established by the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and subsequent responsibilities were set out in the Education (NI) Orders 2003 and 2006 and Department of Education regulations and circulars as follows:

- Establishing and maintaining a register of teachers in Northern Ireland;
- The provision of a professional code for registered teachers;
- The promotion of standards;
- The approval of qualifications leading to registered teacher status including the accreditation of courses of Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland; and
- Regulatory functions relating to professional conduct.

In addition, the Council has a statutory responsibility to provide advice to the Department of Education and employing authorities on a wide range of issues, including the training, the career development and performance management of teachers.

In April 2012, the Council was officially classified as a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and it is now an arm's length body (ALB) of the Department of Education and is subject to the governance and accountability stipulations set out in a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM).

The Council has a governing board of 33 and is presently constituted as follows:

- 14 members are directly elected by teachers

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

Promoting Teacher Professionalism

- 5 members are nominated to GTCNI by Teaching Unions via the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council
- 4 members are nominated by employing authorities
- 4 members are appointed by the Department of Education
- 6 members are nominated to the Council by the following bodies:
 - Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
 - Governing Bodies Association
 - Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
 - Transferor Representatives' Council;
 - Trustees of Catholic Schools; and
 - Universities' Council for The Education of Teachers (NI)

The Chief Officer of the Council is known as the Registrar.

In making this submission to your committee, the Council wishes the remit of the Public Services Ombudsman Bill to cover only the services provided by the Council to teachers in Northern Ireland and, where appropriate, the general public. At a practical level, referrals under the Public Services Ombudsman Bill will become the final step of the Council's current Complaints' Policy. However, the Council does not anticipate the Public Services Ombudsman Bill will have any jurisdiction with respect to the Council's present or future regulatory responsibilities. The Council's current and future regulatory process are covered by the High Court for Northern Ireland, in terms of judicial review and final appeals relating to regulatory determinations made against teachers.

Officers of the Council can supply further information or clarification that your committee may require.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerry Devlin', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr Gerry Devlin
Senior Education Officer