
STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

1999 No. 225

**The Social Security Commissioners (Procedure)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999**

**PART III
PROCEDURE**

Representation

17. A party may conduct his case himself (with assistance from any person if he wishes) or be represented by any person whom he may appoint for the purpose.

Respondent's written observations

18.—(1) A respondent may submit to a Commissioner written observations on an appeal or reference within one month of being sent written notice of it.

(2) Written observations shall include—

- (a) the respondent's name and address and address for sending documents;
- (b) in the case of observations on an appeal, a statement as to whether or not he opposes the appeal; and
- (c) in any case, the grounds upon which the respondent proposes to rely.

(3) The office shall send a copy of any written observations from a respondent to every other party.

Written observations in reply

19.—(1) Any party may submit to a Commissioner written observations in reply within one month of being sent written observations under regulation 18.

(2) The office shall send a copy of any written observations in reply to every other party.

(3) Where—

- (a) written observations have been received from the respondent under regulation 18; and
- (b) each of the principal parties expresses the view that the decision appealed against was erroneous in point of law,

a Commissioner may make an order under Article 15(7) of the Order setting aside the decision and may dispense with the procedure in paragraphs (1) and (2).

Directions

20.—(1) Where a Commissioner considers that an application, appeal or reference made to him gives insufficient particulars to enable the question at issue to be determined, he may direct the party

making the application, appeal or reference, or any respondent, to furnish any further particulars as may reasonably be required.

(2) In the case of an application for leave to appeal, or an appeal from an appeal tribunal, a Commissioner may, before determining the application or appeal, direct the tribunal to submit a statement of such facts or other matters as he considers necessary for the proper determination of that application or appeal.

(3) At any stage of the proceedings, a Commissioner may, on or without an application, give any directions as he may consider necessary or desirable for the efficient despatch of the proceedings.

(4) Without prejudice to regulations 18 and 19, or to paragraph (3), a Commissioner may direct any party before him to make any written observations as may seem to him necessary to enable the question at issue to be determined.

(5) An application under paragraph (3) shall be made in writing to a Commissioner and shall set out the direction which the applicant seeks.

(6) Unless a Commissioner shall otherwise determine, the office shall send a copy of an application under paragraph (3) to every other party.

Procedure on linked case notice from the Department

21. Any notice from the Department to a Commissioner under Article 26 of the Order (Appeal involving issues that arise on appeal in other cases) shall be sent in writing and shall identify each appeal or application to which it relates.

Non-disclosure of medical evidence

22.—(1) Where, in any proceedings, there is before a Commissioner medical evidence relating to a person which has not been disclosed to that person and, in the opinion of the Commissioner, the disclosure to that person of that evidence would be harmful to his health, such evidence shall not be disclosed to that person.

(2) Evidence such as is mentioned in paragraph (1)—

(a) shall not be disclosed to any person acting for or representing the person to whom it relates; or

(b) in a case where a claim for benefit is made by reference to the disability of a person other than the claimant and the evidence relates to that other person, shall not be disclosed to the claimant or any person acting for or representing the claimant,

unless the Commissioner considers that it is in the interests of the person to whom the evidence relates to disclose it.

(3) Non-disclosure under paragraphs (1) or (2) does not preclude the Commissioner from taking the evidence concerned into account for the purpose of the proceedings.

Requests for hearings

23.—(1) Subject to paragraphs (2), (3) and (4), a Commissioner may determine any proceedings without a hearing.

(2) Where a request for a hearing is made by any party, the Commissioner shall grant the request unless he is satisfied that the proceedings can properly be determined without a hearing.

(3) Where a Commissioner refuses a request for a hearing, he shall send written notice to the person making the request, either before or at the same time as making his determination or decision.

(4) A Commissioner may, without an application and at any stage, direct a hearing.

Hearings

24.—(1) This regulation applies to any hearing of an application, appeal or reference to which these Regulations apply.

(2) Subject to paragraph (3), the office shall give reasonable notice of the time and place of any hearing before a Commissioner.

(3) Unless all the parties concerned agree to a hearing at shorter notice, the period of notice specified under paragraph (2) shall be at least 14 days before the date of the hearing.

(4) If any party to whom notice of a hearing has been sent fails to appear at the hearing, the Commissioner may proceed with the case in that party's absence, or may give directions with a view to the determination of the case.

(5) Any hearing before a Commissioner shall be in public, unless the Commissioner for special reasons directs otherwise.

(6) Where a Commissioner holds a hearing, the following persons or organisations shall be entitled to be present and be heard—

- (a) the person or organisation making the application, appeal or reference;
- (b) the claimant;
- (c) the Department;
- (d) a trade union, employers' association or other association which would have had a right of appeal under the Order;
- (e) in cases concerning statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay, the employer and the employee concerned;
- (f) a person from whom it is determined that any amount is recoverable under or by virtue of section 69 or 72 of the Administration Act(1); and
- (g) with the leave of a Commissioner, any other person.

(7) Any person entitled to be heard at a hearing may—

- (a) address the Commissioner;
- (b) with the leave of the Commissioner, give evidence, call witnesses and put questions directly to any other person called as a witness.

Summoning of witnesses

25.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), a Commissioner may summon any person to attend a hearing as a witness, at such time and place as may be specified in the summons, to answer any questions or produce any documents in his custody or under his control which relate to any matter in question in the proceedings.

(2) A person shall not be required to attend in obedience to a summons under paragraph (1) unless he has been given at least 14 days notice of the date of the hearing or, if less than 14 days, has informed the Commissioner that he accepts such notice as he has been given.

(3) Upon the application of a person summoned under this regulation, a Commissioner may set the summons aside.

(4) A Commissioner may require any witness to give evidence on oath and for this purpose an oath may be administered in due form.

(1) 1992 c. 8. Section 69 was amended by Section 2 of the Social Security (Overpayments) Act 1996 (c. 51) and Article 31 of, and paragraph 31 of Schedule 2 to the Job Seekers (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 [S.I.1995/2705 (N.I. 15)]. Section 72 was amended by paragraph 13 of the Job Seekers (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

Withdrawal of applications for leave to appeal, appeals and references

26.—(1) At any time before it is determined, an applicant may withdraw an application to a Commissioner for leave to appeal against a decision of an appeal tribunal by giving written notice to a Commissioner.

(2) At any time before the decision is made, the appellant or person making the reference to a Commissioner may withdraw his appeal or reference, with the leave of a Commissioner.

(3) A Commissioner may, on application by the party concerned, give leave to reinstate any application, appeal or reference which has been withdrawn in accordance with paragraphs (1) and (2) and, on giving leave, he may make directions as to the conduct of the proceedings.

Irregularities

27. Any irregularity resulting from failure to comply with the requirements of these Regulations shall not by itself invalidate any proceedings, and the Commissioner, before reaching his decision, may waive the irregularity or take steps to remedy it.