

**Notice of meeting of
Customer Complaints Scrutiny Review Task Group**

To: Councillors Firth (Chair), Crisp and Gunnell

Date: Wednesday, 5 January 2011

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: The Guildhall

AGENDA

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on this agenda.

2. Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2010.

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting, members of the public who have registered their wish to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Committee's remit can do so. The deadline for registering is by **5pm on Tuesday 4 January 2011**.

To register please contact the Democracy Officer for the meeting, on the details at the foot of this agenda.

**4. Customer Complaints Review - Task Group (Pages 9 - 86)
Final Report**

This report presents information gathered to date in support of the Customer Complaints scrutiny review and an updated version of the Corporate Complaints Policy. Members are asked to comment on the revised policy and agree any further recommendations they wish to make as a result of their work on this review.

5. Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972

Democracy Officer:

Name: Jayne Carr

Contact Details:

Telephone – (01904) 552030

Email – jayne.carr@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting

- Registering to speak
- Written Representations
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

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Scrutiny Committees

The purpose of all scrutiny and ad-hoc scrutiny committees appointed by the Council is to:

- Monitor the performance and effectiveness of services;
- Review existing policies and assist in the development of new ones, as necessary; and
- Monitor best value continuous service improvement plans

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

MEETING	CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS SCRUTINY REVIEW TASK GROUP
DATE	8 DECEMBER 2010
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS FIRTH (CHAIR), CRISP AND GUNNELL

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

10. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes from the last meeting, held on 19 November 2010, be approved as a correct record.

11. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

12. CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS REVIEW - INTERIM REPORT

Members considered a report that presented information gathered to date in support of the Customer Complaints scrutiny review and asked Members to identify relevant consultees and any additional information required in support of the review.

Representatives from the following directorates were in attendance:

- Adults, Children & Education
- Communities & Neighbourhoods
- Customer & Business Support Services
- City Strategy

Officers questioned the representatives on the following issues:

- The statistics provided in Annex C of the report
- Best practice in regard to timescales for responding to complaints
- Whether or not (and how) information derived from complaints was being used to identify service improvements

The following issues were discussed:

(i) Customer & Business Support Services

- It was noted that the statistics in Annex C of the report would have included a number of complaints that had been double-counted. This was as a result of some of the complaints initially being sent to the Chief Executive and then forwarded to the appropriate team for a response.
- Letters responding to complaints included information on the action that was being taken in response to the complaint (eg staff training, implementation of change to work procedures etc). The letters also thanked the customer for their feedback.
- In complex cases, the investigator would sometimes telephone the customer regarding the complaint. Members suggested that telephone calls should be followed up by a letter or email to ensure that an audit trail was in place.
- Customer care training had been delivered to staff.

(ii) Adults, Children & Education

- More detailed information was provided in respect of the number of complaints that had been handled, including a breakdown for particular service areas.
- It was noted that the corporate complaints policy excluded the procedures for handling complaints about social care. Details were given of the statutory procedures that were in place in respect of complaints about social care. The team sought to use the best practice from the statutory procedures when they were investigating housing complaints.
- The deadlines set in the statutory procedures were noted. Officers acknowledged Members' suggestions that, although there were statutory timescales, consideration could be given to completing the process earlier than this and within corporate deadlines. It was, however, noted that the complexity of some of the cases and the need to negotiate with clients regarding convenient dates for meetings, meant that a shorter timescale may not always be achievable.
- A named contact was included in any correspondence.
- Details were given of the support that was offered to people with learning difficulties who had submitted a complaint. An advocate was appointed for vulnerable clients.
- Support was also offered in terms of ensuring that information was accessible, eg available in different languages or formats.
- At each stage of the complaints procedure, officers checked with the customer that they were satisfied with the way the complaint was being dealt with.
- An "Action Plan of Service Improvements" form was completed following each stage of a complaint. As well as detailing the action that had been taken to resolve the complaint, the service manager was required to detail any changes/improvements that would be made to the service to prevent a similar complaint.

- On completion of the investigation, a “Monitoring the Complaints Procedure” form was issued to the client. This survey enabled officers to look at further ways of improving the service it provided.
- In the case of a serious complaint, the complaint was immediately escalated without progressing through the early stages of the complaints procedure.
- The team was independent of the service areas whose complaints it investigated.
- It was hoped that the IT complaints system used by the team could be integrated into the new corporate system.

(iii) Communities & Neighbourhoods

- Details were given of the type of complaints which the team handled. These included issues relating to services such as waste, street scene, parking, and parks and open spaces.
- Some Members made direct contact with officers to seek to resolve complaints and hence these were not always recorded on the IT system.
- A high percentage were service requests and could be dealt with very quickly. Only a small number of complaints were progressed beyond Stage 1.
- Officers expressed concern at the possibility that there could be a reduction in staffing at directorate level in order to resource a central complaints team. This could be detrimental if there was no resulting reduction in the work that the directorate team was carrying out.

(iv) City Strategy

- Details were provided as to how complaints submitted by Members were investigated and recorded. It was noted that Members sometimes made direct contact with senior officers.
- There were currently too many contact enquiry mailboxes and the directorate was looking to ensure that there would only be one in future.
- Some of the complaints that were dealt with by the directorate were very complex and involved working with other agencies and organisations. This needed to be taken into account when consideration was given to determining appropriate deadlines in respect of the complaints procedures.
- Details were given of the correspondence monitoring system that was in place and of the arrangements for reporting to managers.
- Service managers were encouraged to identify common problems and these were used to make service improvements.

(v) Cross Directorate Complaints

Officers were asked about the arrangements that were in place to deal with cross-directorate complaints. They stated that there was good communication in place. It was acknowledged that a central IT complaints system should eliminate any duplication in the

recording of complaints and enable more accurate data to be provided.

(vi) Corporate Feedback Team

Members sought further information regarding the role of the proposed corporate feedback team. Officers explained that the call-centre would log the complaints. The complaints would be forwarded to the relevant directorate for action. The central team would monitor, chase-up and report on complaints. Members requested that the business case be presented to them at the next meeting.

(vii) Confidentiality

It was noted that some complaints were of a very sensitive nature and therefore it was important that call-centre staff were trained to recognise when a complaint needed to be referred to another officer, for example when it needed to be escalated without going through the earlier stages of the complaints procedure. The IT system also had to have appropriate checks in place to prevent unauthorised access to sensitive information.

Officers were thanked for their attendance at the meeting and for the useful information that they had provided.

Members were asked to identify any further changes required to the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy. They stated that it was important that the policy recognised that there were significant differences in the types of complaints handled by directorates, including those for which there were statutory procedures in place or which involved liaising with other agencies.

Further consideration should be given to examples of best practice identified in the discussions with directorate representatives including:

- Ensuring information on complaints was accessible
- Use of the “Action Plan of Service Improvement” form
- Ensuring that the customer was made aware of the action that was to be taken to improve services as a result of their complaint.
- Use of the “Monitoring the Complaints Procedure” questionnaire. It was noted that there would be cost implications if this was issued after all complaints were investigated and hence it may be more appropriate to send out the form to a sample number of cases.
- Ensuring that arrangements were in place to escalate a complaint through the early stages if appropriate.

RESOLVED: (i) That the suggested recommendations, listed at paragraph 26 of the report be agreed.

(ii) That the following information be provided at the next meeting:

- Draft of the new Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and procedures.
- The business case for setting up of a central feedback team (to include proposed structure and associated costs)

REASON: To achieve the objectives of this review, including reducing the number of complaints and contributing to any further efficiency savings beyond those identified by the More for York review.

Councillor Firth, Chair

[The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.50 pm].

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**Meeting of Customer Complaints Task Group -
Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny
Committee**

5 January 2011

Customer Complaints Review – Task Group Final Report

Purpose of Report

1. This report presents information gathered to date in support of the Customer Complaints scrutiny review and an updated version of the Corporate Complaints Policy. Members are asked to comment on the revised policy and agree any further recommendations they wish to make as a result of their work on this review.

Background

2. At a meeting of the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee in September 2010, members received a presentation on Customer Services from Assistant Director Customers & People. Having considered an overview of current services, performance and developments, the committee recognised that whilst there is a corporate policy in existence, currently each individual CYC Directorate has its own methods for recording and responding to complaints. And, an unknown proportion of complaints are dealt with as enquiries and therefore fall outside of any formal process.
3. As there is no corporate monitoring or management information of performance in this area, the Committee questioned whether the new Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and procedures are fit for purpose. In order to ensure its future effectiveness and in an effort to inform its design and priorities, the Committee agreed to form a Task Group to carry out a scrutiny review on their behalf, of customer feedback/complaints and resulting actions.
4. The Committee set a timeframe of within 3 months for completion of the review and agreed the following review remit:

Overall Aim

To inform the design and priorities within the new complaints function in order to ensure its future effectiveness, identifying any revisions required to the Feedback Policy.

Objectives

- i. Reduce the number of common or repeat complaints.
- ii. Reduce the number of complaints to the Ombudsman.
- iii. Contribute to possible further efficiency savings

- iv. Improve the customer experience (customer satisfaction to be measured and monitored).
5. At a meeting in early November 2010, the Task Group agreed the following workplan for the review.

Meetings Dates	Workplan
<p><u>Meeting 1</u> 4 November 2010 1:30 - 3pm</p>	<p>Scoping report providing information relating to the Customer Services Blueprint, and an overview of existing processes and the new structure/organisation/process</p>
<p><u>Meeting 2</u> 19 November 2010 2:30pm</p>	<p>Receive interim report presenting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information on national best practice regarding the handling of complaints etc by local authorities e.g. centralised or not?, and most recent annual Ombudsman Report. 2. Directorate information on number and type of complaints received since 1 January 2010 including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints from public • Councillor requests/inquiries • Complaints to Ombudsman • FOIs <p>Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant consultees and any issues to be addressed through consultation at the next meeting • any additional information required
<p><u>Meeting 3</u> 8 December 2010 2pm</p>	<p>Receive interim report and consult with relevant parties</p> <p>Based on information gathered, suggest any:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possible further efficiency savings • further improvements to customer experience
<p><u>Meeting 4</u> 5 January 2011 2pm</p>	<p>Consider draft final report containing suggested recommendations</p>
<p>11 January 2011</p>	<p>Presentation of final report to Effective Organisation O & S Committee</p>

Consultation

6. The Assistant Director Customers & People attended all the meetings of the Task Group to assist them in their work on this review.
7. Also, at a meeting on 8 December 2010, the Task Group met with representatives from Directorates to discuss complaint statistics gathered from each directorate and their current working practices.

Options

8. Having considered the information provided within this report and its associated Annexes, Members may choose to
 - Identify any further changes required to the draft corporate policy shown at Annex A
 - Agree any additional recommendations arising from the review

Review Findings

9. At a meeting in November 2010, the Task Group considered the procedures within the draft Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and identified a number of issues relating to the different stages of the complaints process. They recognised that many of the 'complaints' received within Directorates were in fact service requests and not complaints, and therefore could be dealt with before the official 'stage 1' procedure was instigated.
10. Service Requests
Members recognised that the public need to understand the difference between a service request and a stage 1 complaint and that a clear definition of a service request would assist them to do so.
11. Service requests will still need recording to track reoccurring issues within service areas and to enable service delivery teams to monitor their own performance and identify service improvements. However, they should not be fed into the customer complaints data analysis and reports. Instead they should be recorded under the National Indicator 14 – reducing avoidable contact. The process for escalating a service request to Stage 1 of the complaints procedure is in the hands of the complainant who will indicate either verbally to an officer, or in writing, that they are not satisfied with the response to/outcome of their service request. This will then become a Stage 1 complaint.
12. Stage 1
The Task Group agreed the wording at Stage 1 of the procedure should be amended to read:

'At this stage the line manager of the service will deal with a complaint and the complainant should be advised of the outcome within 10 working days *or advised of any delay* and when they can expect a full

response, and what they can do if they remain dissatisfied at the end of Stage 1'

13. Stage 2

It should not be necessary for a complainant to have to set out their complaint again at Stage 2 as it may be antagonistic to expect the complainant to provide information that they had already supplied at Stage 1 of the procedure.

