



West Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Compliments and Complaints Policy

And related procedures



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Making West Yorkshire Safer
www.westyorkshire.gov.uk

Revision and Signoff Sheet

Change Record

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23/05/2013	Pam Imeson	1.1	Updated
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07/11/2017	John Tideswell	2.1	Updated for job titles, addition of Section 3.4.3 and minor wording changes.
14/08/2019	Deb Wilson	3.1	Updated with agreed recommendations from the recent Complaints & Customer Service review.
04/02/2022	Beverley Croft-Nicholson	4.1	Review and update of web links and contact details. Accessibility check
26/11/2024	Beverley Croft-Nicholson	5.1	Review to update contact details, links etc. and minor alterations to align with Constitution. Transfer to new corporate template.

Reviewers

Name	Version Approved	Position	Organisation	Date
Alison Davey	4.0	Corporate Services Manager	WYFRS	14/08/2019
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Distribution

Name	Position	Organisation
All Personnel	N/A	WYFRS
All public	N/A	External

Equality Impact Assessment

Are the recommendations within this report subject to Equality Impact Assessment as outlined in the EIA guidance? Yes

([EIA template and guidance](#))

Date EIA Completed: 14/02/2022

Date EIA Approved: 14/02/2022

The EIA is available on request from the report author or from diversity.inclusion@westyorksfire.gov.uk

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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 West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) 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 West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service or its employees when acting in the course of their duties.
- A **Comment** is an expression of opinion or reaction with the service provided by the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service 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 West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service or its employees in the course of their duties.

Compliments and complaints about service provision give an indication of how well West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service 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 six 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:

1. In person, by telephone, or by letter using the contact details listed below:

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
c/o Corporate Services
Bradford Road
Birkenshaw
West Yorkshire
BD11 2DY

Telephone 01274 682311

2. Alternatively visit your local fire station.
3. By e-mail: complaints.compliments@westyorksfire.gov.uk

4. Via the WYFRS website: [Feedback | West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

5. Via Social media.

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 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.

1.1 Comments and concerns

Comments and concerns can be sent to us via the same methods as complaints and compliments. The [Feedback](#) form on our website allows complaint, compliment, comment or concern to be selected from a drop-down list.

We should log all comments and concerns, liaise with the relevant department and respond as appropriate.

1.2 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 at [Apps and Forms](#) on our internal FireHub 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.

1.3 Complaints

The Corporate Services department must be notified of all complaints and any action taken in response, via the Authority's Email system. Corporate Services will maintain a record of all complaints received and will monitor their resolution.

Expressions of dissatisfaction concerning WYFRS 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 Corporate Services department, 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 Head of Corporate Services or Information Governance Manager.

For further information please see below and refer to the [Complaints Guidance](#) document.

2 Resolution of Complaints

There are four stages of resolution:

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.

Stage 2 - Complaints managed by Corporate Services

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

Stage 3 - Complaints resolved by the WYFRS Appeals Panel

Those complaints where the complainant is not satisfied with the response they have received at stage 2. Requests to move a complaint to Stage 3 should be made within 21 days of the Stage 2 response.

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 WYFRS Appeals Panel at Stage 3 Complainants will be informed that in this case they can, if they wish, ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to consider their complaint.

3 Special Notes

Special Note 1 - Litigation

If the complaint may lead to any form of litigation against WYFRS, Corporate Services must be informed as soon as possible. They will collect all material information and refer the matter to the Monitoring Officer for consideration. The complaints procedure will be suspended during any action for litigation.

Special Note 2 - Discipline

If the complaint might result in disciplinary action being taken, Corporate Services must be informed, who will pass all related information to the Investigating Officer and Head of Human Resources. 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).

Special Note 3 - Complaints 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 McCarthy
Monitoring Officer
West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Bradford Road
Birkenshaw
West Yorkshire
BD11 2DY

Or by completing the online Members Code of Conduct Complaint Form, which can be found at [Complaints about Elected Members | West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#).

