

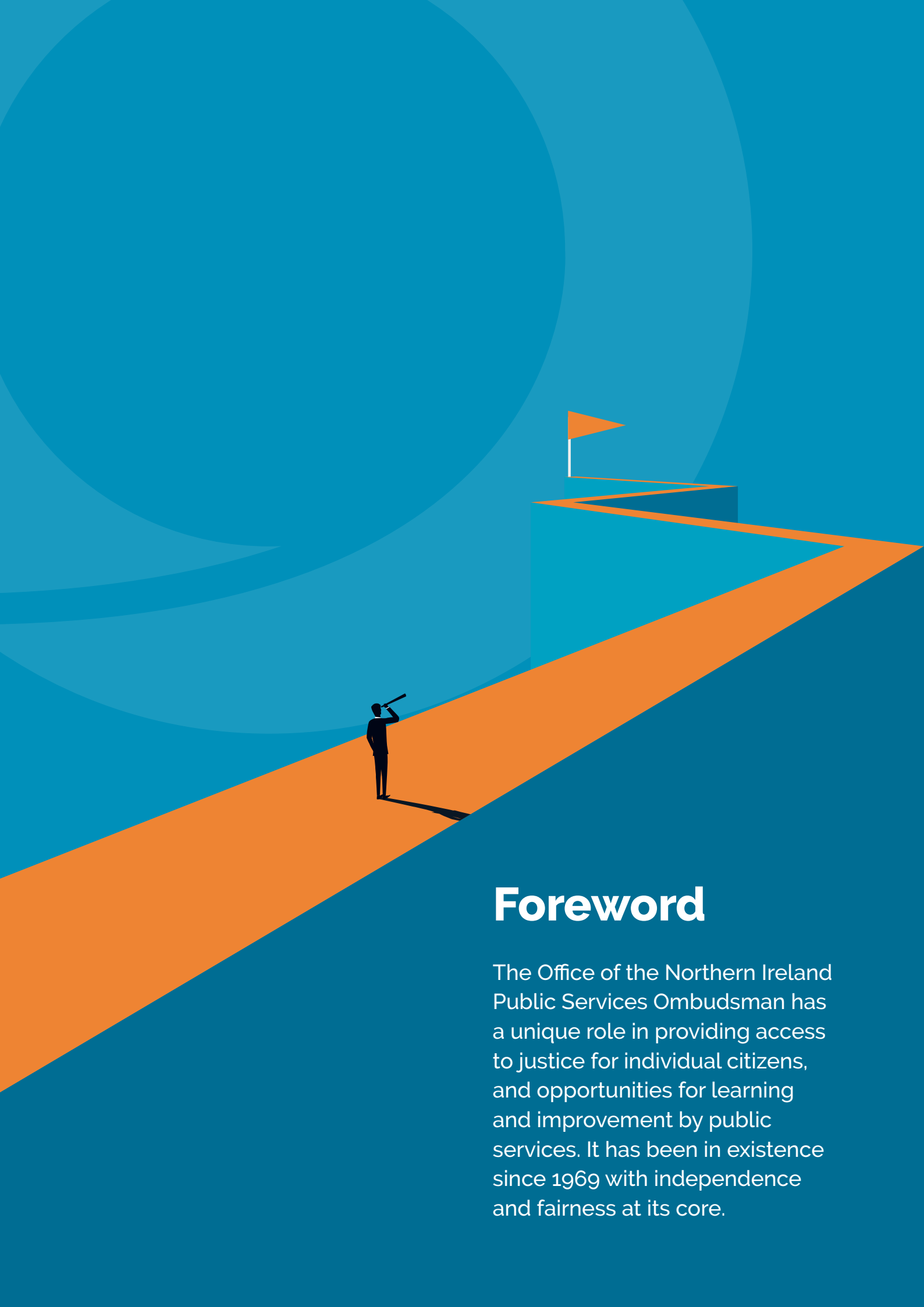
# NIPSO

## Strategic Plan

**2025-29**



Northern Ireland  
**Public Services**  
Ombudsman



## Foreword

The Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman has a unique role in providing access to justice for individual citizens, and opportunities for learning and improvement by public services. It has been in existence since 1969 with independence and fairness at its core.

A fair society means that everyone should have equal access to justice and the redress it can provide. Yet the complexity, cost and time involved in accessing the traditional legal processes for civil or administrative justice can prove prohibitive. Ombudsman offices increasingly provide a route for the individual citizen to seek both resolution from and accountability for public bodies and their decision making.