14. Stage 3

A Director might choose to delegate the investigation of a complaint to an Assistant Director, but it was important that the procedure recognised that the responsibility for handling the complaint rested with the Director. With this in mind the Task Group agreed the following wording should be removed '*or a member of staff independent of the service acting on the Director's behalf*'.

15. Training

In regard to Councillors, they will need full training on their use of the new Complaints IT portal and its full capabilities. Some Councillors may also be willing to participate in testing the new system before it goes live.

16. For staff, the Task Group recognised that front line staff have a crucial role to play in presenting the face of the authority to the public, particularly when dealing with service users when they have problems. They also play an important part in the early resolution of complaints, to the benefit of service users and the authority and Members agreed it was therefore essential they were appropriately trained in how to:

- properly identify and handle the type of enquiry being received e.g. the type of issues that can be resolved at first point of contact.
- maintain a corporate record of them using the processes and procedures in place
- provide appropriate feedback to customers

17. The Task Group agreed that key officers within the new corporate complaints team would benefit from receiving the complaints training offered by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). It was noted that they run a range of one-day courses aimed at helping local authorities to improve their responses to complaints. All their courses are presented by experienced investigators who have genuine practical expertise in complaint handling, giving participants the opportunity to practise the skills needed to deal with complaints positively and efficiently. Those key officers could then disseminate the training to other in the complaints team.

18. Annual Ombudsman Review

Each year the LGO produces an annual review (previous called annual letters) for each local authority about their performance in dealing with complaints made about them to the Ombudsman. The aim is to provide councils with information to help them improve their complaint handling, and improve their services more generally, for the benefit of the public. The table at Annex A shows the number of complaints received by the LGO about City of York Council in 2009/10, in

comparison to other local authorities, and the LGO annual report detailing those complaints is shown at Annex B.

19. Number & Type of Complaints Received By CYC Since 1 January 2010
The Task Group considered statistics data from each Directorate showing the number and type of complaints received since 1 January 2010 – see Annex C.
20. In regard to the complaints received by the Chief Executive's office, it was noted that they most often related to services elsewhere in the council. Accordingly, they are not recorded as stage 1, 2 or 3 complaints within the Chief Exec's own service and may well represent double counts with complaint handling elsewhere in the organisation where these stages are recorded. Similarly, all Ombudsman letters received in the Chief Executive's office relate to other services - these are passed to the relevant department and are also likely to be accounted for elsewhere in the statistics data that the Task Group considered (as provided by each Directorate). There is also significant contact with Members in the Chief Executive's office, including for instance, direct communication between Councillors and the Chief Executive, but no data is kept to show this activity.
21. Members queried the figures provided by each Directorate, having taken account of the variance in volume post April 2010 resulting from the Organisation Review i.e. a reduction in the number of Directorates and the transfer of Legal, Civic, Democratic Services and Elections (which account for significant customer contact) from the Office of the Chief Executive to Customer & Business Support Services.
22. In acknowledging that each Directorate has its own methods for handling complaints, the Task Group were keen to meet with representatives from the Directorates to discuss the statistics provided in Annex C, including best practice in regard to timescales for responding to complaints and whether or not (and how) information derived from complaints was being used to identify service improvements. Therefore at a meeting in November 2010, the Task Group met with relevant officers.
23. Adult Social Services Complaints & Children's Social Care Services Complaints
The Task Group received details on the statutory and legislative requirements connected with these types of complaints and recognised that many of the feedback / responding to complaints requirements, were suitable for use across the council as best practice. The Task Group were pleased to see that many of those methods were already being utilised within other directorates and that they had been written into the new draft corporate policy.
24. However, in the case of other types of complaints they deemed that some of the statutory and legislative requirements were excessive. With this in mind, they agreed that:
 - Sending an acknowledgement letter at every stage felt excessive.
 - The cost of sending a questionnaire to every complainant would prove excessive, therefore it would be beneficial to the council to find acceptable ways to limit the number sent out. It was suggested that for stage one complaints instead of sending one out every time, they could be sent out

randomly to say every 20th complainant. However, the Task Group agreed that for later stage complaints the council would benefit for receiving feedback from each stage so the questionnaire should be sent out with the response letters

- The cost of sending a prepaid envelope with every questionnaire would prove excessive
25. In order for it to be clear to the public that the new Customer Complaints Policy did not cover the specific statutory and legal requirements associated with adult social services and children's social care services complaints, the Task Group agreed these should be included as an appendices to the main corporate policy.
26. In addition, the Task Group agreed it should be acceptable to receive a complaint over the phone as long as the details were read back to the customer to verify the notes taken. However, they agreed it was better not to ask the equalities questions over the phone as it may antagonize an angry customer. Instead, the equalities form could be sent with the questionnaire. Finally, the Task Group felt it was acceptable for a service manager to compile the written responses to complaints but they should be checked and sent out by the central team, in order to ensure the corporate approach is adhered to.
27. Changes to Draft Corporate Customer Feedback Policy
As a result of the work to date, the issues identified by the Task Group have been picked up and addressed through revisions to the draft policy. An updated version is attached at Annex A together with its appendices, for members' consideration.
28. Business Case
At the last meeting Members requested to see the business case for the construction of the central complaints team going forward. This has yet to be debated by CMT and is likely to contain some sensitive issues and require some decisions about how the team will be constructed i.e. named individuals/teams and/or budget transfers. Therefore, at this stage it would be unfair to debate this with Members, particularly prior to any consultation with the affected individuals.
29. However, Members could refer to the original blueprint and project plan that was presented at an earlier Task Group meeting, which provides an outline of the forthcoming business case.

Recommendations Identified To Date

30. At the meeting held on December 2010, the Task Group agreed to propose the following recommendations to the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee:
- To assist the public, policy to include a definition of a service request and a stage 1 complaint (see paragraph 10)
 - Service requests to be recorded, tracked and monitored by Directorates to allow for early identification of required service improvements, without being fed into the customer complaints data analysis and reports (see paragraph 11)
 - Wording of policy at Stage 1 to be revised as per paragraph 12

- Wording of policy at stage 2 to be revised to reflect that a complainant does not have to set out their complaint again at Stage 2, as per paragraph 13.
- Removal of wording at Stage 3 – '*or a member of staff independent of the service acting on the Director's behalf*' as per paragraph 14
- CYC to investigate and provide relevant training for the different stages of complaint handling/investigation for key officer within the corporate complaints team and Councillors (see paragraphs 15-17).

Suggested Additional Recommendations

31. Following the consultation with directorate officers, and having identified the issues detailed in paragraphs 24-26 above, it is suggested the Task Group also propose the following recommendations:
- Re stage one complaints:
 - An acknowledgement letter is not required
 - Questionnaires to only be sent out to every 20th complainant
 - For stage two & three complaints, questionnaires should be sent out with all response letters
 - Prepaid envelopes not to be provided with questionnaires
 - The adult social services and children's social care services complaints procedures to be included as an appendices to the new corporate policy
 - All written responses to complaints to be checked and sent out by the central team

Implications

32. **Financial & HR** - More for York savings are associated with the centralisation of complaints teams. The cost of the LGO courses referred to in paragraph 17 depends on the number of delegates i.e. courses for up to 15 people - £1,025, Courses for up to 30 - £1,735. If a course was to be shared with other local authorities, the cost per delegate would be £130.
33. **Equalities** All proposals contained in the Customer Strategy have been fully consulted upon and the work is covered by an Equalities Impact Assessment.
34. **Legal** Improvement of complaints handing may contribute to less cases reaching the Ombudsman. Centralisation of Freedom of Information requests will aid compliance with legislation on this matter.
35. **Information Technology (IT)** Resources are committed to providing the technology necessary for the newly centralised team.
36. There are no Crime and Disorder, Property or other implications.

Corporate Strategy

37. This review supports the Council's Effective Organisation priority around 'providing what customers want'.

Risk Management

38. Improvement in the management of complaints and resulting service improvement will reduce the risk of negative publicity and the Ombudsman publicly criticising the council for maladministration. Improvement in the processing of Freedom of Information requests will minimise risks of the Information Commissioner imposing large fines on the organisation relating to its use of information.

Recommendations

39. In order for a final report to be produced for the consideration of the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee at their next meeting on 11 January 2011, the Task Group are recommended to:
- i. Identify any further changes required to the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy attached at Annex A
 - ii. Amend and/or agree the suggested additional recommendations listed at paragraph 31.

Reason: To achieve the objectives of this review, including reducing the number of complaints and contributing to any further efficiency savings beyond those identified by the More for York review.

Contact Details

Author:

Melanie Carr
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Services
Tel No. 01904 552063

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty
Assistant Director Legal, Governance & ITT

Report Approved

Date 21 December 2010

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Customer Strategy
Customer Services Blueprint

Annexes

Annex A – Revised draft Corporate Complaints Policy & Appendices



Corporate Customer Feedback

Policy and Procedures

December 2010 v1.4

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.

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DRAFT

General Procedures



Adults Children and Education

Learning from customer feedback – comments, concerns, compliments & complaints.

LAST REVISION DATE:

This procedure was last revised in:

May 2010

SCOPE:

This procedure covers both Social Care and Housing representations, comments, compliments and complaints.

LEGISLATION:

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
 Adoption and Children Act 2002
 Health and Social Care (Community Health Standards) Act 2003
 Care Standards Act 2000
 Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006
 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009
 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009

CUSTOMER INFORMATION:

Have Your Say - leaflet (Housing & Social Care Services)
 Have Your Say - leaflet (Children and Young People)
 Have Your Say - leaflet (for people with learning disabilities)
 Complaints Review Panel - leaflet
 How To Complain To The Local Government Ombudsman – leaflet
 Have Your Say – Poster (Housing & Social Care Services)
 Have Your Say – Comment Card (Housing & Social Care Services)

FURTHER ADVICE:

Complaint manager
 Senior Complaints & Information Advisor

INFORMATION:

None.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:

Housing Complaints – All stages - full response within 10 working days

Children’s Social Care Complaints - Stage 1 - full response within 10 working days

Children’s Social Care Complaints - Stage 2 - full response within 25 Working days

Children’s Social Care Complaints - Stage 3 - to be convened within 30 working days of request, panels report to be sent to the complainant and Director within 5 working days of the panel meeting, The directors response to be sent within 15 working days of receipt of the report.

Adults – All complaints will be risk assessed and graded as green, amber or red. A response timescale will be agreed with the complainant.

MONITORING & EVALUATION:

Annual report on complaints to the social services committee, plus monthly reports to the director and assistant directors.

