

**VICTIMS SUPPORT PROGRAMME & PEACE IV**

**Guidance Note on the Appeal of Application Decisions**

**VSS G/N1**

Updated June 2021

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# Introduction

This Guidance Note sets out the procedure to be adhered to if an applicant wishes to request an appeal of a decision concerning the application process and/or subsequent award of funding.

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that the decisions taken and the processes followed by the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) are applied fairly and consistently. The appeal will provide a process independent to the original decision making process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate to an Appeal Panel that:

**Either:**

“The outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made based on the information provided.”

**And/or:**

“That there was a failure in adherence to procedures or systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.”

**The Appeals Panel will not consider any other grounds for appeal.**

This procedure allows applicants to explain and demonstrate how they have met the requirements of the funding scheme and why the initial decision should be reconsidered. The procedure comprises a review of your application by an Appeal Panel.

The Appeal Panel will comprise of VSS Board Members who were not involved in the making of the original decision. The VSS Board also reserves the right to supplement the Appeal Panel with (an) external independent member(s) if required.

# Your Right to have a Decision Appealed

If you consider that the decision regarding your funding application is incorrect, you have the right to request an appeal.

We recommend that before requesting a formal appeal, you contact the VSS Programmes Manager to discuss your case. The Programmes Manager will be able to provide clarification in writing about the following:

1. Information on the application scoring and criteria;
2. De-briefing on the reasons for rejection;
3. Options in terms of the formal appeal procedure.

Clarification from the Programmes Manager may resolve the matter without the need to request a formal appeal. Using this option does not affect your right to proceed with a formal appeal; however, the VSS will not extend the deadline for return of your submission of appeal form. **(Annex 1)**

# How to Apply for an Appeal of an Application

The appeal of an application decision should be made in writing using **Annex 1**.

You should return the completed form **(Annex 1)** to the Programmes Manager, via e-mail (programmes@vssni.org) within **28 working days** of the date of the letter from VSS outlining the reasons why your application was unsuccessful.

**The VSS will not accept late applications.**

On receipt of **Annex 1**, VSS will assign a Programme Officer to your case. The Programme Officer is available to discuss your case and answer queries about the appeal process. We will notify you of the date and time that the appeal will take place.

# The Appeal Panel

An Appeal Panel will undertake a full review of your application. The Appeal Panel will comprise of VSS Board Members who were not involved in the making of the original decision. The VSS Board also reserves the right to supplement the Appeal Panel with (an) external independent member(s) if required.

Panel members are required to declare any conflicts of interest before they review an application. Examples of conflicts that may arise include Panel members who may have a personal interest in the case under consideration or if they are known to the applicant. In such situations, the VSS will exclude that Panel member from that case and appoint a new Panel member.

The Panel's role is to consider the representations made by you; they have no discretion to operate outside the rules of the scheme. The Panel cannot make recommendations on policy or regulatory interpretation.

# What happens After the Panel reach a decision?

When the Appeals Panel agrees on a final decision, the Panel will send a Royal Mail recorded delivery letter to the address provided on the Appeals Form outlining the decision on your case.

# Standard of Service

If you do not receive the standard of service you expect, or you are still unhappy with the decision of the VSS Appeal Panel, you have the right to complain to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman Office (NIPSO).

Referrals to the Ombudsman should be made within six months of the final response from the VSS Board.

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman**

Progressive House

33 Wellington Place,

Belfast, BT1 6HN

Telephone: 02890 233821

Freephone: 0800 343424

Text Phone 028 90897789

Free post – Freepost NIPSO

E-mail – nipso@nipso.org.uk

Website – [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk/)

# Contact

Victims and Survivors Service

1st Floor Seatem House

28–32 Alfred Street

Belfast

BT2 8EN

Telephone: 028 90 279 100

Text Phone: 028 90 324 495

E-mail: programmes@vssni.org

Visit: [www.vssni.org](http://www.vssni.org/)

**If you require this information in a different format, please contact us.**

## Annex 1

## APPEAL FORM

**It is important that anyone completing this form has read and understood the guidance note on the Appeal of Application Decisions.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organisation Name:** |  |
| **Reference Number:** |  |
| **Contact person:** |  |
| **Address Line 1:** |  |
| **Address Line 2:** |  |
| **Town/City:** |  |
| **Post Code:** |  |
| **Contact Telephone Number:** |  |
| **E-mail Address:** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Please state the grounds upon which you wish to appeal the decision taken by the Victims and Survivors Service[[1]](#footnote-1):** |
|  |

**This form and any supporting documentation must be completed and returned to the VSS Programmes Manager, via e-mail to programmes@vssni.org within 28 working days of the letter from VSS outlining the reasons why your application was unsuccessful.**

**Information missing from your original application cannot be taken into account by the Appeal Panel. The Appeal Panel can only review what was submitted by the closing date of the application process**

1. Please identify here the grounds for appeal in line with section 1 of the Guidance Note. Please also provide any narrative necessary to explain the grounds/reason for the appeal, and to refer to/explain any additional supporting information you are providing. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)