How to Make a Complaint to NISCC
About a Registered Social Care Worker

Introduction
This leaflet will give you advice if you are concerned about how you or someone close to you has been treated by a social care worker. We use the term social care worker to describe qualified social workers, social work students and others who provide personal care to service users.

Anyone can make a complaint to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC). Before making a complaint however, please read this leaflet carefully as it possible that there is a more suitable way to have your complaint resolved without involving NISCC.

We always recommend that you complain to the worker’s employer in the first instance. They also need to know about your concerns as they are responsible for the worker’s practice and for the services you receive. However, if your complaint is so serious that it means that the social care worker is unsafe to practise, we need to know about it. If you do decide to make a complaint to NISCC, please use the Complaints Form enclosed at the back of this booklet.

What NISCC does
NISCC is the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. It was set up in 2001 to:

- Keep a register of social care workers in Northern Ireland;
- Set the standards that social care workers have to meet; and
- Help to protect the public by making sure that registered social care workers are prevented from working in social care jobs if they cannot work to the standards we expect.

There are about 30,000 social care workers in Northern Ireland and they are being put on the Social Care Register in stages. Registration is currently compulsory for:

- Social workers and social work students;
- Managers of residential, day care and domiciliary care staff;
- Social care workers in residential childcare; and
- Social care workers in adult residential and nursing home settings.

You can use the ‘Check the Register’ facility on the home page of our website www.niscc.info to check if a worker is registered with the NISCC, or you can telephone our Customer Service Team on 028 9536 2600 (Option 1).
What you can expect from a social care worker

All social care workers who are registered with NISCC have agreed to work to standards that are described in NISCC Code of Practice for Social Care Workers which says that social care workers have to:

1. Protect the rights of service users and make sure they are listened to;
2. Earn and keep the trust of service users;
3. Help service users to keep themselves and others safe from harm;
4. Help service-users to live as independently and as safely as possible;
5. Be accountable for the standards of care they provide; and
6. Do the best job they can.

(You can download a copy of the Code of Practice from our website www.niscc.info).

What to do if you have concerns about a social care worker

If you have concerns about the actions of a social care worker, there are a number of options open to you depending on the nature of those concerns.

- If possible, you should speak directly to the worker to let them know your concerns and what you would like to see changed. Many worries about social care workers can be resolved without involving NISCC.
- If you are worried about talking to the worker, or have already spoken to them and you are still unhappy with their work, you should talk to their manager. You should also contact the manager if you are unhappy with the type of service you are getting, or if you would like additional support from the organisation.
- All social care organisations including voluntary organisations and charities should have written guidelines on making complaints. You should ask for the organisation’s complaints leaflet and follow the advice in that.
- If your complaint is about someone employed in a Health and Social Care Trust, your local Patient & Client Council will be able to offer you support in making a complaint. Their contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

The sort of things you should tell NISCC about

You should tell NISCC about any behaviour by a social care worker that seriously worries you and that doesn’t meet the standards that we expect as described earlier. Examples of the types of things you should report to NISCC are:

- Stealing money or property from a service-user;
- Assaulting a service-user or carer;
- Physical or verbal abuse;
- Intimidating a service user or carer;
- Making sexual advances to a service-user or carer;
- Failing to provide proper care; and
- Breaching professional boundaries

NISCC’s job is to take action if it considers that a registered social care worker has done something so serious or unsafe that it calls into question their suitability to remain on the Social Care Register and working in social care.
How to make a complaint to NISCC
We need you to tell us the following written information to allow us to investigate your complaint:

- Your name and address.
- The social care worker’s name and the address where he or she works.
- An explanation of what happened to concern you, and if possible, the dates this occurred.
- The names of anyone else who can support your complaint.
- Details of any other complaints you have made about your concern.

You should use the form at the back of this leaflet to provide this information. If you need help to fill in the form, please contact us in the NISCC Conduct Team. Call 028 9536 2940 or Email conduct@niscc.hscni.net

Our commitment to you
- NISCC takes all complaints very seriously.
- We will deal with them effectively and efficiently.
- We will keep you informed about what is happening to your complaint.
- We will take action where we think it is necessary.

What NISCC can do
If a social care worker is found guilty of misconduct, NISCC can:
- Place an admonishment (caution) on the worker’s registration record for a period of up to five years;
- Suspend the worker’s registration for up to two years; or
- Remove the worker from the Register.

What NISCC cannot do
- Deal with complaints about organisations or about anyone who is not on our Register.
- Fine a social care worker or pay you compensation.
- Tell a social care worker to apologise to you.
- Order a social care worker or their employer to provide you with the services you want.
- Intervene in a social work case or change decisions made by social workers.
- Influence court proceedings or overturn any decisions made by a court.

