



## **IMPROVING OUR SERVICES**

### **A Guide to the Youth Council's Customer Service Charter and Complaints Procedure**

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) was established under the Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

YCNI is a non-departmental public body (NDPB). This is a body which has a role in the processes of government, but is not a government department. It operates at arm's length from its sponsoring Department (of Education). There are three categories of NDPB: (i) executive bodies, (ii) advisory bodies, and (iii) tribunals. The Youth Council is an executive body.

The Council is funded through grant-in-aid by the Department of Education, and its affairs are managed by a Board comprising 15 publicly appointed members. The Chief Executive is the principal executive and accounting officer of the Council, and is supported by professional staff responsible for subject and functional areas of the Council's programme.

## **VISION**

### **The Youth Council's vision of the future is one where**

- all children and young people are valued in their own right and have the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to fully participate as active citizens in an inclusive society;
- the educational and developmental role of youth work is valued, effectively resourced and implemented by a sufficient number of appropriately trained and supported youth workers; and
- the Youth Council is recognised by government, the youth sector and others, as the key agency advocating for youth work and influencing policy impacting on young people.

The Youth Council sees its role in creating that society by:

- Promoting the participation of young people
- Shaping youth work policies and strategies
- Promoting youth work and the rights of young people
- Promoting peace-building, inclusion and active citizenship
- Developing youth work practice
- Supporting and resourcing regional voluntary youth organisations

## **VALUES**

The Youth Council actively applies the following values to all areas of its work:

- Young person focused
- Equity, diversity and interdependence
- Excellence
- Partnership

## **STATUTORY FUNCTIONS**

The Council's statutory functions, as set out in the Youth Service (NI) Order 1989, are:

- To advise the Department of Education, Education and Library Boards and other bodies on the development of the youth service
- To encourage cross-community activity by the youth service
- To encourage the provision of facilities for the youth service, and facilities which are especially beneficial to young persons
- To encourage and assist the co-ordination and efficient use of the resources of the youth service
- To assist the effective provision of administrative services by the voluntary headquarter organisations

In addition, Council:

- Advises on the training of part-time and full-time youth workers
- Encourages the development of European/International opportunities for young people and those who work with them

## **CUSTOMER CHARTER**

### Openness and Access to Information

On our website, and/or in a range of other formats, we will:

- Publish our Strategic Plan
- Publish our Business Plans
- Publish our Annual Report and Accounts
- Publish details of our policies and programmes
- Provide clear and straightforward information about our services

We will:

- Consult with our customers, both formally and informally, at various stages in the development of our policies, programmes and services, and will produce consultation documents in alternative formats
- Have a complaints procedure for the services we provide
- Publish, monitor and evaluate the targets set for our service delivery

## **SERVICE STANDARDS**

### When you TELEPHONE US

- Our switchboard will be open from 9.00 am – 5.00 pm Monday – Friday. Your call will be answered within 5 rings.
- An answering machine will operate outside the stated opening hours, and during weekends/holiday periods.
- Messages left on the answering machine will be responded to within one working day.
- When you telephone, if you have a contact name your call will be transferred directly to that person.
- If the person you wish to speak to is not available, a message can be left with the switchboard operator. This will be passed on to the appropriate person, and your call returned within one working day.
- If you do not have a contact name, the switchboard operator will ask about the nature of your enquiry, and will transfer your call to the appropriate person.

When you WRITE/FAX/E-MAIL Us

- We will include contact name/addresses/telephone and fax numbers on all correspondence.
- We will answer your correspondence within 10 working days of receipt.
- Where it is not possible to reply in full within this time limit, your correspondence will be acknowledged and you will be told, in writing, the reason(s) for any delay and when you can expect a detailed response.

When you VISIT OUR OFFICES

- The Youth Council offices are open to the public between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday - Friday.
- Visitors should report to the Youth Council's reception desk (on the ground floor), where the receptionist will confirm your appointment and notify the person you are meeting of your arrival.
- You will be seen within 10 minutes by the person with whom you have an appointment.
- If you do not have an appointment, you will be seen within 15 minutes by someone who can help you.

**YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The Youth Council is committed to providing the best professional service possible. It is by listening to those who use our services and learning from what they have to say that we will be able to improve what we do. If you have any comments or suggestions on how we can improve our services, we want to hear from you.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The Youth Council aims to provide an effective and efficient standard of service. We welcome your comments and suggestions, both positive and negative, about the service we provide. If something goes wrong, or if you are dissatisfied with the service you have received, please let us know. Your feedback can help us to put things right and improve our services in the future.

If you feel we have failed to do something, done something wrong, acted unfairly or discourteously, or if you wish to offer suggestions for improvement, the following complaints procedure outlines the steps you should take.

Please note that **the complaints procedure is not an appeals system against properly reached funding or grant making decisions. Separate appeals systems are in place for that purpose.**

### Making a Complaint

**Please contact us with your concerns as quickly as possible, as this will make it easier for us to find out what went wrong. We can deal with your complaint more effectively if you tell us:**

- briefly, what your complaint is about;
- when it happened;
- who you dealt with in the Youth Council;
- What you would like us to do to put things right.

Please keep a note of any telephone conversations and keep copies of any letters you send or receive.

In compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and in line with our Equality Scheme, we will consider any special needs of a person making a complaint.

## Complaints Procedure

### **Step 1: Initial Complaint**

**If you are not happy with the service you have received, you should initially contact the person that you first dealt with. They will try to put things right.**

We hope that most complaints can be dealt with as quickly, and as close to the root of the problem, as possible.

### **Step 2: Formal Complaint**

If you are not satisfied with the response you have received from your initial complaint, a formal written [or other suitable format] complaint should be sent to The Chief Executive, YCNI, Forestview, Purdy's Lane, Belfast BT8 7AR.

You will receive a written acknowledgement within 3 working days from receipt, and a full response within 10 working days from receipt. If we cannot give a full response within this time, we will write to tell you why, and let you know what is being done to investigate your complaint.

### **Step 3: Review by Council**

If you are not satisfied with the response at Step 2, you can write to the YCNI Chairperson asking that the matter be put before a meeting of the Youth Council. The full facts of the complaint will be presented to the next scheduled Council meeting, and a reply will be sent to you within 10 working days of the meeting.

**If you are still dissatisfied after these steps have been taken, you can contact the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints (also known as the Ombudsman) at:  
NI Commissioner for Complaints  
33 Wellington Place  
Belfast BT1 6HN**

**Freephone: 0800 343424**

**Telephone: 028 9023 3821**

**Fax: 028 9023 4912**

**E-mail: [ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk)**

## **CONTACTING US**

**In writing:**

The Youth Council for Northern Ireland  
Forestview  
Purdy's Lane  
BELFAST BT8 7AR

**E-Mail:** [info@ycni.org](mailto:info@ycni.org)

**Telephone:** 028 9064 3882

**Textphone:** 028 9064 4801

**Fax:** 028 9064 3874

**Website:** [www.ycni.org](http://www.ycni.org)