



CITY OF
YORK
COUNCIL

Corporate Customer Feedback

Policy and Procedures

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DRAFT

CORPORATE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK POLICY AND PROCEDURE**INDEX**

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Part 1 - Policy

1. General Principles

City of York Council is committed to excellent customer service and to securing customer satisfaction in the way we respond to complaints and feedback from any of our service users. The council will ensure it delivers a better service to our customers by monitoring and measuring complaints, concerns, compliments and comments. We will follow a standard procedure to achieve greater consistency in how we deal with complaints and feedback.

We will collect and report on information regarding complaints and feedback so that we know which areas of service our customers are most satisfied / dissatisfied with. This will enable us to take a closer look at whether to change aspects of the service and / or offer training and support to staff dealing with complaints about particular issues. We will demonstrate that we listen to our customers' views and will feed them into service development and improvement. Gathering information on complaints and checking responses to them is one way we will do this.

Fundamentally, all feedback, in all its forms will be dealt with in accordance with this policy, and our customers will be advised about this.

City Of York Council will ensure that our feedback and complaints system:

- is easily accessible and directed through one central point
- is published and recognised as a model of good practice
- ensures a thorough and fair investigation within set time-scales
- provides an effective response including appropriate action taken
- is confidential
- is independent from the service provider
- provides feedback to management so that services can be improved or changed
- keeps customers informed of progress
- is fully understood by all staff and partners.

2. Making a Complaint

The council can receive a complaint, concern, or compliment from a member of public or anyone acting on behalf of a customer with the proper authority and consent, in the following formats:

- in person at any council office or reception point
- by telephone
- by letter
- by email
- through our website .

A complaint is:

Any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, from a member of the public about the level or nature of a council service or policy, or the way in which the council's staff carry out their duties, which requires a response. A complaint is not a request for service e.g. a missed bin request would not be logged as a complaint.

A complaint is not:

A request for a service that is made for the first time. For example, if a customer complains that a streetlight is not working we will treat it as a service request that we aim to fulfil by repairing it within the service level agreement. If we then fail to repair it, and the customer is still unhappy, it should then be defined and treated as a complaint.

This policy does not relate to those services below where there is a statutory or other legislative requirement although we will commit to ensuring feedback in these areas are still directed to the appropriate service and the matter resolved to the customer's satisfaction:

- **Adult Social Services (see Appendix 1)**
- **Children's Social Care Services (see Appendix 1)**
- **School Admissions**
http://www.york.gov.uk/education/Schools_and_colleges/school_admissions/
- **Planning Objections**
http://www.york.gov.uk/environment/Planning/Planning_applications/Search_Planning_Applications/
- **Revenues and Benefits** <http://www.york.gov.uk/advice/Benefits/>
- **Freedom of Information requests** <http://www.york.gov.uk/council/information/foi/howto/>

The corporate policy and procedures will also be applied if we receive feedback in any form regarding one of our contractors or a partner organisation, which delivers services on our behalf.

Advocacy and support

Where appropriate feedback officers will make reasonable provision to support people who may be vulnerable or who may have difficulties with communication.

3. Feedback e.g. Suggestions, Compliments and Comments

The Council also acknowledge that it is important to ensure feedback is recognised and used to inform service development and improvement.

In order to assist this process, the Council will use the same system and method as for dealing with complaints, to collect, record and pass on feedback on a regular basis to the management team, staff and councillors. This will help to ensure the good work of staff is recognised and praised accordingly.

Part 2 - The Procedures

4. Dealing with Complaints

The procedure is specifically designed to ensure and that the council's Policy has been followed consistently in every case and within the timescales set below. (Appendix 9 for flow diagram of the process)

The identity of the person making a complaint should be made known only to those who need to consider the complaint, it should not be revealed to any other person or made public by the council. Care should be taken to maintain confidentiality where particular circumstances demand (for example, information about third parties). It may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

The Corporate Feedback Team (CFT) who work within Customer Services will control and monitor all feedback across the council. They will work with all services and/or contractors/partners to ensure all complaints are dealt with and response timescales are met. (Appendix 8 for roles of the CFT team)

Customer Services or CFT staff will receive and record the details of the complaint in whichever format the customer has chosen to communicate with.

The CFT will:

- ensure the right person in the right service receives the complaint, concern or compliment;
- monitor anything that needs a response to time or quality standards including the issue of customer satisfaction questionnaires to all Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints (with equalities forms attached to ensure we consider the views of all of our communities in York);
- have their name and contact details on all responses to complaints so the customer can come back to a single point of contact for further action should they need to
- produce the customer feedback analysis and reports for DMTs, Annual Report to Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committees
- be the contact point for letters or investigations passed to the directorate from the council's Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Link Officer.

Complaint Stages

There will be occasions when a customer identifies a service failure or concern (e.g. a missed bin, a pot-hole or a broken street light) and contacts the council to make them aware of this. When this is the first time the council has been made aware of this staff will generally deal with the matter quickly and satisfactorily as a service request. Service failure where the customer has not received a satisfactory standard service, has to contact the council more than once over an issue or is unable to make contact for whatever reason can be considered as 'avoidable contact'. This can be measured separately through the council's customer database and will be monitored separately by Customer Services management to identify areas of further service development or improvement.

The process for escalating a service request to the formal stages of the feedback policy will be determined by the customer who will indicate, either verbally to an officer or in writing, that they are not satisfied with the response to/outcome of their original service request.

Stage 1 - 10 Day response

At this stage the complaint will be logged on the system as a stage 1 complaint by the Corporate Feedback Team and allocated to the appropriate service manager for action.