Housing complaints - quarterly performance reports to housing departmental management team

DISTRIBUTION:

Intranet

Approved By: _____ (Director of adults, children and education)

Date: _____



CITY OF YORK COUNCIL

Social Care Services

Staff Guidance

Learning from Customer Feedback -

Comments, Concerns, Compliments &

Complaints Procedure

May 2010

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INTRODUCTION

This guidance sets out the obligations under the legislation, which requires all local authorities and health authorities to set up a complaints and representation procedure.

This procedure aims to:

- Ensure that people have their concerns resolved swiftly and satisfactorily.
- Be a positive aid to inform and influence service improvements, not a negative process to apportion blame.
- Develop a listening, responding and improving culture.
- Give people the opportunity to tell the authority about both their good and bad experiences.
- Be clear and easy to use.
- Ensure that people are treated with dignity and respect and are not afraid to make a complaint and have their concerns treated seriously.
- Ensure a fair process and adequate support for everyone involved in the complaint.
- Ensure that any concerns about the protection of vulnerable adults or children are referred immediately to the relevant team or the Police.
- Ensure that the people receive a comprehensive response to all concerns in a way and timescale that they are happy with, without having to use the word complaint.
- Enable the local authority when purchasing services in the independent sector to exercise its continuing duty of care.
- Secure sensible and effective links with other procedures.
- Safeguard the customers right of access to other means of redress, such as the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).
- Ensure that the local authority monitors its performance in handling complaints and customer feedback, delivers what it has promised, learns from feedback provided by customers and uses the learning to improve services.

The procedure strives for greater empowerment of our customers to shape services and their own care, and reflects the council's aim to work in partnership with users and their carers.

If you wish to make any comments on the contents, please contact Cath Murray (complaint manager on ext 4080).

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions, or apparent failings of a local authority's adult social services provision which requires a response.

An expression of dissatisfaction does not have to be logged with the complaints team when it is the first time the person has made staff aware of the problems and these can be resolved by the next working day. Where staff cannot resolve dissatisfaction within the timescale, or the person remains dissatisfied, the complaints team should be made aware as soon as possible.

All written complaints, received either by letter or on the freepost complaints form should be sent to the complaints team. However complaints can also be made verbally by phone or in person and staff should advise the person how to contact the complaints

team to make a complaint and offer to contact the complaints team on the persons behalf if the concern has not been resolved immediately or the person remains dissatisfied.

All complaints should be treated seriously and customers should be made aware of the complaint manager's role and their rights under the complaints procedure. You can do this by giving the customer a copy of the leaflet "Have Your Say" which includes a freepost form.

What is a concern?

A concern has the same definition as a complaint, but enables people who are uncomfortable with or do not want to use the term complaint to express their concerns to the authority and have them responded to. The aim is to ensure that the council can monitor the quality of service provision and learn lessons from negative feedback, where the customer does not want to make a complaint.

What is a Comment?

A comment is when a customer, or a member of the public wants to draw an issue to the attention of adult social services, or has an idea for improving services.

What is a Compliment?

A compliment is a positive comment or expression of thanks from a customer or someone representing a customer about the services they have received.

In addition to positive comments and expressions of thanks, on occasions staff may receive a commendation for work over and above their normal duties. For example this may be when a member of staff undertakes a piece of work which would not normally be within their scale, to resolve a problem quickly, or to support colleagues when a team is short staffed or has a heavy work load. This will not normally be for additional work, where the member of staff will receive money for additional duties.

Time limit for making a complaint

Local authorities need not consider complaints made more than 1 year after the date of the event which led to the complaint. However the decision not to accept complaints made after this time scale has elapsed, will be made on a case by case basis by the Complaint manager in consultation with other managers. The decision making process will take into account whether the complaint can still be investigated effectively and fairly, whether there can still be benefit to the complainant and whether there were genuine issues which prevented the complaint being made earlier.

If a decision is made not to investigate, the complaint manager will write to the complainant to advise them that their complaint cannot be considered, the reasons why they have reached this conclusion and of their right to contact the LGO.

Advocacy and support

Where appropriate the complaint manager will facilitate independent and confidential advocacy, provide advice and information regarding support available locally and make reasonable provision to support people who may be vulnerable or who may have

difficulties with communication. Advocacy will always be offered to children and young people making a complaint.

Disputed Decisions

In some circumstances, a decision may become the subject of a complaint. Following clarification, the complaint manager may recommend that the service postpones or “freezes” the implementation of a decision until the complaint has been investigated. This will be following discussion with relevant managers and a risk assessment will also be completed. Decisions will usually be made in favour of postponing the decision unless this will have a significant detrimental effect on the physical or mental well being of the individual. Where there are opposing views regarding postponing a decision, advice will be sought from the director and his/her decision will be final.

Regulated Services

Where a complaint is received about a service provider, the complaint manager will normally direct it in the first instance to that provider to respond to. However where the council completed the assessment that led to a placement and associated funding the complainant will have recourse to the council’s complaints procedure. This will not be the case for people who have made private arrangements and are self funding. However from the 1st October 2010 people who are self funding private care will be able to take their complaint to the local government ombudsman.

The council will have the responsibility for investigating complaints about social care functions and obligations and the care quality commission will be responsible for investigating complaints about compliance with regulations and national minimum standards.

Where the complaint manager receives complaints about services provided under the Care Standards Act 2001, they will liaise with the complainant to clarify whether they want the complaint to be passed on to the appropriate registered person. If the complainant is happy for details to be passed on the complaint manager will also forward relevant details to the care management team and the commissioning and contracting team.

The complainant can make a complaint about social services functions and regulations and standards and the investigations can be conducted at the same time. The complaint manager will liaise with relevant people and agencies to ensure that a seamless response to all parts of the complaint is provided.

Compliments and Commendations

It will be important for members of staff and team managers to ensure that the complaint manager is sent a copy of all compliments and commendations so that these can be recorded and reported appropriately.

The complaint manager will decide whether a compliment is a thank you or a commendation in consultation with the appropriate director.

Compliments

Compliments will usually be thank you cards or letters for a team, or one or more individuals within a team. Everyone who is thanked within the card or letter should be made aware that they have received a thank you by the team manager and the card or letter then forwarded to the complaint manager as soon as possible.

A record of this will be made and the number of thank you cards or letters received will be reported on in a public annual report, which is presented to councillors and made available to the director and assistant director.

It will be the responsibility of the team manager to decide whether it is appropriate to acknowledge receipt of the thank you to the person who sent it.

Commendations

Commendations are compliments awarded to staff for work above and beyond their usual duties and responsibilities. This may come to the attention of the council through a letter or comment from a customer or member of the public, or may be brought to the attention of a senior manager through a team leader or line manager.

A commendation for example may be achieved by a member of staff completing a piece of work which would not normally be within their scale. This may be to resolve a problem quickly, or to support colleagues when a team is short staffed or has a heavy work load. This will not normally be for additional work that has been taken on where the member of staff has received additional money for this.

Commendations should be brought to the attention of the complaint manager as soon as possible and where there is any doubt about whether this should be logged as a commendation or thank you the complaint manager will discuss this with the appropriate director.

Where it is agreed that a commendation for a member of staff is appropriate. The director will, where appropriate, write to the customer or member of public and thank them for bringing this to their attention and will write to the member of staff thanking them for their work.

The complaints team will:

- Make a record of the commendation including copies of letters from the Director.
- Send a note about the commendation and copies of letters from the director to human resources to be kept on the member of staff's personal file.
- Include numbers of commendations and relevant details about them in the public annual report.

Adult Social Care Complaints**Who Can Complain?**

A person is eligible to make a complaint where:

- The local authority has a power or duty to provide or secure the provision of a social service for him/her and
- His/her need for such a service has (by whatever means) come to the attention of the Authority.

This definition also applies to a person acting on behalf of someone who meets the above requirements.

A complaint can be made by a representative where the complaint manager receives permission from the eligible person, usually in writing, giving their permission for the representative to make the complaint on their behalf.

A representative will also be able to make a complaint where the eligible person is not capable of making the complaint themselves, this includes when they have died.

The complaint manager will decide if a person is suitable to act as a representative, if it is decided they are not acting in the eligible person's best interests the complaint manager will inform them in writing that we will not accept the complaint under the terms of the Act and the reasons for this.

If a person is not eligible to make a complaint under the terms of the Act, they will always be able to have their complaint looked at under the council's corporate complaints procedure.

What may be complained about?

- An unwelcome or disputed decision.
- Concern about the quality or appropriateness of a service.
- Delay in decision making or provision of services.
- Delivery or non-delivery of services including the complaints procedure.
- Quantity, frequency, change or cost of a service.
- Attitude or behaviour of staff.
- Application of eligibility and assessment criteria.
- The impact on an individual of the application of a local authority policy.
- Assessment, care management and review.
- Services provided under joint working arrangements with third party providers, or where a person's assessed needs are met by another agency. Such arrangements do not absolve the authority from their duty of care.
- The quality or accuracy of information or report provided to courts by a social worker.

This list is not exhaustive and the complaint manager will seek legal advice where necessary.

Assessment Tool

The department of health designed the following tool for complaints teams to assess the seriousness of complaints and decide the relevant action:

Step 1: Decide how serious the issue is

Seriousness	Description
Low	Unsatisfactory service or experience not directly related to care. No impact or risk to provision of care. OR Unsatisfactory service or experience related to care, usually a single resolvable issue. Minimal impact and relative minimal risk to the provision of care or the service. No real risk of litigation.
Medium	Service or experience below reasonable expectations in several ways, but not causing lasting problems. Has potential to impact on service provision. Some potential for litigation.
High	Significant issues regarding standards, quality of care and safeguarding of or denial of rights. Complaints with clear quality assurance or risk management issues that may cause lasting problems for the organisation, and so require investigation. Possibility of litigation and adverse local publicity. OR Serious issues that may cause long-term damage, such as grossly substandard care, professional misconduct or death. Will require immediate and in-depth investigation. May involve serious safety issues. A high probability of litigation and strong possibility of adverse national publicity.

Step 2: Decide how likely the issue is to recur

Likelihood	Description
Rare	Isolated or 'one off' – slight or vague connection to service provision.
Unlikely	Rare – unusual but may have happened before.
Possible	Happens from time to time – not frequently or regularly.
Likely	Will probably occur several times a year.
Almost certain	Recurring and frequent, predictable.

Step 3: Categorise the risk

Seriousness	Likelihood of recurrence				
	Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
Low	Low				
		Moderate			
Medium					
			High		
High				Extreme	

Grading Complaints

The complaints team then grades the complaints as:

Low	= Green	Can be resolved locally
Medium	= Amber	Needs a response from the Director

High = Red Needs a response from the Director

Complainants are contacted by the complaints team to design a complaints plan and agree an appropriate response timescale. Following the response a complainant can ask the LGO to investigate if they remain dissatisfied.

When a complaint is received the complaint team will:

1. Contact the customer to clarify their complaint, the outcomes wanted and agree how the complaint will be dealt with and the timescale for response. This will include confirming any support needed to make the complaint.
2. Acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 working days and confirm how the complaint will be dealt with and the timescales for this. The customer will be asked to sign and return confirmation of the arrangements.