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

4 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 Corporate Services department was informed about the complaint.
- Date of letter of acknowledgement.
- Date(s) of any interim letters, telephone calls or visits to complainant.
- Date of final letter/email. (This may be the only letter/email 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/Unit 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 complaint file and a copy forwarded to the Corporate Services department.

If Corporate Services receive 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, unless otherwise agreed at the outset with the complainant.

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 Corporate Services. Where litigation may be brought against WYFRS, 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, Corporate Services 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 Unit 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 Corporate Services 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, Corporate Services should be informed, and the complaint will be progressed to Stage 2.

The Station Manager/Unit Head should forward all relevant documentation, correspondence, notes for case, emails, reports etc. to Corporate Services 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, in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Corporate Services will give assistance to all employees requiring information or assistance on any aspect of the complaints procedure and can be contacted at Fire Service Headquarters on telephone number 01274 682311, or via email to Complaints.Compliments@westyorksfire.gov.uk.

5 Stage 2 - Complaints managed by Corporate Services

Corporate Services 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 Executive 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 Corporate Services to enable the public to exercise their right to complain about any failure by WYFRS to meet the standard of service expected and to ensure that all the points at issue have been fully addressed.

Corporate Services will assist complainants with communication difficulties in making contact with organisations, which can be of help to them in these situations.

Corporate Services 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/email 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, Corporate Services will provide assistance to the complainant to enable the complaint to progress to Stage

3 of the Complaints Procedure. A letter and/or email explaining the procedure will be sent to the complainant.

6 Stage 3 - Complaints resolved by the WYFRS 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 Appeals Panel. If they wish the matter to be considered by the Appeals Panel, they should write to Corporate Services within 21 days of being notified of the decision at Stage 2.

On receipt of a Notice of Appeal, Corporate Services 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. Director of People and Culture.

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.

7 Stage 4 - Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman

If the complainant has gone through all three stages of the complaints process above and is still dissatisfied with the decision reached or with the way the complaint was handled, they may wish, take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. Corporate Services will provide every assistance to the complainant in making contact with the Local Government Ombudsman. Thereafter, Corporate Services will refer the complaint file to the Monitoring Officer who will assume responsibility for dealing with the Ombudsman.

7.1 About the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman has issued a Complaint Handling Code which sets out advice and guidance for councils on how to handle complaints. You can find more information about this on the Ombudsman's website ([Complaint Handling Code - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)).

The Ombudsman investigates complaints in a fair and independent way. It does not take sides, and it is a free service.

The Ombudsman expects that the complainant has have given West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service the chance to deal with any complaint, before being contacted.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at individual complaints about councils and some other organisations providing local public services. There are some [limits on what the Ombudsman can look at](#). For example, the Ombudsman may not consider your complaint if you have not been significantly personally affected by the issue you are raising, or if you have a right of appeal to a court or tribunal.

Contact details:

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

8 Review

Corporate Services will review the Compliments and Complaints Policy, in line with any changes to the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority Constitution, or at least 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.

9 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 WYFRS or its employees, or maladministration reported by the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Director of Corporate Services is the appointed Monitoring Officer for 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 Director of Corporate Services outside of the complaints procedure.

10 Unreasonable Complaints

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

How this policy supports our values

Core values:



- **Teamwork:** We recognise everyone's strengths and contributions, working effectively as one team.
- **Integrity:** We are trustworthy, act ethically, treating each other with dignity and respect.
- **Learning:** We learn all the time; we share knowledge and experiences, celebrating success.
- **Responsibility:** We are responsible, work positively and take ownership of the work we do.
- **Communication:** We share clear information, in ways everyone understands, having open discussions.

Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services – our five ethical principles:



- **Putting our communities first:** We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.

- **Integrity:** We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.
- **Dignity and respect:** We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.
- **Leadership:** We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
- **Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI):** We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

Document Properties

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