



**Foras na Gaeilge**

# Foras na Gaeilge Service Charter

## 1. Objective of the Service Charter

The Foras na Gaeilge Service Charter is a public statement of the level of service the public can expect when in contact with the organisation. The public includes all people in both jurisdictions, in their personal or professional capacities. Information is given in the Charter also about our Complaints Procedure and how to make a complaint and to seek an appeal if appropriate.

## 2. Mission and Vision

### Vision Statement

Our vision sets out the ambitions we want to achieve and where we want the Irish language to be in the future: 'Irish to be embedded as a community language in every aspect of life on the island of Ireland'.

### Mission Statement

Our mission sets out the reasons we exist, our remit and the change we wish to make: 'Strengthening the use and cultural richness of Irish in every place, for every person and in every aspect of life'.

## 3. Our Commitment

Foras na Gaeilge is committed to providing a professional, efficient and courteous service to the whole public; those who contact us to get a service. We will do our best to provide a high quality and accessible service at all times.

Foras na Gaeilge is committed to nurturing a workplace in which employees are encouraged and supported with dignity. Therefore, we ask the public to treat our staff with respect and dignity. We have the right to end contact with members of the public who do not adhere to that request.

These are the general principles of our service commitment:

- We will answer you promptly, efficiently and to as high a standard as possible.
- We will give you relevant and understandable advice and will give you clear and accurate information.
- We will be courteous and fair in our communication with you.
- We will cater to the particular needs of people who contact us.
- We will inform you of the rights and entitlements you have, as appropriate.
- We will provide you with a process to make a complaint about our service if necessary. Foras na Gaeilge will make every effort to resolve your complaint satisfactorily.
- Irish is the working language of Foras na Gaeilge. We will fulfil our duties under the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021 in the Republic of Ireland and under Part III of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and under the Identity and Language Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in Northern Ireland.

#### 4. Equality

We will follow good practice in relation to equality in force on the island of Ireland and will adhere to the legal requirements in that respect that apply to us in both jurisdictions. We will treat all persons who contact us fairly, regardless of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, religion and membership of the Travelling Community or any other minority group. All our staff will be given regular training on equality and anti-bias.

#### 5. Communication with us

Written communication (email and letters)

We will make every effort to give an acknowledgement response to all correspondence within 3 working days from the date received, under normal circumstances. We will provide a full answer to all correspondence within 15 working days or, in the case of a complex query where that is not possible, we will send an interim answer explaining the stage at which the case is and informing you when a full answer will be available. All members of staff will use automatic email responses when they are absent for periods longer than one day. In all answers that you will be sent, clear language will be used, and technical terms will be explained so that you have comprehensible and succinct information. We will respect your privacy, and your query will be dealt with in confidence. A copy of our privacy policy is on our website.

### Communication by telephone

If you contact us by telephone, we will try to answer the call as soon as possible, and we will be courteous and helpful at all times. We will introduce ourselves when the call is answered and will attempt to answer your question fully. If we cannot do that immediately, we will refer you to the correct staff member or department or we will take your contact details and will come back to you as soon as possible. All members of staff will make every effort to answer voicemail messages within 3 working days, under normal circumstances. Appropriate up to date voicemail messages will be put in place on various extensions of the organisation.

### Visitors to our offices

You can meet us at our offices from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm by appointment. All visitors who have made an appointment will be promptly welcomed as soon as the staff have been informed that they have arrived. When you visit Foras na Gaeilge we will be courteous and helpful and will provide you with accurate and clear information. We will make appropriate arrangements for meetings, and we will make sure that the meeting place is safe, clean and accessible. We will respect your privacy, and your query will be dealt with in confidence. A copy of our privacy policy is on our website.

### Our website

Our website will be regularly maintained, and it will be ensured that the material on it is accurate and up to date. We will use accurate and clear language to provide information on our website and in other digital resources and technical terms will be explained, to ensure that the content is succinct and understandable. We will ensure that our website is easy to use and comprehensible and that it can be read on various browsers and devices. Foras na Gaeilge contact points will be shown clearly on the site and our privacy policy will be published there also.

### Communication on social media

We will continue to post appropriate content on our main corporate accounts and our closed professional networks.

- When you contact us on our social media platform, we will try to answer your query within the working week, Monday to Friday.
- Sometimes we may not be able to provide an answer to all queries due to time and staff constraints.
- Please email [eolas@forasnagaeilge.ie](mailto:eolas@forasnagaeilge.ie) if you do not receive an answer from Foras na Gaeilge within 5 working days.

- Certain queries will require more detailed answers. In that case, we may ask you to move the conversation to a more appropriate platform, for example email or telephone.
- We will review messages and will remove any that are inappropriate or insulting.
- Our privacy policy is published on our website.

## 6. Making a complaint

Foras na Gaeilge is committed to providing excellent service in a prompt, courteous and fair manner. We understand, however, that people who use our services may be dissatisfied at times. In that event, people can make a complaint with us. Based on our dedication to high standard of service, we will consider that complaint and will respond to it.

This is the procedure.

A complaint is a statement that makes known that a person is dissatisfied, whether that dissatisfaction has any basis or not. Included in our policy are complaints in respect of:

- The standard of service we provide;
- Behaviour of staff;
- Action or lack of action by a member of staff that has an influence on an individual or group;
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and relevant equality legislation in the Republic of Ireland.

The following are not included in our policy:

- Complaints which have been fully investigated already through this procedure;
- Anonymous complaints;
- Complaints which may be reasonably considered to be vexatious and/or trivial;
- Complaints about access to information where there are other solutions available in legislation already, for example freedom of information and data protection;
- Complaints about funding decisions made by Foras na Gaeilge where particular procedures are already in place, for example the appeal process;
- Internal complaints that Foras na Gaeilge staff may have. This section is in connection with external complaints only.