Green Complaints

1. Send copies of any correspondence, the complaint, a service improvement action plan and a memo to the responding manager explaining:
 - The agreed plan for dealing with the complaint and the timescale for the final response. It is expected that 95% of green level complaints will be responded to within 10 working days.
 - The need to send a copy of any correspondence or an email confirming the outcome and actions taken to the Complaint manager.
 - That in the event of delay, the responding manager must keep the complainant and the complaints team up to date on progress made and reasons for the delay and the date that a final response will be made.
2. Send a reminder to the responding manager to advise them that their response is due.
3. Close the complaint when a copy of the correspondence or email confirming the outcome and actions to be taken is received.
4. Send a satisfaction questionnaire and follow-up letter to the complainant after the response deadline has elapsed advising them to contact the complaints team if they remain dissatisfied and of their right to contact the LGO.
5. Record the time taken to resolve the complaint from the date the complaint was received to the date of the final response.
6. Remind the manager to return the Action Plan for Service Improvements.
7. Record when action has been taken.

Amber and Red Complaints

1. Appoint an appropriate investigating officer. The complaint manager will make a decision about whether this needs to be a manager who has no line management responsibility for the service being complained about, or someone external to the council.
2. Consider appointing an independent person to oversee the investigation process where the complaint is complex or the complainant is vulnerable.
3. Send copies of any correspondence, the complaint, the guidelines for investigating complaints and a the template for the report to the investigating officer explaining:
 - The agreed plan for dealing with the complaint and the timescale for returning the draft report for the Director's attention. It is expected that 95% of amber and red level complaints will be responded to within 25 working days.
 - The need to send a draft copy of their report to the complaint manager.
 - That in the event of delay, the investigating manager must keep the complainant and the complaints team up to date on progress made and reasons for the delay and the date that a final response will be made.
4. Send a reminder to the investigating manager to advise them that their report is due.
5. Liaise with the investigating officer to ensure the report is in an appropriate format and provides a thorough and logical response to each point of complaint.
6. Send a copy of the completed investigation report to the director and advise them of the timescale for sending their final response and ensure that any issues that need clarification are dealt with and the report is amended where appropriate.
7. Support the director in preparing a final written response and close the complaint when a copy of the response is sent.
8. Ensure that the appropriate managers are aware of the response to the complaint and any actions which are to be taken.
9. Send a satisfaction questionnaire and follow-up letter to the complainant confirming that a final response has been sent and advising that they can contact the complaints team if we can be of further help and of their right to contact the LGO
10. Record the time taken to resolve the complaint from the date of receipt to the date of the final response.
11. Remind managers about any actions which need to be taken and record on the file when information is received about any action which has been completed.

On very rare occasions the Investigating officer's report may be withheld, if it is felt that showing it to the customer would be harmful. The decision to withhold a report will be made jointly by the complaint manager and the director in consultation with the

Investigating officer and where appropriate independent person. In this situation a risk assessment will be completed and held on the file. Consideration must be given to whether it would be possible to provide the report if it were written in a different way, or if additional support could be provided, or whether it is feasible to only withhold part of the report. Careful consideration will also need to be given to how this will be dealt with if the complaint progresses to the LGO.

There will also be occasions when the investigation report needs to contain a confidential annex for the attention of the director and not to be sent to the complainant. This will be where the investigation uncovers information about service delivery which may involve additional issues or customers.

Children & Young People's Social Care Services

Who can complain?

Section 26(3) and 24D of the Children Act 1989 and section 3(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 require the responsible authority to consider representations including complaints made to it by:

- Any child or young person (or a parent, or someone who has parental responsibility) who is being looked after by the local authority or is not looked after by them, but is in need.
- Any local authority foster carer (including those caring for children placed through independent fostering agencies).
- Children leaving care
- Special Guardians
- A child or young person (or parent) to whom a Special Guardian order is in place.
- Any person who has applied for an assessment under section 14F(3) or (4).
- Any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians.
- Persons wishing to adopt a child.
- Any other person whom arrangements for the provision of adoption services extend.
- Adopted persons, their parents natural parents and former guardians and such other person as the local authority consider has sufficient interest in the child or young person's welfare to warrant their representations being considered by them.

Where a complaint is received from a representative on behalf of a child or young person, the local authority will, where possible, confirm that the child or young person is happy for this to happen and that the complaint received reflects their views.

The complaint manager in consultation with relevant operational managers will decide whether the person is suitable to act in this capacity and has sufficient interest in the child's welfare. If it is decided that a person is not suitable to act as a representative for a child, they will be informed of the decision in writing by the complaint manager and that no further action will be taken.

Complaints may also be made by adults relating to a child or young person, but are not being made on their behalf. The complaint manager in consultation with operational managers will decide whether the person has sufficient interest in the child's welfare for

the complaint to be considered. The child may also be consulted as part of the decision making process.

Anonymous complaints must be referred to the complaint manager and be recorded in the same way as other complaints. These complaints will fall outside of the scope of statutory procedure, however the complaint manager in consultation with other managers will decide how they should be dealt with. This may include investigating the complaint and considering areas for service improvement.

Where the complaint relates to 2 or more authorities, it will usually be considered by the authority looking after the child or in other cases the authority where the child was originally resident.

City of York Council staff will co-operate with other authorities in the investigation of complaints as defined by section 27 of the Children Act 1989.

What may be complained about?

Section 26(3) of the Children Act 1989 provides that all functions of the local authority under Part 3 of the Act may be the subject of a complaint. This may include:

- An unwelcome or disputed decision.
- Concern about the quality or appropriateness of a service.
- Delay in decision making or provision of services.
- Delivery or non-delivery of services including the complaints procedure.
- Quantity, frequency, change or cost of a service.
- Attitude or behaviour of staff.
- Application of eligibility and assessment criteria.
- The impact on a child or young person of the application of a local authority policy.
- Assessment, care management and review.
- Services provided under joint working arrangements with third party providers, or where a person's assessed needs are met by another agency. Such arrangements do not absolve the authority from their duty of care.
- The quality or accuracy of information or report provided to courts by a social worker.

In addition the following functions may be the subject of a complaint:

Part 4 of the Children Act 1989

- The decision by a local authority to initiate care and supervision orders.
- The effect of the care order and the local authority's actions and decisions where a care order is made.
- Control of parental contact with children in care
- How supervisors perform their duties where a supervision order is in force.

Part 5 of the Children Act 1989

- Matters that do not relate to court and which are specifically actions of the local authority can be considered, regarding applications for and duties in relation to child assessment orders.
- Matters relating to applications for emergency protection orders and decisions relating to the return of children who have been removed.

- The quality or accuracy of information or report provided to courts by a social worker.

Adoption Services

- Provision of adoption support services (as prescribed in regulation 3 of the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005) insofar as these enable adoptive children to discuss matters relating to adoption.
- Assessments and related decisions for adoption support services as prescribed in regulation 3 of the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 (Part 4 and 5 of the regulation 3 of the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005).
- Placing children for adoption, including parental responsibility and contact issues (sections 18 to 29 of the 2002 Act).
- Removal of children who are or may be placed by adoption agencies (sections 30 to 35 of the 2002 Act).
- Removal of children in non-agency cases (sections 36 to 40 of the 2002 Act)
- Duties on receipt of a notice of intention to adopt (section 44 of the 2002 Act).
- Duties set out in regulations in aspects of:
 - A local authority considering adoption for a child (Part 3 of Adoption Agency Regulations 2005).
 - A proposed placement of a child with prospective adopters (Part 5 of Adoption Agency Regulations 2005).
 - Placement and reviews (Part 6 of Adoption Agency Regulations 2005).
 - Records (Part 7 of Adoption Agency Regulations 2005).
 - Contact (Part 8 of Adoption Agency Regulations 2005).
- Parental responsibility prior to adoption abroad (part 3 of Adoptions with a Foreign Element Regulations 2005).

Special Guardian Support Services

- Financial support for Special Guardians.
- Support groups for children and young people to enable them to discuss matters relating to special Guardianship.
- Assistance in relation to contact.
- Therapeutic services for children and young people.
- Assistance to ensure the continuation of the relationship between the child or young person and their Special Guardian or prospective Special Guardian.

This list is not exhaustive and the Complaint manager will seek legal advice where necessary.

The complaint manager in consultation with other managers will decide whether the consideration of a complaint may prejudice any concurrent court proceedings, tribunals, disciplinary proceedings or criminal proceedings.

Where it is decided not to proceed with the investigation of a complaint to avoid prejudicing other proceedings the complaint manager will write to the complainant and the reason for their decision and specify the concurrent investigation. When this investigation has been completed the complainant may re-submit their complaint within one year of the conclusion of the concurrent investigation.

The Procedure

Stage	Action	Timescale
1	Problem Solving - attempt by the first line manager to resolve the complaint without a formal investigation.	Full response within 10 working days. Can be extended to 20 working days in exceptional circumstances with the customers agreement
2	Formal Investigation - if the customer is not happy with the response at stage 1, or the response was not in time, they can request a formal investigation. This will be investigated by a senior manager who has no management responsibility for the service being complained about, or a person independent of the council. An independent person will be asked to oversee the investigation. The reports will be reviewed by the assistant director who will then send the complainant their written response.	Full response within 25 working days. Can be extended to 65 working days in exceptional circumstances.
3	If the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 investigation, a request can be made within 20 days for the complaint be considered by a complaints review panel.	Panel to be held within 30 days of the customer's request. The Panel will send a copy of their report to the director and complainant within 5 working days of the panel meeting. The director will then write to the customer within 15 working days of receiving the panel's report.
	The customer can also contact the LGO after the council's procedure has been exhausted.	

Stage 1 complaints

Stage 1 complaints can be made in writing, by phone, or in person. Where Stage 1 complaints are received the aim is to deal with these quickly and informally by problem solving. However where the complaint manager and complainant agree that it would not be appropriate to consider the complaint at stage 1 they can move this immediately to a stage 3 investigation.

On receipt of a stage 1 complaint the complaint manager will:

1. Acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 working days and if necessary contact the complainant to clarify their concerns, ensure they understand the procedure and assess whether any support is needed to make the complaint.
2. Inform the customer in writing who will investigate the complaint and the timescales for this.
3. Send copies of any correspondence, the complaint, an action plan for service improvement and a memo to the responding manager explaining:

- The 10 working day timescale within which the customer should receive a final response and the date when this expires. (In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the complainant, this can be extended to 20 working days).
 - To respond directly to the complainant and to send a copy of any correspondence or an email confirming the outcome and actions taken to the complaint manager.
 - That in the event of delay, the responding manager must keep the complainant and the complaints team up to date on progress made and reasons for the delay and the date that a final response is likely to be made.
4. Send a reminder to the responding manager to advise them that their response is due.
 5. Close the complaint when a copy of the correspondence or email confirming the outcome and actions taken is received.
 6. Send a satisfaction questionnaire and a follow-up letter to the complainant after they have received their response advising them to contact the complaints team if they remain dissatisfied.
 7. Record the time taken to resolve the complaint from the date the complaint was received to the date of the final response.
 8. Remind the manager to return the action plan for service improvements.
 9. Liaise with the quality assurance team to ensure these plans are implemented.

Stage 2 Complaints- The Formal Investigation Stage

If a complainant wishes to pursue a matter that cannot be resolved at stage 1, or they have not received their stage 1 response in time, they can request a stage 2 investigation. Although the investigation process is formalised at this stage, it is still important to continue problem solving.

Where a customer requests a stage 2 investigation the complaint manager will:

1. Liaise with the assistant director and appoint an appropriate investigating officer who has no line management responsibility for the service being complained about.
2. Appoint an independent person to over see the investigation process.
3. Acknowledge the request in writing within 3 working days.
4. Inform the customer in writing how their complaint will be dealt with including the name of the investigating officer, independent person and assistant director providing the response and the timescale for this.
5. Inform the assistant director on completion of the stage 2 investigation who will then:
 - Meet with the investigating officer, complaint manager and where appropriate the independent person to clarify any issues within their reports and discuss the most

appropriate way to provide feedback to the customer. This can be done by a telephone conversation with the investigating officer and independent person if appropriate.

