



How to complain about the **Child Support Agency**

About this leaflet

This leaflet explains how you can complain if you are not happy with the service you have received from us.

You can complain if you are not happy with the way that we handle your case or the standard of service you receive.

This leaflet does not explain how you can appeal against our decisions. Our leaflets "A Guide to changing Child Support decisions" and "How to appeal" contain this information.

What we do

We are responsible for applying the rules laid down by Parliament for the assessment, collection and payment of child maintenance. We were set up to make sure that both parents contribute towards bringing up their children if they can afford to do so.

You can find more information about child maintenance in the leaflet "For parents who live apart" (CSA 2001 (NI)). We explain how to get this leaflet on page 2.

We do our best to deal with your child maintenance quickly and fairly. Information about the standard of service that you can expect from us is set out in our charter.

You can get copies of these leaflets and our charter from your local Social Security office or by calling our Customer Helpline on 0345 139 896. Lines are open between 8.00 am and 8.00 pm Monday to Friday and 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Saturday. Calls are charged at local call rates if you use BT or Mercury phones. Textphone users can call 0345 139 704. We may record our calls to check our service and to train our staff.

How to complain about the service you have received

If you are not happy with the service you have received, you can get in touch with us.

All our staff will be able to help and advise you.

Our Customer Service Manager is based in the Child Support Agency Centre at Great Northern Tower, Belfast. The Customer Service Manager's name and a contact phone number is displayed in the waiting area of your local Social Security office. If you phone our Customer Helpline, you will be able to speak to one of our customer service staff about your complaint. Their number will be on a letter we have sent you. If you prefer to write, any of our staff will give you the name and address of the person you need to write to if you ask them. Your complaint can be sent by e-mail to the address below:

customer.helpline@dhssni.gov.uk

If you wish you can make your complaint at any of our Area Offices. The addresses and phone numbers of our Area Offices are on page 11.

If you are still not satisfied, you can write to the manager of the Child Support Agency Centre in Great Northern Tower, Belfast. They will investigate your complaint and do everything they can to help.

If you are still not satisfied after your complaint has been investigated, you can write to our Chief Executive:

The Chief Executive
Child Support Agency
Great Northern Tower
17 Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7AD

What we will do

We aim to do the following for all levels in the complaints process:

- Acknowledge your complaint by letter, or phone if you prefer, within 2 working days of receiving it.
- Send you a full reply within 10 working days. If we cannot send you a full reply, we will send you an initial reply within 10 working days to tell you when you can expect a full reply.

We will do the following:

- Put right any mistakes as quickly as possible.
- Keep your complaint confidential.
- Investigate your complaint fully and fairly.

- Keep you informed of how our investigations are going, where appropriate.
- Apologise and give you an explanation if we have provided a poor service.
- Decide whether to pay you a special payment if you have suffered a financial loss, gross inconvenience or severe impact on your health because of a mistake we have made. Please see page 7 for information about special payments.
- Use your complaint to help us to improve our customer services.

What to do if you are not satisfied with the way we have dealt with your complaint

Independent Case Examiner

If you are not satisfied with the way we deal with your complaint, you can write to the **Independent Case Examiner**.

The Independent Case Examiner can look at complaints about the way we have handled your case, for example, if we have taken a long time to deal with it or if we have made a mistake and not put it right.

The Independent Case Examiner will investigate your complaint if:

- You have given us the chance to consider your complaint and have received a reply about that complaint from the office dealing with your case;
- You have already written to and have received a reply from or on behalf of our Chief Executive; **and**
- You contact the Independent Case Examiner within 6 months of receiving a reply about that complaint from our Chief Executive.

The Independent Case Examiner cannot look at complaints that involve child support law, for example if you think your maintenance assessment is wrong.

The Independent Case Examiner will not look at your complaint if:

- You have not given us the chance to put it right first;
or
- Your complaint has been investigated or is being investigated by the Parliamentary Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

You can get more information about the Independent Case Examiner in the leaflet (ICE 1 (NI)) "The Independent Case Examiner for the Child Support Agency". This is sent out with all Chief Executive replies, or you can get it from the address on page 6, your nearest Social Security office or from the Child Support Agency Centre at Great Northern Tower, Belfast.

You can contact the Independent Case Examiner by writing to:

Independent Case Examiner for the
Child Support Agency
PO Box 1245
Belfast
BT2 7DF
Phone: 0151 801 8800
Minicom: 0151 801 8888

Parliamentary Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Members of Parliament can ask the Ombudsman to investigate your complaint.

You can get more information about the Ombudsman from:

The Ombudsman
Freepost
Belfast
BT1 6HN
Phone: 0800 343424 (Freephone)

or call in at:
The Ombudsman's Office
33 Wellington Place
Belfast BT1 6HN

The Ombudsman will normally expect you to have used our complaints procedure before considering your complaint.

Other independent advice

You can also ask for advice from any other person or group such as:

- Your local Citizens' Advice Bureau;
- An independent advice centre;
- A professional advisor, such as a solicitor (but you will have to pay the solicitor's bills unless you are entitled to free legal advice and help under the "green form" scheme); or
- Your Member of Parliament.

Special Payments

We will do our best to deal with your child maintenance quickly and properly, however every organisation can occasionally make mistakes or take longer than necessary to handle matters.

We may consider paying you a special payment if it is determined that you have suffered a financial loss or gross inconvenience, or evidence is provided by a third party in respect of the severe impact on your health because we made a mistake or took a long time to deal with your child maintenance.

If you feel that this applies to you, write to the Customer Service Manager at the Child Support Agency Centre that is dealing with your case, detailing the reasons for your claim. You will find the address on a letter you have received from us.

There is more information in the Department of Health and Social Service's guide "Financial redress for maladministration". You can look at a copy of this guide in any Social Security office.

We consider each case individually.

Help us to help you

We are always pleased to receive suggestions to help us to improve our services. We are taking action to improve areas where our customers have told us our service could be better.

We want to know how satisfied you are with the service you get from us. We also want to know how you think we can improve it.

We will carry out regular surveys to find out your opinions and ideas.

If you have any comments or suggestions about how you think we could improve our services, please write to:

The Customer Service Manager
Child Support Agency
Great Northern Tower
17 Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7AD
Phone: 0345 139825

Area Offices

Antrim

Antrim Social Security Office
20 Castle Street
Antrim BT41 4JD
Phone: (028) 9442 6500

Foyle

Foyle Social Security Office
Asylum Road
Londonderry BT48 7EA
Phone: (028) 7131 9500

Newry

Newry Social Security Office
Bridge Street
Newry BT35 8AJ
Phone: (028) 4062 0800
*(This Office is temporarily in Banbridge
Social Security Office.)*

Omagh

Omagh Social Security Office
Mountjoy Road
Omagh BT35 8AJ
Phone: (028) 8225 4222

Corporation Street

Corporation Street
Social Security Office
24-42 Corporation Street
Belfast BT1 3DR
Phone: (028) 9025 1411

Falls Road

Falls Road Social Security
Office
19 Falls Road
Belfast BT12 4PH
Phone: (028) 9054 2800

Hollywood Road

Hollywood Road
Social Security Office
106-108 Hollywood Road
Belfast BT4 1JU
Phone: (028) 9052 8900

CSA 2022 (NI)

September 99

Northern Ireland Child Support Agency

