



Enforcement of Judgments Office Charter

serving
the community
through the
administration
of justice

Northern Ireland Court Service
www.courtsni.gov.uk



We can provide this booklet in a wide range of alternative formats - please contact the Information Centre at:

Northern Ireland Court Service

Information Centre
Windsor House
Bedford Street
Belfast BT2 7LT

Telephone 028 9032 8594
Facsimile 028 9041 2390
Textphone 028 9041 2920
Email informationcentre@courtsni.gov.uk
www.courtsni.gov.uk

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ENFORCEMENT OF JUDGMENTS OFFICE CHARTER

Introduction

It is the duty of the Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO) to enforce Court Orders for the recovery of money, property and goods obtained by creditors in the Civil Courts of Northern Ireland. The Office has approximately 75 administrative staff, headed by the Chief Enforcement Officer. The EJO has a judicial officer in the form of the Master (EJO).

The EJO also maintains a Register of all enforced court orders. This Register is available for public inspection upon payment of the appropriate fee.

The EJO is governed by The Judgments Enforcement (NI) Order 1981 and The Judgments Enforcement Rules (NI) 1981.

This charter is for people who come into contact with EJO in what will sometimes be difficult or stressful times. It sets out the standards of how they will be treated during the enforcement process.

Objectives and Values

Our Mission Statement is "To take appropriate and prompt enforcement action in relation to all judgments lodged."

Throughout the enforcement process we will balance the needs of the creditors against the ability of the debtor to pay. Our aim is to achieve satisfaction of judgments while preserving the dignity of all parties involved.

Our key values are to demonstrate respect for people and apply fairness in all we do. The standards of behaviour for our staff are set out in our Mission, Vision and Values statement.

Services Provided by the EJO

The following are the main services provided by EJO:

- The enforcement of outstanding money judgments
- The enforcement of outstanding non-money judgments (recovery of goods or land)
- The maintenance of the Judgments Register.

Accountability

Administrative responsibility for the EJO lies with the Northern Ireland Court Service.

We monitor our performance and publish targets and achievements on our web pages and on notice boards in our public waiting areas. The EJO web pages can be found on the Court Service website -: www.courtsni.gov.uk.

We facilitate regular meetings of a Users Forum. This body is made of representatives of creditors and debtors and reviews operating issues and performance including service modernisation and business relationships.

We are also subject to periodic inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Courts Administration (HMICA). These inspection reports are published and available from several sources including the EJO.

All EJO staff are bound by service standards set down by the Northern Ireland Court Service and the levels of service you can expect are set out below.

General Standards of Service

All EJO customers can expect the following standards of service

- The office will be open from 9.30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday (excluding Bank and Public Holidays);
- Our public waiting areas will be clean and comfortable with access to toilet facilities;
- Directions and signs to our various offices will be clearly displayed;
- If you wish, your enquiry may be dealt with in a private area;
- You will be dealt with by knowledgeable, courteous, professional staff;
- Specialist Customer Liaison Officers have been appointed as our main points of contact. The names and contact details of these officers will appear on our information leaflets, office notice boards and our web pages;
- On most occasions you will be dealt with immediately, however if you have not been spoken to by the appropriate person within 10 minutes of your arrival, a full explanation will be provided;

- Reasonable adjustments will be made to provide appropriate access, information and facilities for disabled customers. Our Disability Liaison Officer should be contacted to facilitate people with sight, hearing, language or physical impairments. We will give you information about the facilities available for disabled people and make alternative arrangements if required. A separate leaflet "Information for Disabled Customers" is also available. To obtain a copy of this leaflet, ask a member of Court Service staff or contact the Information Centre at the address on the back of this publication;
- For those customers whose first language is not English a translation service will be provided upon request;
- If you contact the Office by telephone, your call will be answered within 30 seconds;
- If you contact the Office by letter or e-mail you will receive a reply within 20 working days.
- Fact sheets are attached to our enforcement orders. These sheets give a Plain English explanation of the effect of the order and advice on what your options are.
- Fact Sheet Information Packs giving detailed explanations of the enforcement process and useful contacts are available from EJO and all local Court Offices.
- Ensure our web site www.courtsni.gov.uk contains a wide range of up to date information on all aspects of the enforcement process.

Standards of Service for Specific Customers

The vast majority of EJO customers fall into one of two groups; creditors and debtors. Creditors are those people judged by Court to be owed money, property or goods. Debtors are those people judged by the Courts to owe money, property or goods to a creditor. The specific service standards each customer group may expect from EJO are set out below.