I am pleased to present our next four-year Strategic Plan 2025 – 2029. In delivering our 2022 – 2025 plan we had a focus on accessibility, engagement and making a difference. While we have achieved much over the last three years, these themes remain core to providing a route to access to justice for all citizens in Northern Ireland.

We have delivered many of the actions we had set ourselves in our 2022 – 2025 plan. In particular, we have deepened our level of engagement and understanding of how to make our service more accessible. We regularly analyse complainant data to understand the demographics and those who do and do not use our service. We have established ongoing mechanisms for complainant feedback rather than relying on a one-off survey and have sought to continue to monitor public awareness.

We have worked with public bodies through complaint standards to ensure a simple, accessible and compassionate complaints process. This work remains ongoing across the public sector and our aim is to ensure all public bodies have adopted the new process and the changes in culture it will bring by 2027.

Using our work to make a difference by providing redress, driving improvement and making a positive change for people, public services and in public policy also remains key. While we have developed our work on publishing our reports, undertaking systemic investigations and providing thematically analysed case digests, there remains more to be done. Over the next four years we want to assess and share the impact of our work further and use our unique position to provide insight, analysis and evidence to inform improvement in public services.

Underpinning all of this are our core values of independence, integrity, fairness, and being people focused, while aiming to deliver excellence through focusing on our people, systems and approaches.

Our aim is to continue on our journey of ensuring we have a relevant, modern and inclusive Ombudsman's Office that makes a positive difference for people and public services in Northern Ireland.

This next Strategic Plan reflects the improvements we have already made and charts our next steps on this important journey.

**Margaret Kelly**



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Kelly".

*Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman*

## Vision

Make a positive difference for people and public services in Northern Ireland by providing individual resolution, upholding standards and sharing learning to drive improvement.

## Purpose

Investigate unresolved complaints about public services, uphold standards and ensure accountability for public bodies and local councillors. Drive improvement through excellent Complaint Standards and shared learning from individual complaints and systemic reports.

## Values

Our values underpin all aspects of our work and how we engage internally and externally.



### Independence

We are open, non-partisan, unbiased and we act impartially.



### Integrity

We act honestly, solely in the public interest and adhere to the Nolan Principles.



### People Focused

We work supportively with each other. We treat people with respect and empathy, and we recognise and value individual experience. We are accessible and engage to explain our work.



### Fairness

We are open and transparent. We ensure all views are listened to and use an evidence-based approach in our decision making.



### Excellence

We deliver an excellent service, meeting our service standards with high levels of governance and accountability. We have a focus on continuous learning and improvement.



# Strategic Objectives

## Making a Difference

We use our work to provide redress, drive improvement and make a positive change for people, public services and public policy.

- 1.1** Deliver access to justice for individuals and help improve public services through investigation recommendations.
- 1.2** Develop a schedule of insight reports to analyse data and trends from our work to share learning and help drive wider improvements.
- 1.3** Improve standards in complaints handling to ensure the focus of public bodies is on candour, resolution and service improvement through learning from complaints.
- 1.4** Use our unique position to provide insight and analysis from our work to respond to public consultations or calls for evidence to inform change in public services and public policy.
- 1.5** Use our Own Initiative powers to investigate issues of public interest for wider impact.

## Engagement

We actively engage with the public, public bodies and political representatives to better understand the key issues affecting public services and improve awareness and understanding of our work.

- 2.1** Deliver our engagement strategy with our key stakeholders to improve understanding of our role and capture issues of public interest.
- 2.2** Share the value and impact of our work through the delivery of our strategic communication plan and publication schedule.
- 2.3** Promote high standards in public life, through proactive engagement, to improve and increase understanding of the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors.
- 2.4** Promote awareness of best practice in complaints handling to improve complaint standards across public services.



## Accessibility

We use our work to actively improve access to justice. We aim to ensure public bodies embed accessibility and inclusion as a key component of complaints procedures. We strive to ensure everyone who needs to use our service can do so.

- 3.1 Deliver the statutory Complaint Standards programme to improve access to justice across all public services through a simple, accessible and compassionate complaints process.
- 3.2 Implement our accessibility plan and undertake an annual review to ensure all those who need to use our service can do so.
- 3.3 Ensure our information is easy to understand and is available in a variety of formats.
- 3.4 Provide opportunities for those groups least likely to access NIPSO to engage with us.
- 3.5 Promote understanding of our role in providing a route for access to justice and redress for people in Northern Ireland.



