



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY REPORT 2017**

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## **Section 1 - Background to the Complaints Policy**

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is the body corporate of the Northern Ireland Assembly. It has the responsibility, under section 40(4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to provide the Assembly, or ensure that the Assembly is provided with the property, staff and services required for the Assembly to carry out its work.
- 1.2 The Commission, in common with other public and governmental bodies provides a method for members of the public to make a complaint about Assembly staff, services and/or perceived failures in complying with the Assembly's Equality Scheme.
- 1.3 The revised Complaints Policy was implemented on 16 September 2016 after taking advice from the Northern Ireland Ombudsman (NIPSO).
- 1.4 The Complaints Policy, which is published on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission website, lists the type of complaints that may be made. These are:
  - Our failure to provide a service;
  - Inadequate standard of service;
  - Northern Ireland Assembly policies;
  - Treatment by or attitude of a member of Northern Ireland Assembly staff.
- 1.5 The Policy also makes clear the issues that will not be considered under it:
  - Decisions of the Northern Ireland Assembly;
  - MLAs or their staff;
  - Executive Ministers;
  - Executive Departmental policy; or
  - The merits of decisions taken by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission acting within its legal powers.

## **Section 2 - Complaints received by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission**

- 2.1 For the period September 2016 – September 2017 there have been five complaints. The table below provides information on the complaints and their resolution.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title of the complaint</b>	<b>Nature of the complaint</b>	<b>Action taken, including any learning</b>	<b>Date closed</b>
3/11/2016 and 7/11/2016	Subject matter and panel formation of a Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) on Abortion Policy and Law: Key Considerations	That all the academics participating in the seminar came from a pro-choice perspective and there was no argument from a pro-life perspective.	All procedures followed and completed.  Learning outcomes not applicable.	8/11/2016
7/11/2016	Subject matter and panel formation of a Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) on Abortion Policy and Law: Key Considerations.	That the seminar was on the narrow area of abortion policy and the law and all contributors came from those wishing to change the abortion law in Northern Ireland.	All procedures followed and completed.  Learning outcomes not applicable.	8/11/2016
08/11/2016 and 17/11/2016	Subject matter and panel formation of a Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) on Abortion Policy and Law: Key Considerations	That the seminar participants all came from a pro-choice perspective which violated the complainant's Section 75 rights.	Complaint made under Section 75 - all procedures followed and completed.  Supplementary complaint under Section 75 - all procedures followed and completed.  Learning outcomes not applicable.	11/11/2016   17/11/2016
5/12/2016 and 5/01/2017	FOI Query	That information requested under FOI was not provided in a timely manner.	All procedures followed and completed.  FOI unit have reviewed their procedures and have taken measures to ensure that such delays will not occur in the future.	24/01/2017
1/08/2017	Dissatisfaction about the tour of Parliament Buildings	That the tour guide was not smartly dressed and that some of the off script comments were not, in the complainant's eyes, appropriate.	Further training has been provided to tour guides.	3/08/2017

### **Section 3 - Conclusion**

- 3.1 Since the introduction of the current Complaints Policy, the number of complaints sent to the Northern Ireland Assembly have been minimal. A KESS Seminar in 2016 invited the largest number of complaints with three received.
- 3.2 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is fully committed to serving the public and implementing the highest standards of service. Through the process of investigating and resolving all complaints received, the Assembly Commission has taken every opportunity to learn and improve; ensuring continuous review of its policies, provision of training and undertaking of adjustments to improve the services provided.
- 3.3 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission continues to endeavour to provide appropriate services for the public and minimise the number of complaints received.