

# **THE CHURCH OF IRELAND CLERGY PENSIONS TRUSTEE DESIGNATED ACTIVITY COMPANY**



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## **CLERGY PENSIONS FUND**

### **Internal Dispute Resolution (IDR) Procedure**

Under Irish pensions legislation<sup>1</sup> all pension schemes are required to have an Internal Dispute Resolution (IDR) Procedure. As a result all disputes arising in connection with the administration of a pension scheme may not be brought to the Pensions Ombudsman unless they have, in the first instance, been processed through that scheme's IDR Procedure.

Accordingly, the trustees of every occupational pension scheme are required to establish internal procedures for resolution of disputes and to set out certain steps which must be included in those procedures. The Trustee of the Clergy Pensions Fund has put in place such an IDR Procedure, which must be followed before an issue can be brought to the Pensions Ombudsman.

The Pensions Ombudsman has jurisdiction to investigate specified complaints against, or disputes with, persons responsible for the management of an occupational pension scheme.

The IDR Procedure, as it relates to members of the Clergy Pensions Fund, is described below in the form of a series of "questions" and "answers".

#### **What is IDR?**

IDR, or Internal Dispute Resolution, is a procedure that the Trustee has drawn up in order to deal with certain types of complaints that may be made by actual or potential beneficiaries of the Clergy Pensions Fund (CPF).

#### **When should this IDR Procedure be used?**

Most queries or complaints in relation to the CPF are easily resolved if raised with the Pensions Administration Manager at Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6, before invoking the IDR Procedure. Any relevant documents should be brought to the Pensions Administration Manager's attention.

If the query or complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily by raising the issue with the Pensions Administration Manager then the Honorary Secretary of the Church of Ireland Pensions Board may be written to c/o The Head of Finance at Church of Ireland House. He/she will be able to make an initial assessment of your complaint and advise you of whether it qualifies for IDR.

If it does qualify for IDR, the Honorary Secretary can arrange for assistance for you in writing to the Trustee invoking the IDR Procedure and in assembling relevant documentation.

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<sup>1</sup> Pensions Ombudsman Regulations, 2003 (S.I. 397 of 2003) made pursuant to section 132 of the Pensions Act 1990 as inserted by section 5 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002.

If your complaint does not qualify for IDR, the Honorary Secretary may be able to recommend a resolution to your complaint. *In any event, notice of your complaint will be brought to the attention of the Trustee by the Honorary Secretary.*

### **What types of complaint can I bring to the IDR Procedure?**

Two types of complaint are eligible for IDR. If you are:

- an actual, or potential beneficiary and you allege that you have sustained financial loss due to maladministration by or on behalf of a person responsible for managing the CPF, or
- an actual or potential beneficiary and have a dispute of fact or law in relation to an action taken by a person(s) responsible for managing the CPF.

### **Do I have the right to bring my complaint directly to the Pensions Ombudsman?**

No. The Pensions Ombudsman can only consider complaints that have already been through IDR. You may refer your complaint to the Ombudsman if, having gone through IDR, you are not satisfied with the outcome.

### **How do I make a complaint using the IDR Procedure?**

If your complaint qualifies for IDR, then you must make an application in writing to:

The Company Secretary, The Church of Ireland Clergy Pensions Trustee DAC,  
Church of Ireland House, Rathmines, Dublin 6.

You must include the following information when you write to the Trustee:

- Your full name and date of birth
- Details of your membership of the Fund if relevant (e.g. serving clergy should include date of joining, retired clergy should include date of retirement, clergy who have left the service of the Church of Ireland should include the date of leaving etc)
- Your home address and the address for correspondence if different
- Your PPS Number, or National Insurance Number as appropriate
- Where you are not a member, details of your relationship to the relevant member, or details as to why you consider you should be a member
- A written statement providing all available details of your complaint or dispute
- A description of the informal steps taken in an attempt to resolve the dispute
- A statement as to why you are aggrieved. If you believe you have suffered a financial loss, details of why you believe this to be the case with supporting calculations if possible
- Copies of all available supporting documentation
- Confirmation that you have not previously referred your complaint to the statutory Pensions Authority

## **How will my complaint be dealt with by the Trustee under IDR?**

The Trustee may, on receiving your letter, appoint a nominated person, or persons, to make an initial assessment of your complaint. The nominated person(s) may decide to consult with the Church of Ireland Pensions Board and any other parties involved in the dispute, such as the scheme administrators, if relevant. The nominated person(s) will provide these parties with details of your case and consider their recommendations. The nominated person(s) may also discuss your case with their expert advisors and receive their opinion on the merits of your case.

The nominated person(s) may decide to offer you an oral hearing if it is felt that it would add clarity to the case. If such an oral hearing is offered to you, you may accept or reject it.

If, in the opinion of the nominated person(s), the case is reasonably clear, whether in your favour or otherwise, the nominated person(s) shall issue conclusions to you by way of a 'Notice of Determination'. (See later). However, for more complex cases, the case may be referred by the nominated person(s) to the Executive Committee of the Representative Body for its consideration, before a 'Notice of Determination' is issued by the nominated person(s).

If the facts of the case are unusually complex, the case can be put by the nominated person(s) to an independent person who has not previously been involved in the case. The nominated person(s) shall consider, in respect of each complaint, whether using such an independent person is appropriate. For example, the nominated person(s) may be satisfied that it has already received expert and independent advice. However if it is decided that referring the case to an independent person is likely to be useful, the nominated person(s) will consider who an appropriate independent person might be. (For example he or she might be a pensions solicitor from a firm that does not have any conflict of interest with the case.) You shall be informed of the proposed independent person and if you are not satisfied with the nominated person(s) choice, the nominated person(s) may decide not to refer the case to any independent person, but to proceed instead with issuing their conclusions to you by a 'Notice of Determination'.

If the case is referred to an independent person, such person shall be given supporting documents and asked by the nominated person(s) for a recommendation on your complaint or dispute. The nominated person(s) will consider any such recommendation before issuing their conclusions to you by way of a 'Notice of Determination'.

If your complaint or dispute relates to a decision made by the Trustee which involved the exercise of its discretion on a particular point, then, if the nominated person(s) remains satisfied with the original decision, the nominated person(s) shall most likely simply confirm the Trustee's decision to you and refer you to the part(s) of the rules of the Fund that confers that discretion.

## **What form of response to my complaint will I receive from the Trustee?**

You will receive a response in writing recording the decision in relation to the complaint or dispute *within three months* of receipt of the required information from you. This response is referred to as a **Notice of Determination**. It shall include:

- a statement of what has been decided (which could be a decision to make a compensating payment, or to reject the claim etc.)
- a reference to any legislation, legal precedent, guidelines of the statutory Pensions Authority, ruling or practice of the Revenue authorities, or other material relied upon
- a reference to any parts of the rules of the scheme relied upon
- where a discretion has been exercised, a reference to the parts of the rules of the scheme that confer this discretion
- a statement that the Notice of Determination is not binding on you unless you agree in writing to be bound by it
- a statement that the Pensions Ombudsman may have jurisdiction to investigate the matter and that further information can be obtained from:

The Pensions Ombudsman  
36 Upper Mount Street  
Dublin 2  
Telephone: 00353 1 6471650  
Email: [info@pensionsombudsman.ie](mailto:info@pensionsombudsman.ie)

**Approved by The Church of Ireland Clergy Pensions Trustee,  
Trustee of the Clergy Pensions Fund,  
on 22 June 2011**

**Last update: October 2017**