

# Meath Public Participation Network Grievance and Complaints Procedure

Approved at meeting of Meath PPN Plenary held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024



**Líonra Rannpháirtíochta Phoiblí An Mhí**  
**Public Participation Network Meath**

Meath Public Participation Network (Meath PPN) is committed to dealing effectively with any complaints your group may have about our service.

### **When to use this Grievance and Complaints Procedure**

When your group complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us (e.g. issues relating to your grant application or appeals to the Local Authority) and we will then advise you as best we can about how to make your concerns known.

### **Informal Resolution**

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things as soon as possible and in the easiest and most direct way. If you have a complaint, raise it with the person you are dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. However, they may need time to consider it, which can take up to five working days.

If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your complaint, we will bring them to the next Secretariat meeting and the Plenary. If we are unable to help, we will explain why and you can then ask for your complaint to be formally investigated.

### **How to Complain Formally**

You can complain in any of the ways below:

- You can use the form on our website at [www.meathppn.ie](http://www.meathppn.ie).
- You can e-mail us at [meathppn@meathcoco.e](mailto:meathppn@meathcoco.e) for a form.
- You can write a letter to us at the following address: Meath PPN, Meath County Council, Bovinda House, Navan, Co. Meath C15 Y291

### **What Should You Include in Your Complaint?**

Remember to state your groups name, a contact name, address and telephone number (and email, if applicable).

- Briefly describe what your complaint is about - stating relevant dates and times, if applicable.
- List your specific concerns starting with the most important concern.
- Be clear about what you are hoping to achieve (for example an apology, explanation, etc.)
- State your preferred method of communication

It will assist the Meath PPN if extra information and/or copies of relevant documents are attached to your complaint.

## **Dealing with Your Complaint**

Meath PPN will formally acknowledge your complaint within a maximum of five working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.

We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any requirements - for example, if you have language difficulties.

We will deal with your complaint in an open and honest way. We will make sure that your interactions with us in the future do not suffer just because you have made a complaint.

If you are making a complaint on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

## **Investigation**

We will set out to you our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person/sub-committee looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it is important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 30 working days.

If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take
- give you regular fortnightly updates on any progress made

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

When investigating your complaint, we will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your complaint. If necessary, we will look at our policies and any guidance.

## **Outcome**

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or email, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

## **Putting Things Right**

If we didn't do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

## **Learning Lessons**

We take your complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

## **What to do if you Need Help**

Our staff will aim to help you make your complaint known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone else who can help.

## **What We Expect from You**

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff and volunteers have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

## **Confidentiality**

Your complaint will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and at all times in accordance with data protection legislation.