Contacting NISCC
If you would like to discuss your concerns before you complete a complaint form, please contact our Conduct Team in confidence – remember we are here to help you. Telephone: 028 9536 2940 Email: conduct@niscc.hscni.net

Remember, we can only take action if:
- The worker is on our Register;
- The complaint is about specific behaviour that does not meet our standards;
- The behaviour is serious enough to affect their suitability to be on our Register;
- We get evidence to support the complaint; and
- We have received a completed and signed Complaint Form.
Notes about completing the Complaint Form

- Name one worker only on the form, use a separate page if you want to complain about another social care worker or ask us to send you another form.
- If you are completing the form on someone else’s behalf, make sure you have their consent to do this and remember to give us their contact details.
- If you name any witnesses who can support your concerns, make sure that you have their consent to do so and tell us how we can contact them.
- If we need to make any special arrangements to speak to you, the service user or any witnesses, tell us what we need to do.

Next steps

- To investigate your complaint thoroughly, we will need to share the information with others, the worker and their employer, for example.
- If we cannot take any action we will write to you explaining our decision.
- We may refer the complaint to an independent Committee to decide what further action needs to be taken.
- You may be asked to make a statement and if the complaint is referred to a public hearing, you may be asked to give evidence.

Other organisations that can assist with concerns about services

We can only investigate complaints about the behaviour of individual registered workers. If you need assistance or have concerns about other aspects of social care services you could contact the following:

**Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)** - may be able to help you make your complaint. You can find your local office or email a query by checking the CAB website, www.citizensadvice.co.uk

**Patient & Client Council (PCC)** - can offer advice and support to anyone who has a complaint about any part of Health & Social Care Services. They have four regional offices and you can contact a support officer on Freephone 0800 917 0222 or by emailing complaints.pcc@hscni.net

**Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)** - is responsible for monitoring and inspecting the quality of Health & Social Care Services in Northern Ireland. You should contact RQIA if you have concerns about how services are managed. Call 028 9051 7500 or by email info@rqia.org.uk
Complaint Form

For a complaint against a social care worker registered with NISCC

Completing this form will give us the information we need to deal with your complaint. If you need help to complete the form, please contact our Conduct Team on 028 9536 2940 or email conduct@niscc.hscni.net. If you do not know the answer to a question, just write “don’t know”.

1. Your Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name (Title, first name &amp; last name)</th>
<th>Please tick the box below that best describes how you are involved in this complaint</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am the Service User</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a relative/friend/carer of the Service User</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Role (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcode</td>
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If you are not the service user, tick this box to confirm they are aware you are making this complaint on their behalf & provide the service user’s details on an accompanying sheet.

Please indicate if we need to make any special arrangements when we contact you and provide additional detail below? (e.g. interpreter, signer)

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<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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2. Details of the Social Care Worker

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social Care Worker’s full name</th>
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<tr>
<th>Name of the Social Care Worker’s Employer</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Details of where this Social Care Worker works (or was working at the time of the incident)</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social Care Worker’s NISCC Registration Number (if known)</th>
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If you want to complain about more than one social care worker, please tick this box and give their details on a separate sheet.

NISCC is registered with the Information Commissioner. Data supplied by you on this form will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
3. Other Investigations Into Your Concerns

Please indicate if you have reported your concerns to any of the following people?

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Social Care Worker’s Employer</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Another Person/Organisation (please provide details)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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4. Your Complaint About the Social Care Worker

Please describe your concerns about the social care worker. Tell us what happened; when and where the incident(s) occurred and the reasons why you think it was wrong for the social care worker to behave in the way you describe. Also tell us about the evidence you have to support your complaint, including the contact details of any witnesses to the incident(s). You can attach additional sheets to this form if you need to include more information.

5. Your Declaration

- To the best of my knowledge, the information I have provided above is accurate.
- I understand that in order to investigate the complaint, the NISCC will need to share details with the social care worker(s) concerned, their employer(s) and other regulatory bodies as necessary.
- I understand that if this matter is referred to a public conduct hearing, I may be called to give evidence.

Please tick this box to confirm that any named witnesses are aware that you have made this complaint and the NISCC Conduct Team has permission to contact them directly.

Return this form in confidence to:
Head of Conduct, NISCC, 7th Floor Millennium House, 19-25 Great Victoria Street, Belfast BT2 7AQ

We can provide this leaflet in other formats such as large print, Braille, alternative languages (for those who are not fluent in English) or audio. Contact us if you need to request an alternative format. The leaflet is also available on the NISCC website at www.niscc.info.

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