- Send their response with a copy of the investigating officer and independent persons reports within 25 working days from the date the complaint was received, explaining whether they agree with the reports and recommendations and explaining what action they will take and the timescales for completing this.
 - Send a copy of this letter to the complaint manager for the complaint file.
 - Consider meeting with, or making a telephone call to the complainant to explain their response.
 - Complete and return the action plan for service improvement.
6. Advise the investigating officer that if there is a delay they must keep the complainant and complaints team up to date regarding the progress made and give reasons for the delay and the date that the investigation reports will be completed. (In exceptional circumstances the timescale may be extended to 65 working days).
 7. Close the complaint when a copy of the response is received.
 8. Send a satisfaction questionnaire and a follow-up letter confirming that a final response has been sent to the customer and advising the complainant to contact the complaints team within 20 working days if they feel that the complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily.
 9. Record the time taken to resolve the complaint from the date the stage 2 request was received to the date of the final response.
 10. Remind the manager to return the action plan for service improvements.
 11. Liaise with the quality assurance team to ensure these plans are implemented.

On very rare occasions the investigating officer's report may be withheld, if it is felt that showing it to the customer would be harmful. The decision to withhold a report will be made jointly by the complaint manager and the director in consultation with the investigating officer and where appropriate independent person. In this situation a risk assessment will be completed and held on the file. Consideration must be given to whether it would be possible to provide the report if it were written in a different way, or if additional support could be provided, or whether it is feasible to only withhold part of the report. Careful consideration will also need to be given to how this will be dealt with if the complaint progresses to a review panel or the LGO.

There will also be occasions when the investigation report needs to contain a confidential annex for the attention of the Director and not to be sent to the complainant. This will be where the investigation uncovers information about service delivery which may involve additional issues or other customers information.

Stage 3 Complaints- Complaints review Panel

If a complainant remains dissatisfied they can request that their complaint is considered by a review panel within 20 days of receiving their stage 2 response.

The complaints team will:

1. Acknowledge the request in writing within 3 working days.
2. Appoint the chair of the panel and confirm with them the attendees and content for the panel papers within 10 working days.
3. Arrange in consultation with the chair the appointment of the remaining panellists.
4. Arrange the date and venue for the panel to be held within 30 working days of the request being received.
5. Circulate the panel papers to all attendees 10 working days before the meeting is to be held.
6. Make a clerk available to take notes of the meeting.
7. The complaint manager will attend the panel meeting to advise on policy and procedure and the response times for the panel.
8. Contact the director of adult, children and education to advise them that their response is due within 15 working days from the date the panel's letter was received and to complete and return the action plan for service improvement.
9. Close the complaint when a copy of the response is received.
10. Send a satisfaction questionnaire and a follow-up letter confirming that a final response has been sent advising the complainant that they should now contact the LGO if they feel that the complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily.
11. Record the time taken to resolve the complaint from the date the stage 3 request was received to the date of the final response.
12. Remind the manager to return the action plan for service improvements.
13. Liaise with the quality assurance team to ensure these plans are implemented.

Early Referral to The Local Government Ombudsman

Following the outcome of the adjudication process, if the complainant remains dissatisfied the complaint manager may refer them to the LGO without organising a stage 3 review panel. This will be for cases where it is considered that the council has had sufficient opportunity to consider the complaint itself and the process of a review panel would not result in a significantly different outcome.

The complaint manager can only consider this option at the conclusion of the adjudication process and the following safeguards must also be in place:

- All the parts, or significant parts of the complaint must have been upheld.
- The council has provided a clear action plan for service delivery and improvement.
- The council has agreed to meet all or the majority of the desired outcomes.
- The complainant agrees with this option.

Where this is the case, the complaint manager and complainant will agree a written statement of the complaint for release to the LGO. This will include the investigation and adjudication and the independent person's report where appropriate. The LGO will then consider the complaint and the council's actions and may at that point request the council to implement a stage 3 review panel.

Roles and Responsibilities

Investigating officer

To consider the complaint with the independent person where one has been appointed by:-

- Taking a lead in the investigation.
- Ensuring that the written record of the complaint is clear and accurately represents the complainants concerns and desired outcomes.
- Conducting interviews sensitively and thoroughly and ensuring that the information gained from these is recorded accurately.
- Conducting a thorough review of records held by the local authority and other agencies as appropriate.
- Reading and analysing relevant policies, procedures, good practice guidelines and legislation and where appropriate comparing this to practice in other authorities.
- Effectively communicating with the complainant, complaint manager and where appointed the advocate and independent person on the progress of the investigation and advising of any delays to this.
- Identifying solutions and recommend actions to resolve problems.
- Preparing an accurate and clear report of the investigation process, its findings and recommendations using language appropriate to the needs of the complainant. This will need to take account of the complainant's age, any disabilities or language barriers.
- Liaising with the adjudicating officer, complaint manager and where appointed independent person to clarify any points arising from the investigation report.

- Meeting with the complainant, and where appointed the advocate and independent person to explain the findings of the investigation and clarify any points arising from the investigation report.
- Working to tight timescales.

Independent Person

The independent person will not be an elected member, an employee of the local authority or a spouse or partner of an employee or elected member of the local authority. They can be a former employee or elected member, but a minimum of 3 years must have elapsed before this will be acceptable.

They will ensure the investigation process is open, transparent and fair by:

- Attending all interviews and meetings with the investigating officer.
- Reading the same records, policies, procedures and other documentation as the investigating officer.
- Liaising with the adjudicating officer, complaint manager and independent person to clarify any points arising from the investigation reports.
- Preparing an accurate and clear report of the investigation process, its findings and recommendations commenting on their view of the findings and recommendations, whether they are logical, fair and appropriate. Explaining where necessary the reasons they consider an investigation to be unfair or incomplete, using language appropriate to the needs of the complainant. This will need to take account of the complainant's age, any disabilities or language barriers.

Advocates

To provide independent, confidential information, advice, representation and support to the complainant by:

- Empowering and supporting the complainant to express their views, wishes and feelings, or with the complainant's permission speak on their behalf.
- To attend meetings and interviews with or on behalf of the complainant.
- Work in partnership with the complainant to seek the resolution of their problems and concerns.
- Support the person to pursue their complaint through every stage of the procedure and provide them with information about their rights and the options available.
- Help them clarify their complaint and the outcomes they would like.
- Help them understand the response to the complaint and the action which will be taken.

Further detailed guidance can be found in *Getting it Sorted: Providing Effective Advocacy Services For Children and Young People making a Complaint under the Children Act 1989*. Department for Education and Skills 2004.

Adjudicating Officers

This role will be fulfilled by a manager with sufficient seniority to make strategic decisions regarding service delivery and will therefore usually be the assistant director.

- The purpose of this role is to consider the points of the complaint the Investigating officer and where appointed independent person's findings, conclusions and recommendations and the complainants desired outcomes.

They should

- Liaise with the investigating officer, complaint manager and where appointed independent person to clarify any points arising from the investigation reports.
- Invite the complainant to a meeting either before or after writing their response to the complaint.
- Write to the complainant to explain the council's formal response to the complaint using language appropriate to the needs of the complainant. This will need to take account of the complainants age, any disabilities or language barriers and will include:
 - Their view on whether the investigation has been thorough and complete.
 - Their position on the findings of each point of the complaint.
 - Any action to be taken and the timescales for this.
 - Confirmation of the complainants right to request the complaint be considered at stage 3 within 20 working days
 - A reminder the complainant of their right to contact the LGO
 - The report from the investigating officer and where appointed independent person.
 - Circulation of the reports and response to staff as appropriate.

The adjudicating officer should also attend the complaints review panel if this becomes necessary. On rare occasions they may delegate the task of representing the council in the review panel to another member of staff with sufficient seniority to represent the council in this way. This is only acceptable if all the findings of the investigating officer where agreed with and they must still attend if requested by the chair of the panel.

The authority's representative should:

- Provide information to the panel to support the authority's position.
- Consider whether any other member of staff should attend to address specific issues and request their attendance through the chair.

- Keep staff involved in the complaint, but not attending the panel, informed of the proceedings.
- Act on any recommendations from the panel which the director has agreed to.

Complaint Manager

Managing the complaints procedure by:

- Overseeing receipt and investigation of complaints.
- Appointing investigating officers and independent people and review panellists as appropriate.
- Ensuring that there is no conflict of interest.
- Promoting local resolution.
- Making recommendations for action following an investigation.
- Maintaining records of complaints made, themes, outcomes and service improvements.
- Monitoring and reporting on timescales, themes and service improvement.
- Compiling an annual report on numbers of complaints, thank yous and commendations made, themes, outcomes, service improvements, compliance with timescales, details of advocacy provided, effectiveness of the delivery of the complaints procedure and statistical information on age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity of complainants.
- Commissioning training for investigating officers, independent people and review panellists and providing appropriate support to them.
- Providing appropriate training and support to staff.
- Providing and ensuring that appropriate advice information and support is available to customers.
- Ensuring that information about the procedure is available and accessible.
- Liaising with the quality assurance teams to ensure service improvements are implemented.
- Ensuring that independent people, investigators and review panellists are CRB checked and have appropriate references and codes of conduct are in place.
- Completing and overseeing investigations for stage 3 housing complaints.
- Attending and advising on policy and procedure issues at review panels.

- Completing investigations and producing reports for the LGO when enquiries from their office are received.

Review Panellists

Will support the chair in taking an active part in the decision making process by:

- Reading the documentation in advance of the meeting.
- Attending the whole panel meeting and contributing to the consideration of the complaint by asking relevant questions and reaching conclusions on the way forward.
- Discussing conclusions reached with other panel members and the wording to be used in the report.
- Contributing relevant expert opinion based on specialist skills, knowledge, or experience.

Chair of Review Panel

The chair will be independent from the council and will be appointed by the complaint manager. Their responsibilities will be to:

- Chair the panel.
- Discuss with the complaint manager any specific needs of the complainant and ensure these are appropriately accommodated.
- Agree with the complaint manager who the local authority representative should be and request the attendance of any other person who may assist in understanding the complaint and its context.
- Ensure that everyone is treated with respect.
- Ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to contribute fully and appropriately and that the length of each part of the meeting is suitable.
- Ensure that a written report is produced providing a full response to the complainant and local authority within 5 working days of the panel.
- Ensure that any disagreement amongst the panellists are recorded and that a majority decision is reached where necessary.
- Be available to meet with staff from the local authority to discuss any recommendations if necessary.

Clerk To Review Panels

This role will be fulfilled by an officer who is not the complaint manager.

The clerk will be provided by the local authority to offer administrative support to facilitate the creation of the panel through to the production of the final recommendation to the council.

The clerk will:

- Organise the venue, facilities and refreshments.
- Organise the distribution of documentation.
- Take notes to facilitate the panel's decisions.
- Confirm whether the complainant wishes to bring any representatives or witnesses and provide appropriate assistance to facilitate this.
- Provide administrative support to the chair and panel to produce the final recommendations within 5 working days of the panel meeting.

Other Children's Services

All other children's services complaints will be dealt with through the corporate complaints procedure unless another route is available in legislation, for example the school admission appeals procedure.

