



West Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Compliments and Complaints Policy

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1 Compliments and Complaints Information and Policy

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Compliments and Complaints Policy is to ensure that compliments and complaints are properly administered, recorded and acknowledged and, where necessary, investigated. Also, that those members of the public when lodging a complaint are treated in a fair, reasonable and consistent manner.

A Compliment is an expression of satisfaction with the service provided by the Fire Authority or its employees in the course of their duties.

A Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Authority or by its staff when acting in the course of their duties.

A Comment is an expression of opinion or reaction with the service provided by the Fire Authority or its employees in the course of their duties.

A Concern is a matter of interest or importance to someone relating to the service provided by the Fire Authority or its employees in the course of their duties.

Compliments and complaints about service provision give an indication of how well the Authority is carrying out its functions and where improvements can be made where appropriate. Therefore any complaint should be made as soon as possible and within 6 months of the event/issue occurring.

Further information on the services provided can be found in the Customer Service Guide.

They can be received in a number of ways:

- In person, by telephone, via social media or by letter using the contact details listed below:

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Oakroyd Hall
Bradford Road
Birkenshaw
West Yorkshire
BD11 2DY
Telephone 01274 682311

Alternatively visit your local fire station ([Local Stations](#))

- By e-mail (complaints.compliments@westyorkfire.gov.uk)
- Via the WYFRS website. ([Have Your Say or Feedback](#))

If you require any assistance with making your complaint we will provide any reasonable adjustment or advice you require. If this is the case please contact the Service Standards Officer (Corporate Services) at Fire Service Headquarters on telephone number 01274 682311.

If making a complaint please include as much detail as possible and the outcome you are hoping for.

Compliments

All compliments received from external sources (public/partners/organisations) should be recorded in the station log. In addition, details should be forwarded electronically to Corporate Services via the form on Corporate Services Intranet site. Any written correspondence should be kept in the file held on stations, for inspection by Operational officers during Performance Management visits.

For further information please refer to the Compliments Guidance document

Complaints

The Service Standards Officer must be notified of **all** complaints and any action taken in response, via the Authority's E-mail system. The Service Standards Officer will maintain a record of all complaints received and will monitor their resolution.

Expressions of dissatisfaction concerning Authority policy or actions (or lack of action) by third parties will not fall within the scope of this policy. Where such expressions are received, they should be directed to the Service Standards Officer who will arrange for a written response to be made to the complainant and will maintain a separate record of such correspondence.

Complaints relating to Freedom of Information and Data Protection issues will not fall within the scope of this policy. In these circumstances contact the Corporate Services Manager/Information Governance Manager.

2 Resolution of Complaints

There are four stages of resolution:

2.1.1 Stage 1 - Complaints resolved at the point of receipt

Ideally dealt with by employees at the time, or by the Watch Manager, Station Manager or Department Head.

2.1.2 Stage 2 - Complaints managed by the Service Standards Officer

Those complaints where the complainant is not satisfied with the response they have received from Stage 1.

2.1.3 Stage 3 - Complaints resolved by the Authority's Appeals Panel

Those complaints where the complainant is not satisfied with the response they have received from the Service Standards Officer (outcome of stage 2).

2.1.4 Stage 4 - Complaints resolved by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

Those complaints where the complainant is not satisfied with the response they have received from the Authority's Complaints Appeals Panel.

2.2 Stage 1 - Complaints resolved at the point of receipt

On receipt of a complaint, a record should be made in the complaints log held by each station/department and if possible a copy of the Customer Service Guide should be given to the complainant.

The following details are required for the Complaints Log:

- Name, Address and Telephone Number. (Unless anonymity is requested).
- Details of the complaint. (Unless confidentiality is requested).
- Date complaint made.
- Details of action taken to resolve the complaint.
- Date the Service Standards Officer was informed about the complaint.
- Date of letter of acknowledgement.
- Date(s) of any interim letters or visits to complainant.
- Date of final letter. (This may be the only letter if the complaint is resolved immediately).
- A request to speak to a Senior Officer (defined as Station Manager or above) must be recorded together with the action to notify an officer.

Whenever possible the employee receiving the complaint should try to resolve it immediately. If the complainant is satisfied with the explanation offered at this stage, no further action will be required. Details of the complaint should be recorded in the Complaints Log held on station. The person dealing with the complaint must then pass all relevant details to their line manager and Corporate Services as soon as practicable.

If an immediate solution is not possible, the complainant should be reassured that the matter will be fully investigated, following which a written response will be made of the findings. If it is not possible to conclude the investigation and respond within 3 days of receipt, a letter of acknowledgement should be sent along with a copy of the Customer Service Guide.

If the Station Manager/Department Head feels that a written reply of any description may cause unnecessary upset a 'Note for Case' supporting that decision should be prepared, retained in the appropriate complaints file and a copy forwarded to the Service Standards Officer.

If the Service Standards Officer receives a complaint in the first instance, the appropriate Station Manager or Department Head will be notified of all events and required outcomes.

A Senior Officer will carry out a thorough investigation and send a full explanation (and an apology if appropriate) to the complainant within 7 days. The date of the letter should be recorded in the complaints log.

If the investigation, due to its complexity, requires more time to complete then a further letter(s) should be sent to the complainant at 7 day intervals keeping them informed of the progress of their complaint.

In cases where the complainant requests anonymity, details of the complaint must still be recorded in the complaints log but not details of the complainant. In such cases, the complainant should be reassured that the matter will be investigated fully but that it will not be possible to respond to them. A 'Note for Case' detailing the actions taken to resolve the complaint should be sent to the Service Standards Officer. Where litigation may be brought against the Authority, or where the complaint may result in disciplinary action being taken, full details of the complainant must be recorded and the complainant must be informed that no guarantee of anonymity can be given.

