



## **National Archives' Policy for Handling Complaints**

### **Introduction**

This document sets out the National Archives' policy for handling complaints made about our services and facilities. We believe that understanding how users experience our services and facilities can help us to improve the quality of our public offering.

This policy applies to all those we serve or have dealings with, however regularly, including individual members of the public, contractors, suppliers, stakeholders, government departments, bodies and all those who use any of our services, whether visiting, writing, telephoning or accessing the National Archives' online services.

Please note that this policy excludes complaints made about Freedom of Information (Fol) access requests which are handled separately.

### **What is a complaint?**

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with our services, no matter how it is expressed and whether it is justified or not, that requires a response or further action on the part of the National Archives.

### **Our complaints process**

We will ensure that our complaints processes are:

- Clear and simple to use
- Easy to access and understand
- Responsive to the reasonable needs of complainants
- Prompt, with established time limits
- Fair, with an opportunity for a full and impartial investigation
- Proportionate to the matters complained about
- Informative, by using lessons learnt from complaints to improve services and by reviewing the results of such changes

### **When we respond to your complaint you can expect us to:**

- Take your concerns seriously
- Give you the name of the member of staff responsible for dealing with the complaint at each stage of the procedure
- Be factually correct
- Deal with your complaint promptly
- Avoid jargon
- Answer all your points of concern
- Be flexible in the way that we communicate with you
- Give the reasons for the decision reached on a complaint

### **Our complaints process will be:**

- Frank and open
- Impartial, avoiding bias in favour of any party
- Thorough, finding out the relevant facts, taking views from people involved on both sides of the complaint and verifying explanations where possible
- Equitable, treating people in similar circumstances in similar ways

### **How to complain?**

We welcome views on our services and will respond to feedback and complaints however presented, whether in person or in writing. If you have a complaint or are unhappy with any aspect of the National Archives' services, you can contact us by emailing [query@nationalarchives.ie](mailto:query@nationalarchives.ie).

The manager of the service which you have dealing with will respond to your concerns and if you remain unhappy with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the National Archives, Bishop Street, Dublin 8, D08 DF85. Complaints relating to our services must be made in writing (or equivalent) within one month of the date the alleged incident occurred and must provide details of the complaint.

Letters/emails of complaint will be acknowledged within ten working days of receipt and will be investigated by the appropriate member of the National Archives' senior staff. A written response to the complaint will be provided within four working weeks/twenty working days from the date that we receive your formal complaint. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can, within one calendar month from the date of our final response to your complaint, request an independent internal review.

This will only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and will be referred by the Director of the National Archives to a case reviewer in the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. Should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the further review, you can contact the Office of the Ombudsman, 6 Earlsfort Terrace, Saint Kevin's, Dublin 2, D02 W773.

### **Responsibility to our staff**

The National Archives has a responsibility to ensure that members of its staff are treated fairly if a complaint is made against them. They are entitled to be informed immediately and fully of any complaint made about them and asked for their comments, kept informed of progress in the investigation of the complaint and told of the outcome of the complaint review. If a member of staff makes a complaint about a user of our services or a counter-complaint in response to a complaint, the matter will be looked into by our senior staff. In the case of a counter-complaint, a separate investigating officer will be assigned to look into it to ensure fairness.

### **Confidentiality**

We respect the need for confidentiality when a complaint is made, both for the complainant and for any member of staff who has a complaint made against them. We aim to investigate complaints with sensitivity, preserve confidentiality and to share information only when it is a necessary part of the investigation.

### **Policy for dealing with unreasonably persistent enquiries**

Our staff will treat people in a courteous, fair and proportionate manner and we expect similar courtesy and reasonable behaviour in return. Very occasionally, we will refuse to respond to a complaint. This will only happen if the person making the complaint is insulting or abusive towards our staff, if their complaint lies outside the services provided by the National Archives or if the complainant does not accept the results of our investigation. We will only do this where it is absolutely necessary and we will write to the person concerned to explain why we believe this to be the case.

### **Contact details for appeals and complaints**

Complaints, Corporate Services, National Archives, Bishop Street, Dublin 8, D08 DF85.

Email: [query@nationalarchives.ie](mailto:query@nationalarchives.ie)