

Customer Care Policy Statement and Complaints and Compliments Procedure

Summary:

The Service will approach Customer Care in a pro-active and re-active manner. Pro-actively, the Service will measure the customer's perceived satisfaction levels using a range of consultation measures. Targets will be set against Best Value Performance Indicators that will also be open to scrutiny via audit. In conjunction with this, staff will be encouraged to express ideas for improvements via a Staff Suggestion Scheme.

The Service will adopt customer care systems that are procedure based, simple and easy to use, and allow the exchange of information between user and provider. This will allow the Service to identify good and bad practice and to therefore modify our future approach and thus lead to continuous improvement.

The Service recognises that Best Value Principles should form part of good management practice. To that end the Service has a stated aim that will ensure the principles of Best Value are adopted throughout the organisation, and the desired culture of the Service is set out in Service Values. The Service also recognises the duties that Best Value legislation places upon it in terms of satisfying customer needs.

Users of the Service are limited in number. It is vital therefore that a balance is struck between perception of the services provided and that which is delivered. Therefore, the Service will also adopt a re-active Customer Care approach. This will involve consulting with users of the Service, be it emergency response, external training courses or fire safety / education based.

Further Information: Previously V0106 Customer Care Policy Statement and v120401 Complaints and Compliments

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1 Organisational Responsibility

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| 1.1 | The Governance team is the department with the responsibility needed to be the designated manager responsible for ensuring this policy is effectively implemented. | Governance Team |
| 1.2 | Adequate resources, including finance, will be made available to enable this policy to be effectively implemented. | Corporate Management Team |

2 Policy Text

2.1 Policy

The Customer Relations Officer (CRO) for Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) is the Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Corporate Services).

All complaints are acknowledged within seven working days.

There are three stages for handling complaints.

All complaints/compliments are forwarded to the Business Support Manager (BSM) to be logged on a central database. This includes complaints that are not of a 'formal' nature regarding driving of Service vehicles/appliances where CCTV footage has to be viewed.

The Business Support Manager will be responsible for collating all information relating to Customer Complaints and Compliments.

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service may modify its approach or behaviour in response to complaints or compliments received, where applicable.

Should the complainant remain unsatisfied, it becomes their responsibility to refer the matter to the Ombudsman.

All customer complaints/compliments are open to scrutiny and audit.

The appropriate Corporate Management Team (CMT) Member has the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that Customer Complaints / Compliments procedures are adhered to in relation to their function for reporting and investigation.

This Service Order relates to complaints received from members of the public. Any internal complaints received from BFRS employees should be referred to the appropriate CMT member to investigate if applicable.

Complaints against Fire and Rescue Authority Elected Members, where they have breached the Members' Code of Conduct, should be submitted to the Monitoring Officer, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority, Southfields Road, Kempston Bedford, MK42 7NR. Arrangements for dealing with allegations that a member has breached the Code of Conduct are included in the Authority's Handbook [here](#).

2.2 Public Consultation Comments

On occasion, comments are received as a result of public consultation (e.g. Community Risk Management Plan, Customer Satisfaction Surveys, etc.) which could be deemed as a complaint/compliment. In order to achieve consistency across the Service:

- The Communications and Engagement Manager forwards all compliments /positive feedback and complaints/negative comments received from public consultations to the Business Support Manager with details of the type of consultation, comments, date the information was received and a copy of the comment/complaint.
- The Communications and Engagement Manager will keep a record of public consultation comments.
- The Business Support Manager is responsible for assessing the comments from public consultations monthly, bearing in mind content and timescales, and determines whether the comments should be subject to the complaints and compliments procedure.
- The Business Support Manager will advise the Communications and Engagement Manager of the decision reached, so that, as necessary, the matter may be appropriately acknowledged as part of the complaints and compliments procedure.

2.3 Management Procedure – Complaints and Compliments

		Responsible Officer
Step 1	All complaints / compliments will be forwarded immediately to the Business Support Manager (BSM). (A written summary of verbal notifications should be provided).	Receiver of complaint / compliment
Step 2	The BSM will log, and thereafter update, details of all complaints / compliments on a central database and record on form FSE 254 for complaints only. In the case of a complaint, the BSM will send an acknowledgement, complete with reference number, to the person making the complaint within 7 working days of receipt of details of the complaint.	BSM
Step 3	If the customer contacts the Service after receiving their acknowledgement, it will be the responsibility of the BSM to refer the caller to the appropriate person who will be dealing with the complaint.	BSM
Step 4	The BSM will pass the information of a complaint via a FSE 254 onto the relevant CMT Member or respective Deputy. If the respective CMT Member or Deputy is not available to refer	BSM

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	to in the first instance then, dependant on the nature of the complaint and the urgency with which a resolution is required, it will be the responsibility of the Duty Officer to ensure that the Customer Complaints / Compliments procedures are adhered to.	
Step 5	The CMT Member (or Deputy) will take further action as necessary to resolve the issue within 10 working days and will inform the BSM of the outcome (Stage 1) .	CMT Member (Duty Officer)
Step 6	The BSM will monitor progress to ensure timescales are adhered to.	BSM
Step 7	If further action is required after the initial 10-day period, the CMT Member (or Deputy) will transfer the investigation to another CMT member to consider the appropriate action to resolve the complaint within a further 10 working days (20 working days in total) and advise the BSM that this has been done. (Stage 2)	CMT Member
Step 8	If no satisfactory conclusion is reached, the CMT Member (or Deputy) will advise the BSM who will refer the complaint to the Customer Relations Officer (ACO) (Stage 3) .	CMT Member SAM
Step 9	The ACO will then have a further 10 working days to take whatever action deemed necessary to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. (30 working days in total). The ACO will keep the BSM informed of any actions or recommendations made, which will be entered onto the database.	ACO
Step10	If the customer is still not satisfied at this time, it will then become the responsibility of the customer to take the matter to the Ombudsman.	Customer
Step11	Once the complaint has been satisfied, at any stage information is recorded on the FSE 254 and all correspondence kept on file and database updated by the BSM.	CMT Member BSM
Step12	It will be the responsibility of the ACO to up-date the BSM with any findings or recommendations that eventually come from the Ombudsman.	ACO
Step13	The information recorded on the database will be collected on a monthly basis. Numbers and types of Complaints and Compliments are reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority on	BSM

	a quarterly basis and annually to the Audit and Standards Committee. Compliments are reported in the Blue Bulletin.	
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3 People Impact Assessment

- 3.1 The Governance team has received training in promoting an accessible service, and the EDI team should notify Governance where there is additional accessibility needs of individuals that are known to them.
- 3.2 Translation services are available if required.

4 Review

- 4.1 This Service Order will be subject to review at 3 yearly intervals or following significant change to organisational structure, personnel, procedures or legislation etc.



Bedfordshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Service Information System Policies and Procedures

Document Ref No: V12 04/01

Version: 1

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Reviewer: Lauren Fair, Business Support Manager

Issue date: 26.10.2022

Review date: 01.10.2025

Approved by: Head of Strategic Support and Assurance