

Powers and sanctions report You are in the Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 section Home Our plans and priorities Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 First published: 4 July 2023 Last updated: 27 September 2023 Use of our powers and sanctions between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 We encourage those we regulate to comply with the law by providing support and guidance. However, where proportionate to do so, we take action when they do not follow the law. PPERA provides us with investigation powers, including the ability to: require information (through an investigation notice) from anyone where we suspect there has been a breach of the law or (through a disclosure notice) where we do not suspect an offence but require information in order to fulfil our functions require suspects or witnesses to attend for interview take action if people do not co-operate with our requirements in certain circumstances, enter premises (through an inspection warrant from a Justice of the Peace) We also have a range of sanctions, including: Fines ranging from £200 to £20,000 Compliance and restoration notices, by which we can require people to take particular actions to achieve compliance or rectify non-compliance Stop notices, by which we can require people to take a particular action or stop an intended action These sanctions apply to most, but not all, PPERA offences. There are some offences – generally those involving an element of deliberate dishonesty – for which we cannot issue fines, but we can notify the police or relevant public prosecutor. We are also able to consider ‘enforcement undertakings’ from those we regulate, where for example a party may report an offence voluntarily and propose actions it will take to put things right, avoiding the need for the party and us to go through potentially time-consuming investigations. Use of investigatory powers Use of investigatory powers We are required to report on our use of investigatory powers, specifically cases in which: we issued a disclosure or investigation notice premises were entered using an inspection warrant issued by a Justice of the Peace we applied to a court for an order for disclosure We are not required to include information where, in our opinion, to do so would or might be unlawful, or might adversely affect any current investigation or proceedings. We did not issue any disclosure or investigation notices during 2022/23. We did not use our powers to apply for an inspection warrant to enter premises or apply for any court orders for disclosure. Concluded investigations We concluded 34 investigations during 2022/23, compared with 42 in the previous year. We continued to regulate and take enforcement action where it was reasonable and in the public interest to do so. Our work to support parties and campaigners comply with electoral law, and an absence of significant regulated elections were all factors in this reduced number of cases. Use of civil sanctions We are required to report on our use of civil sanctions, specifically cases in which: a fixed monetary penalty or discretionary requirement was imposed or a stop notice served (other than cases in which the penalty, requirement or notice was overturned on appeal) liability for a fixed monetary penalty was paid before a notice imposing it was issued an enforcement undertaking was accepted 25 investigations led to considerations of sanctions, and we imposed 20 penalties, across seven cases. In total, £16,130 of sanctions were imposed. That figure includes one case involving two fixed penalties which were paid early so we did not have to issue notices to impose payments. This does not take account of 17 cases where we found an offence but decided not to impose a sanction. We take a proportionate approach and do not automatically impose a sanction where an offence has taken place. Details of all penalties imposed during 2022/23 are available on our website. No enforcement undertakings were offered to us during 2022/23. We did not serve any stop notices up

to and including 31 March 2023. No appeals were made against decisions to impose civil sanctions. [Navigation Previous](#) [Next](#) Using our resources to support the delivery of our goals Northern Ireland annual report