

Introduction

Medical Support Services (MSS) is a business unit within the Social Security Agency (SSA). The Agency is committed to providing all customers with a high standard of service. MSS fully supports that commitment.

This leaflet tells how our complaints procedure works and explains in straightforward terms the steps to follow.

You can get more information on how to complain about other SSA services in the leaflet "Making a complaint" which is available in Social Security Offices and the Benefit Shop, Castle Court.

Our commitment

Complaints about any aspect of our service are welcomed and are dealt with in a positive way.

We will fully and fairly investigate every complaint and give an explanation of the circumstances. If a mistake has been made we will apologise and try to put things right as soon as we can. Our complaints procedures are designed to get information in the shortest possible time and issue a reply within the time limits described later in this leaflet.

What is a complaint?

For us a complaint is an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction with the standard of service provided.

Where to complain?

We have 11 medical examination centres throughout Northern Ireland and an administrative office in Belfast.

- ◆ If you have been examined in any of the centres you can make your complaint to the staff on duty at the time, or contact the MSS complaints officer at the address given at the end of this leaflet.
- ◆ If you are examined at home you can make your complaint immediately to the doctor who examined you, or contact the MSS complaints officer at the address given at the end of this leaflet.

How to complain

You can make a complaint to us either in person, by telephone, by letter or e-mail. In some cases the complaint may be dealt with verbally. You may have other complaints, which we would ask you to put in writing, so that we are absolutely clear about which aspect of our service you are unhappy with. In all cases you should make your complaint within 6 months of you first knowing about the problem. But, if there is a good reason, MSS may extend this time limit.

How the procedures work

Sometimes the person you are dealing with can resolve your complaint informally and quickly. However, if you prefer you can contact the complaints officer at the address given at the end of this leaflet.

The complaints officer will arrange for your complaint to be investigated and a reply issued to you. If you are dissatisfied with the reply you can contact the complaints officer again and they will refer your case to a more senior medical or administrative officer, who will arrange for your complaint to be reviewed and a further reply issued.

In all cases your complaint will be:

- ◆ acknowledged within 2 working days;
- ◆ investigated thoroughly;
- ◆ treated confidentially; and
- ◆ replied to within 10 working days

If an unavoidable delay occurs we will let you know the reason why and advise when a final reply might be expected.

Customer dissatisfaction with reply

If you are not satisfied with our reply you can write to the Social Security Agency Chief Executive at the address given at the end of this leaflet. The Chief Executive will ask his Customer Services Director to reply on his behalf.

If you are not satisfied with the response on behalf of the Chief Executive, you can write to, or telephone the Independent Case Examiner. You will find the address at the end of this leaflet.

The Independent Case Examiner is not part of the SSA and the service is free. More information is available on Leaflet ICE1 that you can get at any Social Security Office, and the Benefit Shop, Castle Court.

Alternatively, you can ask your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to refer your complaint to the Assembly Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman is independent and can investigate complaints against Government Departments and their Agencies. The Ombudsman will normally expect you to have used our complaint procedure before considering your complaint. The address to contact is given at the end of this leaflet.

Conclusion

By examining your complaints we will be able to identify any problems with our service and take action to put them right.

Useful Addresses

Complaints Officer
Social Security Agency
Medical Support Services
Royston House
34 Upper Queen Street
Belfast BT1 6FX
Phone: 028 9054 2152
Fax: 028 9054 2192
E-mail: enquiries.mss@dsdni.gov.uk

Chief Executive
Social Security Agency
5th Floor The Lighthouse Building
Gasworks Business Park
Ormeau Road
Belfast BT1 2JB
Phone: 028 9082 9472
Fax: 028 9082 9539
E-mail: customerservice.unit@dsdni.gov.uk

Independent Case Examiner
PO Box 155
Chester CH99 9SA
Phone: 0845 606 0777 (local call rate)
Fax: 0151 801 8825
Minicom: 0151 801 8888
E-mail: ice@ukgov.demon.co.uk

Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast BT1 6HN
Phone: 028 9023 3821
Freephone: 0800 343424
Fax: 028 9023 4912

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SOCIAL
SECURITY
AGENCY

A Guide
to our complaints
procedure

Medical Support
Services (MSS)