Complaints to be managed under the corporate complaints procedure include general education and special educational needs issues, where the complaint is about the work of education social workers and services provided by the local authority. Complaints about the youth offending service will also be managed under the corporate complaints procedure where other procedures are not appropriate.

All schools should have their own three stage complaints process and complaints about the activity and actions of a school should be dealt with under the schools own procedure.

The complaints manager will provide advice and assistance to schools where the school requests this. In addition to some other authorities, where the schools procedure has been completed and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may ask for their complaint to be reviewed independently by the complaints manager.

Following this independent review parents should be advised of their right to contact the secretary of state for education.

The Procedure

Stage	Action	Timescale
1	Problem Solving - attempt by the first line manager to resolve the complaint without a formal investigation.	Full response within 10 Working Days
2	Where the customer is not happy with the initial response to a complaint, or they have not received a response within the timescale they can request a formal investigation. This will be responded to by a senior manager from housing services.	Full response within 10 Working Days
3	If the customer is still unhappy with the response to the	Full response within

	complaint, then it is referred to either the director or the manager who has overall responsibility for handling complaints. (In housing this will be the complaint manager).	10 Working Days
	The customer may also be able to contact the LGO after the council has tried to resolve the complaint.	

Stage 1 complaints

Stage 1 complaints can be made in writing, by phone, or in person and should be logged with the complaints team to ensure these can be recorded for monitoring and reporting. Where stage 1 complaints are received the aim is to deal with these quickly and informally by problem solving.

The complaint manager will be responsible for the following tasks, but may delegate them to other appropriate managers:

1. acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 working days and if necessary contact the complainant to clarify their concerns.
2. inform the customer in writing who will investigate the complaint and the timescales for this.
3. send copies of any correspondence, the complaint, an action plan for service improvement and a memo to the responding manager explaining:
 - the 10 working day timescale within which the customer should receive a final response and the date when this expires.
 - respond directly to the complainant and to send a copy of any correspondence or an email confirming the outcome and actions taken to the Complaint manager.
 - in the event of delay, the responding manager must keep the complainant and the complaints team up to date on progress made and reasons for the delay and the date that a final response is likely to be made.
4. send a reminder to the responding manager to advise them that their response is due.
5. Close the complaint when a copy of the correspondence or email confirming the outcome and actions taken is received.
6. Send a satisfaction questionnaire and a follow-up letter to the complainant after they have received their response advising them to contact the complaints team if they remain dissatisfied.
7. Record the time taken to resolve the complaint from the date the complaint was received to the date of the final response.
8. Remind the manager to return the action plan for service improvements.
9. Liaise with the service development team to ensure these plans are implemented.

Stage 2

If a complainant wishes to pursue a matter that cannot be resolved at Stage 1, or they have not received their stage 1 response in time, they can request a stage 2 investigation. Although the investigation process is formalised at this stage, it is still important for staff to continue to work with the customer and attempt to resolve their concerns.

Where a customer requests a stage 2 investigation the complaint manager will:

1. appoint an Investigating officer who will be a senior manager in housing services.
2. acknowledge the request in writing within 3 working days.
3. inform the customer in writing how their complaint will be dealt with including the name of the Investigating officer and the timescale for receiving their response.
4. send copies of any correspondence, the complaint, an action plan for service improvement and a memo to the responding manager explaining:
 - the 10 working day timescale within which the customer should receive a final response and the date when this expires.
 - respond directly to the complainant and to send a copy of any correspondence or an email confirming the outcome and actions taken to the complaint manager.
 - in the event of delay, the responding manager must keep the complainant and the complaints team up to date on progress made and reasons for the delay and the date that a final response is likely to be made.
5. Close the complaint when a copy of the response is received.
6. Send a satisfaction questionnaire and a follow-up letter to the customer confirming that a final response has been sent to the them and advising the complainant to contact the complaints team if they feel that the complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily.
7. Record the time taken to resolve the complaint from the date the stage 2 request was received to the date of the final response.
8. Remind the manager to return the action plan for service improvements.
9. Liaise with the service development team to ensure these plans are implemented.

Stage 3

If the person remains dissatisfied they can request that their complaint be investigated at stage 3. This will be investigated independently by the senior complaints and information advisor, or the complaint manager (or other appropriate manager)

The team will:

- Contact the complainant to clarify their complaint and gain any evidence supporting the complaint.
- Contact relevant staff and managers.
- Read relevant files, case notes, policies, procedures, legislation and good practice guidance.
- Consider the practice of other authorities where appropriate.
- Consult guidance for remedying complaints provided by the LGO and liaise with their office as appropriate.
- Produce a written report setting out their findings on each point and their recommendations to resolve the complaint and improve services.
- Send the report to the complainant and relevant staff and managers within 10 working days of clarifying the complaint. A satisfaction questionnaire will also be included.
- Send an action plan for service improvement to the appropriate senior manager.
- Remind the manager to return the action plan for service improvements.
- Liaise with the service development team to ensure these plans are implemented.

Other Procedures

On occasions complaints may be made which are more appropriate to be investigated under other procedures, for example grievance and disciplinary, child protection or vulnerable adult. Where issues of this nature are identified, the concerns will be referred to the appropriate person to deal with the complaint under the correct procedure. Any issues appropriate to the complaints procedures will continue to be investigated alongside any other investigation considered necessary.

If a complaint arises following a child protection conference about the work, performance, provision or non provision of services from a particular agency, these should be handled in line with that agencies complaints process.

Unreasonable and Unacceptable Behaviour

The council is committed to considering all complaints and learning lessons to improve services. It recognises that in doing this, it will on occasions come into contact with people who may be both angry and distressed and who may have difficulties with communication, disabilities or illnesses which make their contact with the council at these times persistent, strained or even hostile.

It is important at these times to consider the reasons for this behaviour and to ensure that support is available both the complainant and staff to enable the complaint to be heard and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

Examples of unreasonable and unacceptable behaviour:

- The person repeatedly makes the same complaint with minor differences and does not accept the outcome.
- The person changes aspects of the complaint or continues to add to the complaint, hindering the investigation.
- The person regularly breaks appointments or will not allow appointments with staff which would progress the complaints process.
- The person makes repeated contact with staff in different departments through different routes, letters, faxes, phone calls, MP, councillor and media enquiries.
- Contact is frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful for staff and repeats the same themes.
- The person will not allow the complaint to progress to the next stage, but continues to express dissatisfaction.
- The person is abusive, makes inappropriate or personal comments, makes threats, or uses aggressive behaviour including shouting or swearing at staff.

Where one or more of the above types of behaviour is present, the complaint manager will attempt to identify reasons for this and strategies to resolve any difficulties by talking to the complainant and members of staff and may choose to hold a planning meeting or complete a risk assessment.

If appropriate and not already in place the possibility of an advocate or other support will be considered to enable the person to express and pursue their complaint and understand what action is being taken.

Where further support is not appropriate or is unsuccessful the complaint manager will write to the complainant explaining what behaviour they are using which is unreasonable or unacceptable. They will also advise them of strategies to reduce the unreasonable or unacceptable behaviour so that the complaint can be pursued and services can continue.

This may involve:

- Identifying a key person, or team that the complainant should restrict their contact to.
- Agreeing times and frequency of contact.
- Requesting they provide clarification of the complaint and their desired outcomes.
- Reminding them that staff cannot enter into discussions about outcomes which have already been reached unless they allow this to be moved to the next stage.
- Requesting that they do not use inappropriate or abusive comments, shout or swear at staff, make threats, or use aggressive behaviour.

This letter will also advise them that if the unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour continues, it may become necessary for staff to discontinue the investigation of the complaint and discontinue their contact with the person.

If it becomes necessary to discontinue the investigation of a complaint and discontinue contact, this decision will be made in consultation with senior managers and a review of this must be held at least annually. The complaint manager will write again to the

complainant to advise them this action will be taken, explaining the reasons for this and when it will be reviewed. The letter will also advise the person of their right to contact the LGO and that any new complaints will be investigated through the normal procedure.

The letter will also remind them how they can contact the department providing services to them to discuss any day to day issues which arise and how to request new services if this becomes necessary.

A copy of the letter will be circulated to relevant staff and managers.

Where threats or aggressive behaviour is likely to put staff at serious risk, contact will be withdrawn immediately without notification. A risk assessment will be completed with senior managers and this will identify if contact can continue and how this should be done. In these cases the option of contacting the Police and or taking legal action should always be considered.

Good Practice For Investigating officers

General Points

Be aware of the timescale and the importance of providing a thorough investigation.

Work closely with the complaint manager (and independent person and advocate where appropriate) on all aspects of the investigation and report writing, including keeping the complainant informed of progress.

If the media is involved (local or national press, television or radio etc) maintain strict confidentiality and notify the complaint manager.

Consider the environment the investigations are conducted in – some places may be intimidating or distressing for children and young people in particular.

If appropriate, visit the establishment complained about unannounced to check normal practice.

Adhere to relevant conventions and legislation such as Data Protection Act, Health and Safety Act and the Human Rights Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Investigating officers should also work closely with all others involved in the investigation, especially where an independent person is involved.

Getting Started

Contact the complainant, ideally by phone, to offer a meeting in person. This meeting should explain the investigation procedure and;

- a. Confirm that the points of the complaint and desired outcomes are accurate and produce a written record, gain background information on each point of complaint.
- b. If any points change or more are added please advise the complaints team.
- c. Check whether the complainant needs any support during the process e.g. an advocate and discuss this with the complaints team.

- d. Allow the complainant to explain how he feels and express any strong emotions that he has. Accept how the complainant feels (acceptance does not mean agreement)

Read background on the complaint and the relevant legal and administrative policies and procedures.

Consider whether the complaint could be resolved without further investigation. Assess whether the complaints procedure is the most appropriate way of handling this complaint. Consider alternative possible procedures, for example alternative dispute resolution (such as mediation) or appeals to tribunals, legal action or police involvement. If the complaints procedure is not appropriate, discuss the alternatives with the complaint manager.

Planning the Investigation

Obtain the relevant documents, such as files, log books and timesheets, insist on seeing the originals, not copies, and obtain copies of all the documents needed;

Produce a chronology from the relevant sequent of events from the files and identify the names of the individuals most directly involved in the content of the complaint;

Identify a list of interviewees, notify them with as much notice as possible that you wish to hold interviews and supply them with relevant information on the complaint;

Arrange the order of interviews in a logical sequence as relevant to the particular complaint;

Inform all those to be interviewed that they may be accompanied by a friend or trades union representative, provided that this person is not within normal line management arrangements with the interviewee and that there are no issues of confidentiality;

Consider whether a witness of a particularly difficult interview is needed – this is also a good way of training new investigating officers;

Prepare the line of questioning for each interviewee.

Interviewing

Explain the complaint and your role clearly to the interviewee and confirm that they understand the complaints procedure and their role in it;

Interviews should be conducted in an informal and relaxed manner, while ensuring that due process is adhered to;

- a. Use open not leading questions;
- b. Do not express opinions in words or attitude;
- c. Ask single not multiple questions, i.e. one question at a time;

Try to separate hearsay evidence from fact by asking interviewees how they know a particular fact;

Persist with questions if necessary. Do not be afraid to ask the same question twice. Make notes of each answer given;

Deal with conflicts of evidence by seeking corroborative evidence. If this is not available, discuss with the complaint manager the option of meeting between the conflicting witnesses;

Make a formal record of the interview from the written notes as soon as possible while the memory is fresh. Show the interviewee the formal record of their interview, ask if they have anything to add and ask them to sign the record as accurate. Return all notes and records to the complaint manager.

