

Customer Service Complaints

While it is our aim to deliver a high quality service to our customers, we recognise that situations may arise in which a customer is dissatisfied with the quality of service provided. We have therefore drawn up a Customer Service Complaints Procedure set out below.

Mistakes and misunderstandings can usually be sorted out quickly, effectively and informally and accordingly we encourage our customers to raise their concerns initially in the department where they are transacting their business.

Offaly Local Authorities has developed a simple and transparent Customers Complaint Procedure which you may use if you are unhappy with the quality of service afforded to you. This procedure relates to complaints and comments relating directly to the quality of the service provided, for example:

- Complaints about issues such as delays, mistakes, lack of courtesy, etc;
- Instances where you did not receive the quality of service you feel you are entitled to;
- Complaints under Section 39 of the Disability Act 2005 relating to access to our services, buildings or information;
- Complaints about discrimination under the Equal Status Acts 1998 and 2004.

It does not cover complaints or appeals about other activities of the Local Authorities where there are existing statutory mechanisms in place to deal with complaints/appeals e.g. Freedom of Information, complaints provided for in legislation with regard to environmental issues, housing appeals policy that deals with complaints about access to services, etc.

Customer Service Complaints Procedure

We will deal with your complaint in a professional, prompt, impartial and sensitive manner.

Complaints should be made as soon as possible following the incident and must be submitted in writing (fax, letter, or email) to the relevant Head of Section. The following information must be provided in order to help us address or investigate the matter as soon as possible:

- your name and address
- precise details of your complaint
- the name of the office and if appropriate, the official(s) with whom you were dealing
- a day time telephone number, if you are happy for us to contact you by phone

The more details that you provide will help us to speed up the investigation of your complaint.

Please note that:

- Anonymous complaints about individual staff members shall not be entertained
- Anonymous complaints about service delivery – it will be a matter for the individual section to determine whether it is appropriate to investigate such complaints.

Following Receipt of a Complaint:

- The complaint will be logged and investigated by the Head of Section in the relevant Department.
- The Head of Section will acknowledge the complainant within five working days.
- The acknowledgement will include a note telling the complainant that as far as possible a response will be issued by the Department within a five-week period. Where a longer period is required the complainant will be informed.
- A copy of the complaint, where appropriate, will also be sent, by the relevant Head of Section, to the individual staff member against whom the complaint is made.
- The complaint shall be examined by the Head of Section in association with the relevant staff member(s), following which an appropriate response will issue to the complainant.

Appeals Process:

- A customer who is not satisfied with the manner in which the complaint has been handled may appeal within ten working days from the date of the response to the Director of Services/Head of Finance for the service area.
- Appeals will be determined following an examination of the matter by the appropriate Director of Services/Head of Finance. Where the Director of Services/Head of Finance for the service area has been involved in the original investigation the appeal shall be dealt with by another member of the Management Team or a member of the Senior Management Group.
- The complainant will be advised of a right to refer the issue to the Office of the Ombudsman, 6 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 W773.

Advice Note to Departments Investigating Complaints

Each department is responsible for drafting its own response letter to the complainant. However, the following should be taken into account when drafting a response to the complainant:

- All complaints should be investigated fully in an open and fair manner.
- Anonymous complaints about individual staff members - such complaints will not be entertained.
- Anonymous complaints about service delivery – it will be a matter for the individual section to determine whether it is appropriate to investigate such complaints.
- All policies and procedures will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Role of Corporate Services

Corporate Services will be involved with complaints where:

- Complaints that refer to Corporate Services department.
- A complaint received in Corporate Services but refers to another department will be forwarded to the relevant department to have the matter resolved locally. Corporate Services will also log the complaint and ensure that a response to the Complainant issues.
- Corporate Services will monitor and review the Customer Service Complaints Procedure.
- The customer wishes to appeal the decision of a department relating to a complaint.
- The complaint comes from the Office of the Ombudsman.
- The complaint is made under the Equal Status Act 2000.
- The complaint is made under Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005.

Compliments Relating To Member(s) of Staff within Offaly Local Authorities or To the Quality of Service Delivered

If you wish to compliment or thank a member of staff for their assistance or acknowledge the quality of service delivered, please let us know and we will gladly pass on your comments. You can do this by e-mailing Corporate Services at corpserv@offalycoco.ie or dropping a line to Corporate Services, Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. The compliment will be forwarded to the relevant person.

Appeals against the Outcome of the Complaint

- If you are not satisfied with the response you received to a general complaint you may appeal it to the Director of Services, Corporate Services, Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, County Offaly.

Tel: 057 93 46800

Email: corpserv@offalycoco.ie

We hope that we have been able to resolve your complaint satisfactorily. However, if you remain unhappy with our response then you can refer your complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is fair, independent, and free to use.

The Ombudsman will ask you for details of your complaint and a copy of this letter/email (our final response to your complaint). The best way to contact the Ombudsman is by:

- **Clicking on the 'Make A Complaint' link at www.ombudsman.ie**
- *Writing to: Office of the Ombudsman, 6 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 W773 or*
- *Calling the Ombudsman on 01 639 5600 if you have any queries or if you need help making your complaint.*

- The Office of the Ombudsman may also investigate complaints concerning compliance by public bodies and some other bodies with Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005.

- If you are not satisfied with the response you received to a complaint about discrimination under the Equal Status Acts, you may refer the complaint to the Equality Tribunal.