If the complainant wishes to discuss the matter with a Senior Officer, or if they wish the nature of their complaint to remain confidential, the Service Standards Officer must be informed immediately (or First Call Group Manager if outside normal office hours) and the complainant contacted by that Officer within 1 hour.

In cases where the Station/Watch Manager or Department Head feels that due to the nature of the complaint it cannot adequately be dealt with at a local level/Stage 1, it should be referred to the Service Standards Officer and the complaint progressed to Stage 2.

If during the course of the investigation the complainant believes they have been adversely treated in any way or if the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the Service Standards Officer is to be informed and the complaint will be progressed to Stage 2.

The Station Manager/Department Head should forward all relevant documentation/correspondence/notes for case, emails, reports etc. to the Service Standards Officer as the complaint progresses, observing such precautions as are considered necessary to maintain confidentiality. Details of any complaint investigation should be kept secure at all times.

The Service Standards Officer will give assistance to all Authority employees requiring information or assistance on any aspect of the complaints procedure and can be contacted via the Corporate Services Department, Fire Service Headquarters.

3 Special Notes

3.1.1 Special Note 1 - Litigation

If the complaint may lead to any form of litigation against the Authority the Service Standards Officer must be informed as soon as possible. The Service Standards Officer will collect all material information and refer the matter to the Clerk to the Authority for consideration. The complaints procedure will be suspended during any action for litigation.

3.1.2 Special Note 2 - Discipline

If the complaint might result in disciplinary action being taken, the Service Standards Officer must be informed, who will pass all related information to the Investigating Officer and Chief Employment Services Officer. The complainant should be informed that it is being dealt with and the complaints procedure suspended or progressed to closure (whichever is applicable to the complaint).

3.1.3 Special Note 3 - Complaint involving a Member of the Authority

Complaints against Members are dealt with under a separate statutory procedure.

If you have a complaint about the conduct of an elected Member of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, please direct this in writing, to:

Mr M G Barnes BA
Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Oakroyd Hall
Birkenshaw
West Yorkshire
BD11 2DY

Or by completing the online Members Code of Conduct Complaint Form

Once a complaint has been received by the Authority's Monitoring Officer the relevant processes and procedures will be put in place to allow for its consideration.

3.2 Stage 2 - Complaints managed by the Service Standards Officer

The Service Standards Officer will arrange to have a Group Manager/District Commander or more senior officer investigate complaints which are referred to Stage 2 and will organise the tracking and monitoring

of complaints to enable Directors/Senior Officers, Elected Members or the Commission for Local Administration in England (Local Government Ombudsman) to refer immediately to any complaint.

It is the responsibility of the Service Standards Officer to enable the public to exercise their right to complain about any failure by the Authority to meet the standard of service expected and to ensure that all the points at issue have been fully addressed.

The Service Standards Officer will assist complainants with communication difficulties in making contact with organisations, which can be of help to them in these situations.

The Service Standards Officer will make arrangements to discuss all aspects of the complaint with the investigating officer prior to informing the complainant of the results of the investigation and the decision reached.

The complainant will be updated on progress as required.

A letter will be sent to the complainant giving the outcome of the investigation and informing them they must appeal within 21 days if they wish to do so.

If the matter cannot be resolved at Stage 2 to the satisfaction of the complainant, the Service Standards Officer will provide assistance to the complainant to enable the complaint to progress to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure. A letter explaining the procedure will be sent to the complainant.

3.3 Stage 3 - Complaints resolved by the Authority's Appeals Panel

If a complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 or 2, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with either the decision reached or the way in which their complaint has been dealt with, they have the right to put the matter before the Authority's Appeals Panel. If they wish the matter to be considered by the Appeals Panel they should write to the Service Standards Officer within 21 days of being notified of the decision at Stage 2.

On receipt of a Notice of Appeal, the Service Standards Officer will ensure that all relevant details and documentation are supplied to the Appeals Panel members and will make arrangements for them to examine the complaint.

The Appeals Panel will be made up of:

1. A Director/Senior Officer.
2. An Area Manager / Group Manager from a function not associated with the complaint.
3. Chief Employment Services Officer.

The Appeals Panel may wish to meet the complainant or their representative and hear the complaint first hand.

The Appeals Panel may require any personnel involved in the complaint or the investigation to provide the information necessary for them to investigate the matter fully.

The complainant will be informed of the decision of the Appeals Panel in writing as soon as possible but not later than 3 working days after the hearing. Information on the Local Government Ombudsman complaints process can be found at www.lgo.org.uk

3.4 Stage 4 - Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the decision reached or with the way the complaint was handled, they may wish to take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Service Standards Officer will give every assistance to the complainant in making contact with the Local Government

Ombudsman. Thereafter the Service Standards Officer will refer the complaint file to the Monitoring Officer who will assume responsibility for dealing with the Ombudsman.

3.4.1 Review

The Corporate Services team will review the Compliments and Complaints Policy every two years or sooner if necessary.

All complaints will be reviewed in terms of preventative action. By implementing preventative action as well as corrective action the likelihood of receiving similar complaints is reduced.

3.4.2 Monitoring Officer

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires the Fire Authority to appoint a Monitoring Officer, whose role is to report to the Fire Authority any breach or possible contravention of legal requirements by the Fire Authority or its employees, or maladministration reported by the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Clerk to the Fire Authority will be the appointed Monitoring Officer for the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority. Complaints referred to the Monitoring Officer, which fall within the statutory responsibilities of the post, may be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer outside of the complaints procedure.

3.4.3 Unreasonable Complaints

Unreasonable complainant actions, behaviour and unreasonable persistent complainants will be dealt with in accordance with guidance provided by the Local Government Ombudsman.