If you are unhappy with the standard of service as regards timeliness, courtesy or fairness, you can in the first instance speak with the appropriate officer and explain the concern to them. If you consider that

the question may not be discussed or resolved by the appropriate officer, or if you are dissatisfied with their answer, you can speak with that person's line manager to discuss and resolve the question.

If a resolution has not been reached through informal means, a formal procedure may be used. In that case, you can send a written complaint to [gearain@forasnagaeilge.ie](mailto:gearain@forasnagaeilge.ie) and it will be referred to the Corporate Planning Division to be investigated. In that communication, explain that you are making a formal complaint, describe the nature and details of the complaint, explain the result of the informal discussion you had with the appropriate officer before and provide your contact details.

We will provide an acknowledgement that your complaint has been received within 5 working days. We will deal with the complaint seriously and it will be examined in a detailed and impartial manner. We may need to seek further details or information from you in order to do that. We will attempt to send you a written answer to the complaint within 10 working days from the date it has been received. However, in exceptional circumstances, when it is necessary to seek, gather or examine much information, there may be an extension in time added.

If you are not happy with the result, an appeal can be made to the Chief Executive of Foras na Gaeilge by writing to [gearain@forasnagaeilge.ie](mailto:gearain@forasnagaeilge.ie). Refer clearly to the answer that you are not happy with and send us the application for an appeal within 14 working days after you have received the first result. You will be given an answer within 10 working days as above.

In the event that you are not happy with the Chief Executive's answer, you have the right to present a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman (<https://www.ombudsman.ie/>) in the Republic of Ireland or the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (<https://www.nipso.org.uk/>) in Northern Ireland.

#### Complaints in connection with third party grantees

If your complaint is in connection with the editorial policy or creative stance of grantees funded by Foras na Gaeilge, the complaint in the first instance should be addressed to the grantee. Foras na Gaeilge strongly accepts the principle of editorial and creative freedom and cannot accept any responsibility for such decisions its grantees shall make. Foras na Gaeilge may investigate the complaint, however, if we have a valid cause for concern that the grantee is violating the conditions of the grant or violating legislation in connection with areas such as libel, defamation or hate speech.

We will deal with all complaints confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003 and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It should be noted that a complaint will not affect any relationship the complainant may have with Foras na Gaeilge in the future.

## **7. Data protection**

Foras na Gaeilge is subject to the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Data Protection Acts give protection to the privacy of persons whose personal details are being processed. 'Personal details' means information in connection with a living person that can be recognised from the details themselves or along with other information which is kept. Foras na Gaeilge will adhere to our privacy policy and our data protection policy, both of which are available on our website. Foras na Gaeilge expressly seeks the consent of people to receive communication about our work and other marketing projects. At any time, people can withdraw their consent so that their personal details will not be further processed and refuse all marketing communication. The communication staff will clearly inform you that you have that right and how to use it. Each department of Foras na Gaeilge has a data monitor who ensures that good practice is followed throughout the organisation.

## **8. Freedom of information**

Rights and rules in respect of freedom of information are set out in the Code of Practice of the North/South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland. That Code of Practice is available on our website. A freedom of information application may be sent to [saorailfaisneise@forasnagaeilge.ie](mailto:saorailfaisneise@forasnagaeilge.ie).

## **9. Foras na Gaeilge staff**

As members of the general public, Foras na Gaeilge employees have the same rights to the services stated in this Charter and will be treated on the same basis (other than the exception stated in section 6).

Foras na Gaeilge is committed to fostering a respectful and safe environment for both our customers and staff. We understand that members of the public are sometimes frustrated when they contact us. However, we believe that our members of staff have the right to work in a safe environment free from any abuse or harm carried out by others. We do not accept insulting behaviour towards our staff.

The kinds of behaviour we consider to be insulting include:

- Shouting;
- Threats;
- Intimidation;
- Physical injury;
- Violence of any kind;
- Using language which frightens our staff, or which creates an environment in which they feel to be in danger;
- Religious, cultural, linguistic or racial insults;
- Using disrespectful words based on sexual orientation, gender, age or ability.

The following kinds of behaviour are also not accepted:

#### Unreasonable lack of cooperation

This is considered to occur if a member of the public does not clearly identify a question they are raising with Foras na Gaeilge and if we believe that they are refusing to co-operate with us in a way that might hinder or delay how we tackle the question.

#### Unreasonable persistence

If it is decided that an application is ineligible or if an application is unsuccessful after the appeal process has been completed, it is unreasonable not to accept the decision or to demand that another member of staff look at the case again.

#### Unreasonable behaviour

The following are considered abusive behaviour: multiple calls, emails or letters about the same subject, impolite or aggressive behaviour and trying to incite staff members and unnecessarily arguing with them that amounts to wasting their time. Provocative and baseless statements are also considered abusive behaviour.

In cases such as those referred to above, our staff will ask you to desist from such behaviour.

According to our guidelines, only one warning will be given in respect of these types of behaviour.

- We will give you a warning to stop the abusive or unreasonable behaviour or we will end the relationship;
- If this behaviour continues, we will end the relationship.

Foras na Gaeilge reserves the right to block email addresses in certain cases.

## 10. Monitoring and assessment

We will assess our performance against each one of these headings. We will also carry out regular monitoring of the main groups which are in contact with us in respect of the quality of the services we provide. We will welcome any recommendations and opinions on the services we provide.

**Approved September 2025**