

Customer feedback procedure

Compliments, Comments, Complaints



1 PRINCIPLES OF THE PROCEDURE

- 1.1 The Authority welcomes feedback; compliments, comments and complaints from customers. Feedback will be recorded and acted upon in accordance with the Customer Feedback Procedure and in line with the standards in the Customer Charter. For complaints about legacy authorities please refer to the document 'Protocol for Dealing with Legacy Complaints'.
- 1.2 The procedure ensures that the Council can demonstrate that it draws on the experience of its customers, positive or negative, to bring about change in services.
- 1.3 Legislation determines how we must deal with social care complaints and feedback and there are separate procedures covering this.
- 1.4 Best practice promotes a fair and responsive feedback procedure. Procedures need to be open, easy to access and responsive to enable customers and/or their representatives to make Representations and complaints.
- 1.5 This Procedure is the method by which customers can give feedback and be sure that they will be listened to and taken seriously.
- 1.6 The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all people. We want to ensure all sections of the community are able to access the feedback procedure and will undertake monitoring to check that this is the case.
- 1.7 The Council recognises that some people have concerns about making complaints for fear of losing a service if they 'rock the boat' or fear being treated unfavourably. Customers will not be harassed or victimised as a result of making a complaint.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROCEDURE

- 2.1 To provide an effective means for customers or their representatives to give feedback about the quality or nature of services and to ensure those who complain or comment that they have been dealt with promptly, fairly, openly and honestly.
- 2.2 To ensure complaints are acted on with the focus on complainants desired outcomes where these are realistic and achievable.
- 2.3 To resolve complaints quickly and as close to the point of service delivery as acceptable and appropriate.

- 2.4 To provide managers and Councillors with information to assist in monitoring performance and quality of service delivery.
- 2.5 To maintain public accountability on the effectiveness of customer feedback handling through production of an Annual Report.
- 2.6 Staff understand the objectives and requirements of the procedure.
- 2.7 To promote problem solving and focus on improvements in complaints handling and to avoid apportioning blame. Emphasis on correcting failings or problems.
- 2.8 To provide flexibility in resolving complaints with an option to suspend the complaints process where alternative methods to resolve complaints such as mediation or conciliation may benefit the complainant. See Section 13.

3 TERMS USED AND THEIR MEANING:

- 3.1 Where there is reference to the local authority sending responses 'in writing' the local authority will, if required, also provide the information in a format to meet the needs of the customer.
- 3.2 Days refers to working days, this excludes Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a day which is a bank holiday in England and Wales under Section 1 of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 (b).

4 ANONYMOUS FEEDBACK

- 4.1 Anonymous complaints fall outside of the scope of the feedback procedure and it is for the authority to decide what action it should take. Anonymous complaints will be referred to the relevant manager to agree a course of action, if any.

5 FEEDBACK ABOUT POLICIES

- 5.1 If someone raises a concern about a policy or service criteria levels this should be recorded as a 'representation' and those who have made the policy, very often Councillors, informed. Customers will receive feedback on their representations.

6 COMPLIMENTS & COMMENTS

- 6.1 Compliments will be acknowledged within 5 working days and recorded.

- 6.2 Comments about services which do not present as a complaint or compliment may be statements about how things could be improved and should be recorded to enable the Council to use suggestions to review the way services are provided. People may express disappointment, disagreement or observations about services without necessarily wanting to complain. Feedback of this nature will be recorded as a comment.

A reply in full, where possible, within 5 working days. If we cannot reply within 5 working days we will inform the customer and tell them why and when they can expect a full response.

7 HATE CRIME

- 7.1 A hate crime is a crime where the offender's hatred, bias or prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in deciding who is victimised or the extent of the victimisation. Examples of hate crime include racial, sexual, disability harassment and homophobic violence. Where a complaint is received identifying a hate crime the Council's True Vision policy route will be taken. All customer reports of hate crime to the Council should be passed to Customer Relations for action.

Complainants will be advised of the course of action to be taken.

8 COMPLAINTS

8.1 Definition Of A Complaint

A complaint is....

"...an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or their staff affecting an individual customer or group of customers".

8.2 Who Can Complain?

- 8.2.1 Anyone receiving or seeking a service from the Council or anyone acting for those unable to complain personally, i.e. a 'representative'.
- 8.2.2 Some people may need assistance in order to make a complaint or enquiry. This may be provided by an advocate or carer.
- 8.2.3 A 'representative' is someone acting on behalf of a complainant where that person is unable to make the complaint himself, or has asked the person to act on his behalf or is under 18 years of age.