The Investigating Report

Draft the report and show it to the complaint manager. The complaint manager can advise on local practice. The draft report should include;

- a. chronology
- b. list of interviewees
- c. the complaints set out in a numbered list
- d. your analysis and findings for each point of complaint
- e. record of relevant policy, practice and legislation
- f. your recommendations and response to the complainant's desired outcomes
- g. any other relevant information; and
- h. a separate addendum of any other issues for the local authority

Consider comments from relevant persons such as the complaint manager, adjudicating officer and independent person and amend the report as necessary;

Notify the complaint manager that the final report is complete, they will then advise on what to do next.

This information was originally published in the Right to Complain and compiled with the help of the Office of the Commission for Local Administration (the Local Government Ombudsman).

Adults Children & Education



WARNING: This Report must not be reproduced or shared with anyone else without the prior consent of the Complaints & Mediation Manager, (HASS).

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INVESTIGATION REPORT ON COMPLAINT MADE BY:

Name:

Address:

If complaint is being made on behalf of a customer give details below:

Name:

Address:

In respect of (Service Unit):

Investigating officer (Name & Section):

Date Complaint Registered:

Date Final Response due:

Date of this Report:

Time Taken to complete (days):

Structure Of Report

The information contained in this report will be considered under the following headings:

The Complaint

- The background to the complaint.
Include additional information relevant to the complaint
- The points of complaint.
Use the bullet points of complaint as agreed in the confirmation of complaint
- The desired outcomes.
Use the bullet points from the confirmation

The Investigation Process

- The chronology of the handling of the complaint.
- The people interviewed in connection with the complaint.

Interviews:

Name	Title	Location	Date/s
-------------	--------------	-----------------	---------------

- The documents examined.

Findings Of The Investigation

State each point of complaint and put the findings and outcomes under each point of complaint.

The outcomes should come at the end of the findings for each point and should be in Bold before moving onto the next point of complaint and will be either:

Upheld

Not Upheld

Partly Upheld

Not proven

Summary Of Recommendations

This can include:

Apologies

Review of policy/procedure

Reminder to staff of policy procedure

Staff training

Payment for expenses, time and trouble, delays etc

Format For Independent Person's Report

Front Sheet

Local Authority

Complainant's name, address and telephone number

Independent person's name, contact address and telephone number

Investigating officer's name, address and telephone

HEADINGS

Summary of Complaint

Process of Investigation : (a) interviews, documentation

(b) quality, efficiency and chronology

Information obtained

Elements of complaint - upheld , partly upheld or not upheld

Conclusion

Recommendations

The Investigating Report

Draft the response and show it to the complaints manager. The complaints manager can advise on local practice. The draft response should include;

- i. the complaints set out in a numbered list
- j. the outcomes wanted to resolve the complaint
- k. the names and titles of the key people interviewed and a list of files, and documents read
- l. the analysis and findings for each point of complaint
- m. the recommendations and response to the complainant's desired outcomes
- n. if appropriate a separate addendum of any other issues for the local authority

Notify the complaints manager that the final response is complete, they will then advise on what to do next.

Private and Confidential

Name
Address

Ask for:
Extension:
Reference: H/

Date

Dear

Following your complaint, it was agreed that I would respond to your complaint.

My understanding of your complaint is that:

(type here summary of complaint – please use bullet points/numbers to list the different parts of the complaint as listed in the complaint plan.)

To resolve the complaint you would like:

(type here the things the customer would like to happen to put things right – please use bullet points/numbers to list the different things the customer wants as listed in the complaint plan.)

Review

(type here names of staff you may have contacted and list any documents you may have read)

(type here your response under each separate point of the complaint followed by whether that part of the complaint is upheld, not upheld or partly upheld or not proven)

Recommendations

(type here any recommendations you have following the complaint, use bullet points for each recommendation) **This can include:**

Apologies

Review of policy/procedure

Reminder to staff of policy procedure

Staff training

Payment for expenses, time and trouble, delays etc

If you are not satisfied with this response please contact Cath Murray, Complaints Manager, at 10/12 George Hudson Street, York YO1 6ZE or telephone 01904 554145.

Yours sincerely

(Full Name)
(Job Title)

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<p>CITY OF YORK COUNCIL</p> <p>Monitoring the Customer Feedback Procedure</p>

1. How did you find out how to make a comment or complaint?

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Member of council staff | <input type="checkbox"/> | Professional not employed by the council eg doctor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leaflet | <input type="checkbox"/> | Council's website | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friend / relative | <input type="checkbox"/> | Advocate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

2. How easy was it to make the comment or complaint?

- Very easy Fairly easy Neither / nor Fairly difficult Very difficult

3. Was your complaint answered by the date you were given?

- Yes **Go to Q5** No **Continue**

4. If your complaint was not answered in time, were you happy with the way staff kept you up to date with what was happening?

- Yes No

5. Were you given a contact name and telephone number in case you had any further queries?

- Yes No

6. Were staff helpful?

- Yes No

7. If you needed support to help you make your comment or complaint, did we arrange this for you?

- Yes No **Not applicable**

If you have any further comments please send on a separate sheet

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

On the back of this questionnaire there is an Equalities Monitoring form which helps us to check that everyone is getting the same standard of service.

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Equality Monitoring Information
Confidential

Equality Monitoring Form

We want to make sure that the council is a fair and inclusive service provider. Your answers to the following questions, will help us make sure that everyone's needs are considered in council policy and practice.

Your Gender: Male Female Prefer not to say
Do you identify yourself as trans? Yes No Prefer not to say

Year of Birth: Prefer to not say

1st Part of your Postcode: Prefer to not say

(e.g. YO31 2)

Ethnic Origin:

Please choose one section from A-E and then tick the appropriate box to indicate your ethnic background or please tick this box:

I prefer to not say

A. White:

- British
 Irish
 Any other White background please specify:

B. Mixed Race:

- White and Black Caribbean
 White and Black African
 White and Asian
 Any other Mixed background please specify:

C. Asian or Asian British:

- Indian
 Pakistani
 Bangladeshi
 Any other Mixed background please specify:

D. Black or Black British:

- Caribbean
 African
 Bangladeshi
 Any other Mixed background please specify:

E. Other Ethnic Groups:

- Gypsy
 Traveller
 Any other background please specify:

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Yes No

Prefer to not say

If you tick "Yes", please tick as many boxes below as apply:

Physical impairment
(such as using a wheelchair to get around and / or difficulty using arms, legs etc)

Sensory impairment
(such as being blind / having a serious visual impairment or being deaf / having a serious hearing impairment)

Mental health condition
(such as depression or bipolar)

Learning disability
(such as Downs syndrome or dyslexia or cognitive impairment (such as autism or one resulting from head-injury)

Long-standing illness or health condition
(such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy)

The information you provide is anonymous and will be kept confidential. Only council employees will process this information. Thank you for helping us continue to improve our policies and practices.

Partner preference:

- Heterosexual / Straight
 Lesbian / Gay woman
 Homosexual/ Gay man
 Bisexual

Prefer not to say

Relationship Status:

- Married
 Co-habiting
 Civil Partnership
 Single
 Other

Prefer not to say

Please tick the appropriate box to describe your religion or belief:

Prefer not to say

- Buddhist
 Christian
 Hindu
 Jewish
 Muslim
 Sikh
 No Religion
 Other please specify:

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TO BE COMPLETED FOLLOWING EACH STAGE OF A COMPLAINT

Action Plan of Service Improvements Following a Complaint

Ref no.		Name of responding manager:	
---------	--	-----------------------------	--

Date of complaint		What stage was the complaint:	
-------------------	--	-------------------------------	--

Brief description of the complaint:

What outcome did the complainant want:

Was the complaint: Please indicate by highlighting in **bold** if emailing or circling if posted

Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	Not Pursued
--------	---------------	------------	-------------

(do you agree, partly agreed or disagreed with what the customer said had happened or not happened. The complaint will only be not pursued, if the customer decided they no longer had a complaint before any work you completed)

What action has been taken to resolve this complaint:

Date Action completed / to be completed	
---	--

Action completed by whom	
--------------------------	--

Service Manager

What should we do to change/improve the service to prevent a similar complaint ?

Is there an action in the service plan to address this issue ?	
Yes	describe
No	suggestion

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Guidance Notes for the Complaints Team

Good investigative practice

The majority of complaints are likely to be capable of being dealt with speedily and simply. Where, however, a more substantial inquiry is required, the following guidance may be helpful for investigating officers.

Check if there are any previous complaints from this person. Contact the complainant to arrange a meeting (or time for a telephone conversation) and:

- clarify the complaint;
- clarify the outcome sought;
- check whether the complainant needs support of any kind, or has poor sight or hearing, or a language difficulty, and check what help the complainant needs so as to be able to understand the discussion properly;
- check that the complainant has a copy of the Council's complaints leaflet.

Dealing with unreasonably persistent complaints

Unreasonably persistent complainants can cause undue stress for staff and place a strain on the Council's time and resources. All staff should try to respond with patience and sympathy to the needs of all complainants but there are times when there is nothing further which can be reasonably done to assist them or to rectify a real or perceived problem.

In determining arrangements for handling such complaints, staff are presented with two key considerations:

- Ensure that the complaints procedure has been **correctly implemented so far as possible and that no material element of a complaint is overlooked or inadequately addressed** and to appreciate that even unreasonably persistent complainants may have aspects which contain some substance. The need to ensure an equitable approach is crucial.
- Identify the stage at which a complaint has become unreasonably persistent. Implementation of this policy would only occur in **exceptional circumstances**.

It is emphasised that this procedure should only be used as a last resort and after all reasonable measures have been taken to try to resolve complaints following the general procedure, or another avenue, such as the Local Government Ombudsman.

Judgement and discretion must be used in applying the criteria to identify potential habitual or vexatious complainants and in deciding action to be taken in specific cases. The procedure should only be implemented following careful consideration by, and with the authorisation of, the relevant Head of Service and after liaising with the DFC.

Options for dealing with unreasonably persistent complainants

Where complainants have been identified as unreasonably persistent, in accordance with the criteria above, the Head of Service will implement such action and will notify the complainant, in writing, of the reasons why they have been classified as such and the action to be taken. This notification may be copied for the information of others involved, eg Advocate, Councillor or Member of Parliament. A record must be kept for future reference of the reasons why a complainant has been classified as unreasonably persistent.

The meeting called by the Head of Service will also consist of:

- Trying to resolve matters before invoking this policy. This might be accomplished by drawing up a signed agreement with the complainant, which sets out a code of behaviour for the parties involved if the Council is to continue processing the complaint. If these terms were contravened, consideration would then be given to implementing other action.
- Declining contact with the complainant either in person, by telephone, by fax, by letter or any combination of these, provided that one form of contact is maintained.
- Notifying the complainant in writing that the Council has responded fully to the points raised and has tried to resolve the complaint, but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose. The complainants should also be notified that the correspondence is at an end and that further letters received will not be acknowledged nor answered on the matter.
- Informing the complainant that in extreme circumstances the matter will be referred to the Council's solicitors and/or the Police.
- Temporarily suspending all contact with the complainant or investigation of a complaint whilst seeking legal advice.
- Seeking advice at any time from the Health and Safety Officer and/or the Head of Legal Services.

