



A model internal complaints process

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This guide offers you information and help with making, amending or updating your internal complaints handling process. It outlines a consistent and streamlined process which you can use to resolve complaints quickly and efficiently. With a systematic process in place for all employees to follow when a consumer expresses dissatisfaction, it becomes easier to provide that first-class standard of service.

We encourage you to take the view that service complaints or expressions of dissatisfaction, whether they relate to communication issues, avoidable delays or a breach of your responsibilities, is constructive criticism.

Top tip: Even if your employee thinks the service complaint is invalid or unjustified, it is vital that you handle complaints with caution and empathy.

You can print the following process out for your employees so they can refer to it in the event of a possible complaint.

Note: Where senior management are responding to the complaint, use this acronym as a way of training and give constructive feedback to your staff:

Always remember!

Stay calm

Empathise with them

Remain attentive

Verify the facts

Inform them at every stage Communicate clearly

Effective resolution

Making first contact

Verbal

More often than not, complaints can be resolved simply by talking, and listening on the phone. If staff are confident enough to deal with any concerns as soon as they are raised, and are assertive but polite when offering a solution, then there may be no need for more in-depth investigation. Staff should take every opportunity to diffuse the situation and offer an 'informal resolution'.

Below is a brief example of a script you can use:

"I understand your concerns and would like to start off by apologising on behalf of the company for the point(s) you have raised."

An apology can go a long way and it is one of the first things consumers want to hear when they express their feelings. This goes hand in hand with recognising the importance of their feelings which are key to restoring their faith in your company.

"So I can get a better understanding please can you confirm the following..."

Putting the consumer at ease by reaffirming their concerns shows that you are engaging with them and, to the best of your ability, are looking to understand their concerns and resolve their complaint.

"Can you please tell me what you would like us to do, to put things right?"

There is always a strong possibility that their request is fair and reasonable, in which case you can resolve it at this stage. If not, it's time to escalate the complaint internally for a formal investigation.

Follow up email:

(Note: This can be done verbally, however if the consumer would prefer an email/letter outlining the next steps, you can use the following template):

Continue reading for a brief example of a script you can use.

The Property Redress Scheme

Dear < >

"Following our conversation, <earlier today> or on <date> I am aware, that we were unable to resolve your concerns and reach a satisfactory resolution. Our aim is to provide a first class service and to do everything we can to make sure you are satisfied. If you feel we have fallen short of this standard, and would like us to carry out a formal investigation, which we hope will resolve those concerns and restore your faith in us, please write to us with full details and send it to us at <<Agent name, address, post code or email address>

Please include the following information and evidence, where it is relevant:

- An outline of your complaint explaining why you feel that we have not provided a first class service
- What you would like us to do to resolve it
- Any specific details that you feel would help us with resolving your complaint, including, but not limited to:
- Names of advisors you have spoken to in connection with the complaint
- The branch name in connection with the complaint
- Time(s) and date(s) of the incident(s)
- Telephone numbers and/or addresses you have used to contact us
- Any written documents relating to your complaint
- Any other documents which are relevant and support your complaint

When we receive your complaint, we will send you a 'confirmation of receipt' within 3 working days. We will fully investigate the point(s) you raise and, within 10 working days of us sending you the confirmation of receipt, you will receive our full response.

If we are unable to resolve your concerns during this time period, we will provide you with an estimate of when you will receive our full response and reasons for any delay.

After our final written response, we may conclude that the complaint is closed, and if so, we reserve the right not to enter into any further communication.

If you remain unhappy with our response and have exhausted our complaints procedure, as we are members of the Property Redress Scheme, a government approved redress scheme who resolve complaints between members and their consumers, you can contact them and ask them to investigate your complaint.

However, before raising your complaint with The Property Redress Scheme you must have waited 8 weeks from the date of your written complaint to us for us to investigate and respond, and be able to show that it is still within one year from the last communication we had with you, relating to this complaint

The Property Redress Scheme is free to use for those making a complaint and further information and guidance on how to resolve complaints is available for you on their website www.theprs.co.uk/Consumer

To make a complaint, fill out a complaint form or contact the Property Redress Scheme directly or alternatively, visit their website and. The Property Redress Scheme contact details are as follows:

Email: complaints@theprs.co.uk

By post at:

The Property Redress Scheme

Premiere House, 1st Floor

Elstree Way

Borehamwood WD6 1JH

Kind regards,

Investigating a complaint

A formal investigation may be the only option where:

- first contact is unsuccessful or
- the issues are more complex or serious
- the consumer refuses to engage with anyone else other than senior management

In these circumstances responses may need to be investigated and composed by senior management, with assistance from the employees involved (if applicable) because:

- they are a third party if the incident concerns an employee(s)
- if it is a sensitive complaint, it may need to involve someone with more experience
- if a senior manager is required to sign the response off, this will prevent delays

Remember:

If your internal complaints procedure has been exhausted, we are here to help you facilitate a resolution. For more on our processes see our Complaints guide for members, our Terms of Reference and our Conditions of Complaints