## Delivering & Improving

We focus on our people, systems and approaches to ensure we are an effective and healthy organisation, demonstrating high levels of governance and accountability.

- 4.1 Implement our People Strategy to ensure that we maintain high performance and support the wellbeing of our staff.
- 4.2 Embed customer focus and continuous learning in the delivery and development of our service.
- 4.3 Continually review and improve our working systems and processes to ensure effective delivery, manage risk and ensure the most efficient use of resources.
- 4.4 Explore opportunities to minimise the environmental impact from our work while ensuring that we remain accessible and effective.
- 4.5 Demonstrate accountability and good governance through clear and accessible public reporting on our standards of delivery and use of resources.

# Measuring Progress

We will measure progress by using the following high level outcomes:

## 1

### Making a Difference

We will use our work to provide redress, drive improvement and make a positive change for people, public services and public policy.

- Analysis of investigation outcomes for complainants
- Feedback from complainants
- Progress on Complaint Standards implementation
- Contributing to policy consultations and development
- Analysis and follow-up on recommendations from individual and systemic investigation

## 2

### Engagement

We will actively engage with the public, public bodies and political representatives to better understand the key issues affecting public services and improve awareness and understanding of our work.

- Feedback from networks and key stakeholders
- Analysis of complainant demographics
- Content analysis of media coverage
- Programme of outreach informed by data
- Public Awareness survey





# 3

## Accessibility

We will use our work to actively improve access to justice. We will aim to ensure that public bodies to embed accessibility and inclusion as a key component of complaints procedures. We will strive to ensure everyone who needs to use our service can do so.

- Public Awareness Survey
- Complainant Feedback
- Equality Diversity & Inclusion Survey
- Analysis of NIPSO complainant demographics
- Monitoring of Complaint Standards in public services
- Deliver Accessibility Plan



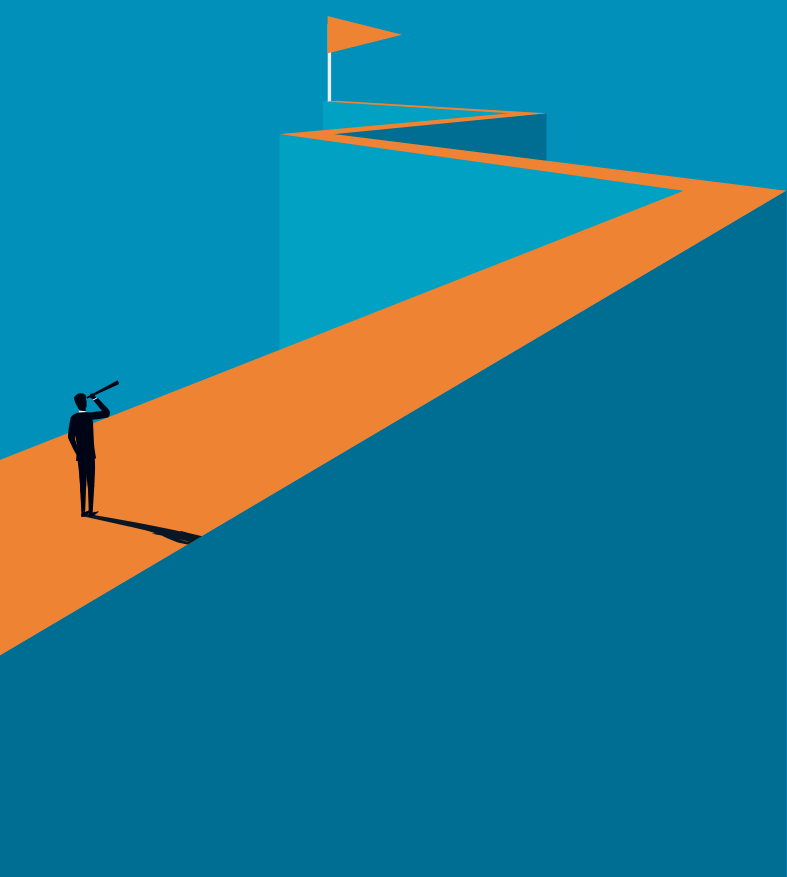
# 4

## Delivering & Improving

We focus on our people, systems and approaches to ensure we are an effective and healthy organisation, demonstrating high levels of governance and accountability.

- Progress on KPIs
- Staff feedback
- Deliver People Strategy
- Maximise use of case management system





Northern Ireland  
**Public Services**  
Ombudsman

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