These measures should be limited in order from the least serious to the most.

Withdrawing unreasonably persistent complainant status

From time to time the CFT will review the list of unreasonably persistent complainants and, where possible and reasonable, withdraw this status, subject to discussion with the relevant Head of Service.

Definition of unreasonably persistent complainants

Complainants (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed to be unreasonably persistent complainants where previous or current contact with them shows that they meet **two or more** of the following criteria:

Where complainants:

- **Persist in pursuing a complaint** where the complaints procedures have been fully and properly implemented and exhausted.
- **Change the emphasis** of a complaint or **continually raise additional issues or seek to prolong contact by continually raising further concerns or questions** upon receipt of a response whilst the complaint is being addressed. (Care must be taken not to discard new issues, which are significantly different from the original complaint. These might need to be addressed as separate complaints).
- **Are unwilling to accept documented evidence** as being factual in spite of correspondence specifically answering their questions or **do not accept that facts can sometimes be difficult to verify** when a long period of time has elapsed.
- **Do not clearly identify the precise issues** which they wish to be investigated, despite reasonable efforts to help them specify their concerns, **and/or where the concerns identified are not within the remit** of the Council to investigate.
- **Focus on a trivial matter** to the extent that this is out of proportion to its significance and continue to focus on this point. (It is recognised that determining what is a 'trivial' matter can be subjective and careful judgement must be used in applying this criteria).
- **Have threatened or used actual physical violence** towards staff at any time – this may in itself cause personal contact with the complainant and/or their representatives to be discontinued and the complaint will, thereafter, only be pursued through written communication. All such incidents should be documented.
- Have **harassed** or been personally **abusive or verbally aggressive** on more than one occasion towards staff dealing with their complaint. (Staff must recognise that complainants may sometimes act out of character at times of stress, anxiety, or distress and should make reasonable allowances for this. They should document all incidents of harassment. You may need to consult other Council policies and where there have been threats, violence and/or harassment.) E.g.
 - Staff Warning Register
 - Whistle blowing
 - Staff Conduct
 - Disciplinary and Grievance
- Have, in the course of addressing a complaint, had an **excessive number of contacts** with the Council placing unreasonable demands on staff. (A contact is defined as those methods of communication set out in section 2. Discretion must be used in determining the precise number of "excessive contacts" applicable under this section, using judgement based on the specific circumstances of each individual case).
- Are known to have **recorded** meetings or face-to-face/telephone **conversations without** the prior knowledge and consent of other parties involved.
- **Display unreasonable demands or expectations and fail to accept that these may be unreasonable** (e.g. insist on responses to complaints or enquiries being provided more urgently than is reasonable or normal recognised practice).

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Ombudsman Complaint Procedure

The Local Government Ombudsmen (LGO) is an independent, impartial and free service, which investigates complaints about councils and certain other bodies. They investigate complaints about most council matters including housing, planning, education and social services and about how the council has done something. But they cannot question what a council has done simply because someone does not agree with it.

From 1st April 2009, the LGO has new arrangements for dealing with complaints. This new procedure, called "**Council First**" requires all complainants to go through all the stages of their council's own complaints procedure before the Ombudsman will consider the complaint. However it is recognised that there will be some complaints where, for one reason or another, it would be inappropriate for this requirement to apply. Following consultation, the LGO decided that the following complaints will normally be treated as *exceptions* to the general requirement:

Complaints where the subject means the matter is clearly urgent

The LGO believes there are some complaints, which require priority consideration because time is a key factor in the injustice claimed. These are:

- Complaints about education (except transport) – *school admission complaints are already treated as a priority*
- Complaints about homelessness – *where the complainant is currently or will imminently be homeless*

Complaints where the LGO or the council decide that completing the council's own procedure would be to the detriment of the complainant

These are:

- Complaints where there has been unreasonable delay by the council in processing a complaint – *the LGO believes that 12 weeks is generally sufficient time to conclude an investigation but what is unreasonable will depend upon the particular circumstances of the complaint*
- Complaints where the council's Chief Executive has exercised discretion not to investigate further – *the LGO will check with the council if this is unclear*
- Complaints where the LGO has exercised discretion to accept a complaint because he/she has good reason to believe the council would not handle it effectively – *this would only happen after the LGO had discussed the matter with the council concerned.*
- Complaints against more than one body – *to avoid the possibility of different time scales for different procedures, the LGO will accept a complaint, which is made against two authorities within the jurisdiction of the LGO or within the jurisdiction of the LGO and Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.*

Complaints where the complainant's circumstances indicate a need for priority

- Complaints made by children and young people – *up to the age of 21 or 25 if disabled*

- Complaints where referral to the council would disadvantage an already disadvantaged complainant – *where the particular circumstances indicate vulnerability and/or the need for urgency; the LGO will always provide reasons*

It is already normal practice for us to require the completion of our complaints procedures and some complaints, most notably about school admissions and homelessness, have always been given priority.

This is the procedure that the Ombudsman adheres to:

- On receipt of a complaint to the Ombudsman, a letter will be sent to the Authority advising us of the complaint with a 28-day response target.
- If no response is provided to the Ombudsman within this target, they will contact the our Link Officer (who is our Head of Legal) who will then contact the relevant Head of Service for a progress report on the complaint.
- If there is still no response at this stage it will be filed for a further 14 days.
- If the Ombudsman has still not received a response after 14 days, a letter will be written to the Chief Executive. This will advise the Chief Executive that the Head of Service and Case Officer for the complaint will be required to report with all files relevant to the case for an interview at the Ombudsman's offices in York.

To make a complaint or for advice on making a complaint to the LGO, you can contact the Advice Team –which is available from Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm

Tel: 0845 602 1983 or 0300 061 0614 (calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes)

Fax: 024 7682 0001

Text: "Call Back" to 0762 480 4299

Send to: The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Email: advice@lgo.org.uk

Target Measuring

Targets	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Complaints dealt with within target time	85%	90%	95%
Complainants found the complaint process easy to understand	85%	90%	95%
Written correspondence (letter, fax or e-mail) responded to within 20 days	85%	90%	95%
Number of Ombudsman maladministration claims	0	0	0

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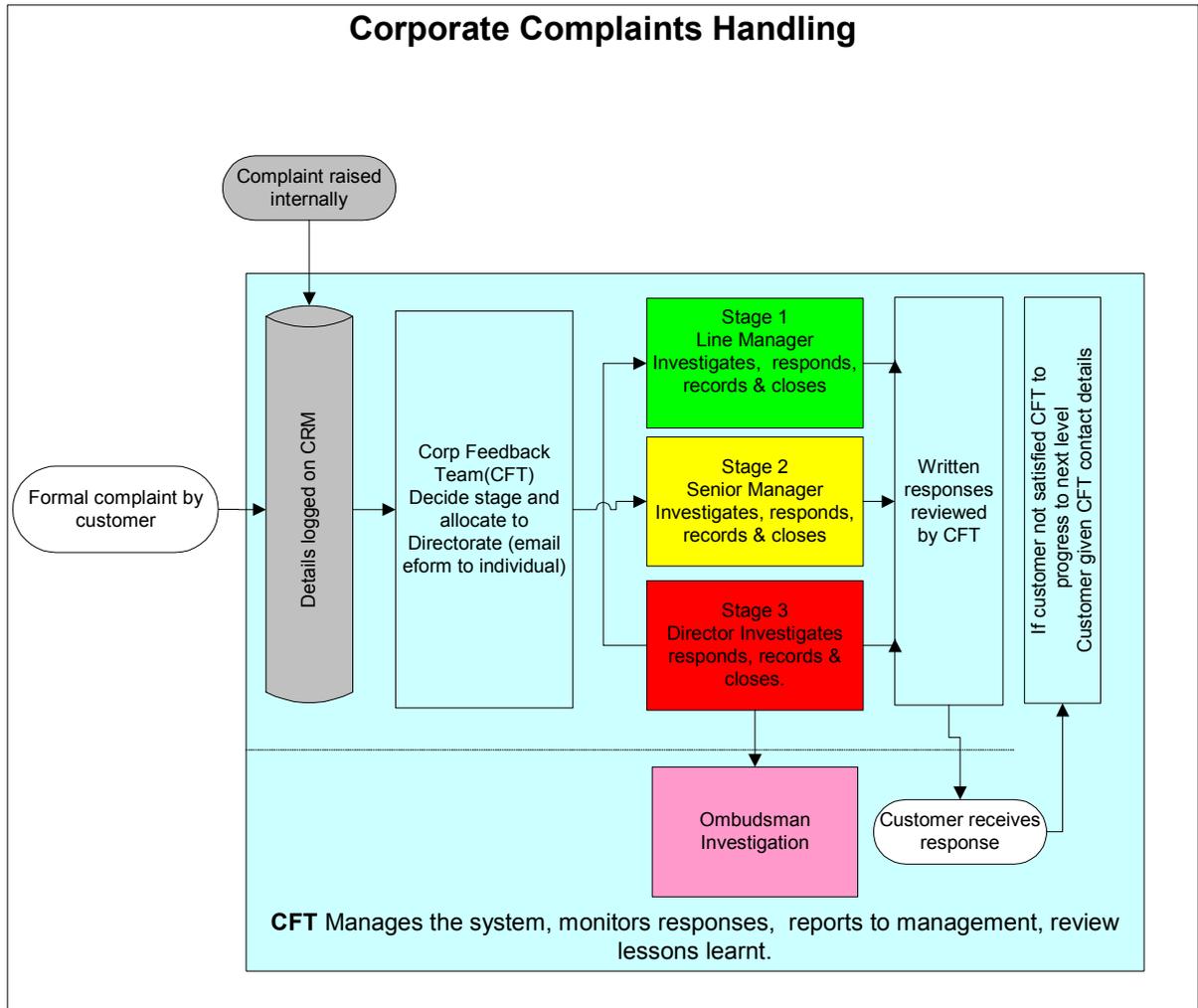
Role of the Corporate Feedback Team

The following section describes the tasks that the Corporate Feedback Team need to undertake in order to undertake their roles effectively. These are not necessarily full time roles; rather the activities should be built into existing job descriptions as necessary.

Tasks:

1. To oversee the Authority's Corporate Feedback management activity.
2. To ensure that all complaints, comments and compliments are appropriately recorded and responded to in line with the Authority's set procedure, and that trend and learning points from this are understood and acted on by the organisation.
3. To ensure complaints and feedback are forwarded to the correct person for investigation and response.
4. To ensure that Local Government Ombudsman complaints are appropriately tracked and monitored within the agreed timescale.
5. To ensure that all standards relating to the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and Procedures are regularly monitored.
6. To provide advice and consultancy to directorates in relation to Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and Procedures
7. To maintain the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and Procedures, ensuring its ongoing relevance, taking into account internal and external developments, such as local and national government initiatives and changing customer expectations.
8. System ownership of the Feedback System including ensuring the system is maintained as required.
9. Ensuring the provision of quarterly reports to the Customer services Management Board, and to Directorate management Teams in order to drive improvements in customer services.
 - Proactively identifying themes, trends and issues, and highlight as appropriate.
 - Ensuring that customer intelligence is collected, collated and translated into meaningful information and reported appropriately.
10. Providing consultancy to Directorate Complaints and Compliments Managers on difficult issues or escalated complaints.

11. Providing support and carrying out independent investigations on behalf of the Directors.
12. Working with partners, where appropriate, to ensure best practice.
- 13.** Coordinating training and staff development activities for staff and Members.



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