

	<b>Complaints Handling Procedure – Draft</b>
	<b>Management</b>

## **1.1 Complaint Management System**

### **1.1.1 Introduction**

When responding to complaints, staff should act in accordance with these complaint handling procedures as well as any other internal documents providing guidance on the management of complaints. Staff should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below.

### **1.1.2 Receipt of complaints**

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and its supporting information. We will also assign a unique identifier to the complaint file.

The record of the complaint will document:

- the contact information of the person making a complaint,
- issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want,
- any other relevant information, and
- any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

### **1.1.3 Acknowledgement of complaints**

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint within two (2) working days.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint. When an email address is provided, email will be considered the most appropriate medium, regardless of the method of contact used by the person making the complaint.

### **1.1.4 Initial assessment and addressing of complaints**

#### **Initial assessment**

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- how serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is,
- whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety,
- how the person making the complaint is being affected,
- the risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

#### **Addressing complaints**

After addressing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. To manage a complaint, we may:

	<b>Complaints Handling Procedure – Draft</b>
	<b>Management</b>

- give the person making a complaint information or an explanation,
- gather information from the product, person or area that the complaint is about, or
- investigate the claims made in the complaint.

We will keep the person making the complaint up to date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and consider any statutory requirements.

#### **1.1.5 Providing reasons for decisions**

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- the outcome of the complaint and any action we took,
- the reason/s for our decision,
- the remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review or appeal.

If in the course of the investigation, we make any adverse findings about a particular individual, we will consider any applicable privacy obligations under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and any applicable exemptions in or made pursuant to that Act, before sharing our findings with the person making the complaint.

#### **1.1.6 Closing the complaint, record keeping, redress and review**

We will keep comprehensive records about:

- how we managed the complaint,
- the outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations, and
- any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the complaint handling manager and/or senior management.

#### **1.1.7 Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints**

We will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant Ombudsman, Office of Local Government or other oversight bodies).

#### **1.1.8 Three levels of complaint handling**

The three levels of complaint handling are:

- Level 1 – Frontline complaint handling and early resolution of complaints.

	<b>Complaints Handling Procedure – Draft</b>
	<b>Management</b>

- Level 2 – Internal review of complaints and/or complaint handling (may include further investigation of issues raised and use of Alternative Dispute Resolution options).
- Level 3 – External review of complaints and/or complaint handling by organisations.

We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible staff will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Where this is not possible, we may decide to escalate the complaint to a more senior officer within Council. This second level of complaint handling will be provided for the following internal mechanisms:

- assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or
- facilitated resolution (where a person not connected with the complaint reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties).

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of Council's review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of our decision (by the Ombudsman for example).

### **1.2 Unreasonable Complainant Conduct**

Refer to Council's *Unreasonable Customer Conduct Procedure*.

### **1.3 Monitoring the Complaint Management System**

We will continually monitor our complaint management system to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints, and
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.

Monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.