The complainant will be advised of the outcome within 10 working days or advised of any delay and when they can expect the outcome. A response provided in the customer's preferred contact method should include:

- a) the findings of the manager and outcome
- b) the details of how they can progress to stage 2 if they are dissatisfied with the outcome
- or
- c) the investigation has not been complete, the reasons for this and when it is expected to be complete.

Written responses will be reviewed and monitored by the CFT who will issue an action plan feedback form to the service manager to record the improvement action that will take place in response to the complaint. (Appendix 4)

Stage 2 –20 Day Response

At this stage the complaint may have been already considered at Stage 1 or be sufficiently serious to be considered at Stage 2 as a first step. An appropriate Senior Manager will be assigned to the complaint by the CFT (senior to the line manager of the service under review)

A response will be given to the complainant by their preferred contact method (confirmed in writing) within 20 working days from the start of the stage. The response and action plan will be given as in stage one.

Stage 3 –20 Day Response

At this stage the complaint may have been already considered at Stage 1 and/or 2 or be sufficiently serious to be considered at Stage 3 as a first step. The Director of the service under review will be contacted by the CFT.

A response will be given to the complainant within 20 working days from the start of the stage. Response and action plan will be given as in stage 1.

The customer should also be made aware that if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome they can take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), who will carry out a further independent investigation. LGO contact details will be given to the complainant with the ombudsman's information leaflet .

5. Corporate Complaints Monitoring

The Head of Customer Services will corporately monitor all forms of feedback through the Corporate Feedback Team and will ensure:

- Details of the council's policy, procedures, leaflets and contact details will be contained on the council's website.
- The council will respond to complaints and other feedback in a positive manner ensuring that respect and dignity for all customers is maintained at all times.
- Where it is clear that the council has been at fault and caused injustice, an appropriate remedy will be authorised using the principles set out in the LGO's remedies guidance and in consultation with senior managers, even if the complaint has not been referred to the Ombudsman.
- Customer satisfaction questionnaires are sent out with any Stage 2 and 3 letter in order for the council to assess how well it dealt with a complaint
- Where a complaint has been referred to the LGO, the council will always use its best endeavours to meet the deadline set for responses and will maintain a positive, professional working relationship with the LGO Office.

6. Dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Procedure

This procedure should be initiated only after a discussion with relevant officers has confirmed that all other avenues have been explored and procedures exhausted. There is a need to carry out an assessment process balancing the rights of the individual, the statutory requirements regarding the service and the Council's responsibilities towards its staff.

The procedure for this is documented outside of this policy. (Appendix 5)

7. Making a complaint about the conduct of a councillor

From 8 May 2008 the responsibility for considering complaints that a councillor may have breached the Code of Conduct moved to the standards committees of local authorities.

The Code of Conduct sets out the rules governing the behaviour of councillors in local authorities across the country and is included in Part 5 of the Council's Constitution.

What this means

Complaints about the conduct of a City of York Councillor or a Councillor from one of our parish councils, must be submitted in writing to:

Chair of the Assessment Sub-Committee,
The Standards Committee, C/O the Monitoring Officer
City of York Council,
Guildhall,
York YO1 9QN.

Link to website to submit complaints online:

http://www.york.gov.uk/council/Elected_representatives/Councillors/complaints/#

What happens next?

The assessment sub-committee can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of a councillor. It will not deal with complaints about things that are not covered by the Code of Conduct. Any complaints must be clear as to why the complainant thinks that a councillor has not followed the Code of Conduct.

The assessment sub-committee aims to make an initial assessment of the complaint within 20 working days of receipt. If the decision is to take no further action, complainants will have the right to ask for that initial decision to be reviewed.

8. Performance Measures

The council will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and procedures by collating all relevant information and statistics and will use these when undertake reviews of this policy and service delivery. (Appendix 7 for measures)

We will hold information on our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system where available – in service areas where CRM is not available, a system will be introduced which is consistent with CRM.

This will comprise:

- The total number of complaints received
- How quickly they were dealt with
- Whether they were resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- Equalities and diversities monitoring data (customer profiling)
- Complaints received per directorate and department
- Lessons learnt and action taken to improve services.

We will use the information to:

- Identify areas of dissatisfaction with services
- Highlight areas for service improvement
- Monitor the success of service improvements based on the number of complaints subsequently received;
- Produce a quarterly and annual statistical report.
- Support the Council's Fairness and inclusion strategy, Engagement Strategy and Customer Strategy
- Support corporate strategy and effective organisation theme

This information will be reported to the Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committees, in an Annual Report

The following performance information will also be collected:

- Number of complaints received
- Number of complaints at stage 1,2,3
- Time taken to respond to complaints
- Number of Ombudsman cases and their outcome (Annually)
- Number of complaints Upheld, Partly Upheld, Not Upheld, Not Pursued

One of the ways to judge whether our feedback system works is to conduct customer satisfaction studies. To do this will send out *Customer Satisfaction surveys* (Appendix 2) when responding to a customer at stage two and three with the outcome of their complaint and/or to closed complaints chosen at random from their service area at stage one. This will also include an Equalities and Diversities Monitoring questionnaire (Appendix 3). (For more information on this please see City Of York Council's Equalities Strategy).

9. Ombudsman Quality Monitoring

When a response is required from the Ombudsman the report will be completed by the CFT. The following quality monitoring will take place. (Appendix 6)

- A copy of the reply will be sent to the LGO Link Officer and appropriate managers for comment before being finalised.
- The LGO Link Officer will quality check the complaint to ensure that all points raised by the Ombudsman have been covered.