As a **creditor** you can expect EJO to -:

- Process and issue your Notice of Intent to enforce a judgment within 3 days.
- Accept your full enforcement application within 12 days.
- Provide you with a receipt for all fees paid and issue you with a letter notifying you that your case has been accepted.
- Take appropriate and timely enforcement action to satisfy your judgment principally through the issue of enforcement orders.
- Provide you with a copy of all issued orders along with an attached fact sheet that explains in Plain English the effect of the order and what, if anything, you need to do next.
- Keep you informed of the current position on your case and also update you with the details of any enforcement action being taken on cases relating to the same debtor.
- Be diligent in our efforts to interview the debtor as to their means. Once interviewed, we will provide you with a detailed report outlining the debtor's assets and liabilities.
- Independently confirm all information provided by the debtor at interview.
- Thoroughly research and follow up any information provided by you that may enhance enforcement action.
- Afford you the opportunity to request a specific enforcement order or to object to the terms of any order.
- Provide you with the date and time of scheduled evictions (possession cases only).
- Forward to you within 4 days of the end of the legislative holding period (28 days) all payments made by debtors against your judgment.
- Upon notification, record on our system all payments made directly to you by a debtor.
- Maintain your on-line searching account advising you when the balance is requiring a top up.

- Provide support and advice to assist you in understanding our legislation and the enforcement process. Our Customer Liaison Officers are specifically trained to provide this service and they can be contacted in person at the EJO or by telephone, letter or e-mail.
- Maintain our web pages at www.courtsni.gov.uk. These pages will provide -:
 - ✓ Application packs that include all necessary forms and our fee schedule
 - ✓ An explanation of the various enforcement orders
 - ✓ Business performance statistics
 - ✓ Access to our on-line facilities (case tracking and Judgment Register searching)

As a **debtor** you can expect EJO to -:

- Act with fairness and equality taking into account your current financial position before making any enforcement order. (if your circumstances change you should immediately contact EJO to allow us to fully review your situation)
- Provide advice to assist you in understanding our legislation and the enforcement process. This advice can be obtained by -;
 - ✓ Contacting the relevant EJO Customer Liaison Officer in person, by phone or in writing.
 - ✓ Referring to our web site at www.courtsni.gov.uk . These pages provide a wide range of information on EJO processes and procedure.
 - ✓ Referring to our Fact Sheet Information Pack. This also provides full details of enforcement process and is available in EJO or at your local court office.
- Offer you the opportunity to be interviewed voluntarily in regard to your assets and liabilities. This interview can take place in EJO, at your home or a court venue close to you. You are entitled to be accompanied during this interview if you so wish.
- Carry out your interview in private with your interviewing officer explaining the process and treating you with respect and dignity at all times.
- Afford you the opportunity to make voluntary proposals in regard to satisfying your outstanding judgment. (Depending on the circumstances your offer may or may not be deemed acceptable)

- Attach to all issued enforcement orders a Plain English fact sheet explaining the effect of the order and what options are open to you
- Afford you the opportunity to object to the terms of any particular enforcement order.
- Provide you with a receipt for all payments made to EJO.
- Issue a 'paid in full' search or certificate of satisfaction, upon request, once your judgment is satisfied.
- In cases where the judgment is for repossession of property we will-
 - o Make every attempt to serve the Order for Possession on you personally and while doing so, explain the possible repercussions if the matter is not resolved.
 - o Afford you reasonable time to resolve the matter prior to eviction.
 - o Inform Social Services that you may become homeless as a result of the enforcement of the Possession Order.

Availability of Advice and Support

We maintain information on many local voluntary advice bodies that offer help and advice to those in debt. (E.g. Housing Rights Association, Advice NI, Citizens Advice Bureau and Rural Support Network) We will provide leaflets and contact details for these types of organisations.

Other useful customer information about the services of the Enforcement of Judgments Office (including contact details for advice bodies) is provided on the Northern Ireland Court Service website, www.courtsni.gov.uk.

Meeting Your Needs

We are committed to ensuring that, so far as reasonably possible, all your needs are met. This includes making all our information and facilities accessible to you.

We shall ensure this Charter and any other information referred in it can be made available in a range of formats. If you require information produced in a format that meets particular needs, then you should contact -

Northern Ireland Court Service
Information Centre
Windsor House
9-15 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7LT
Tel 028 9032 8594 or e-mail them at
informationcentre@courtsni.gov.uk.

Making a Complaint

We are committed to improving the quality of our services. By making comments about our services you can enable us to improve them. By making a complaint you enable us to put things right.

If you have a complaint or comment about the service or the way in which you were treated, it should be addressed in the first instance to:-

The Chief Enforcement Officer
Enforcement of Judgments Office
7th Floor
Bedford House
16-22 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7DS

A separate leaflet 'Making a Complaint about the Northern Ireland Court Service' provides information on how to make a complaint and is available from any court venue or the Court Service's website, www.courtsni.gov.uk

If however, your complaint is about the conduct of the Master, it should be addressed in writing to:-

The Lord Chief Justice's Office
Royal Courts of Justice
Chichester Street,
Belfast
BT1 3JF

Further information on making a complaint about a member of the judiciary is available from the Court Service's Information Centre, from the website or from the Lord Chief Justice's Office.

If your complaint is about the legal decision made by the Master, you should seek legal advice.

Review

We manage our business and our business relationships under the framework of the EFQM business model; this provides the basis for business improvement. Information regarding EFQM and how EJO implements this framework can be found on our web pages. Under this framework, the standards contained in this Charter will be reviewed annually to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of people coming into contact with the Enforcement of Judgments Office. An important part of the process will be to seek their views and comments and to actively address any concerns they may have.



For further information on the work of the Northern Ireland Court Service please contact

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