



# Customer Care and Compliments, Comments and Complaints (CCC) Policy



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## 1

### STRATEGY

West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) is committed to providing customer care in all its dealings with its internal and external customers. One aspect of good customer care is to provide an avenue for receiving and dealing with compliments, comments or complaints from outside sources.

WMFS expects its employees to deliver its services with courtesy and care to the highest standards, no matter who they are dealing with. The way in which WMFS is regarded by both its external and internal customers is entirely dependent on the attitude of staff. Customer care is based upon providing the best service possible.

All of our customers must be given the same amount of care and consideration:

- Regardless of the nature of the service being provided, whether they are internal or external customers, or whether it is of an emergency or non-emergency nature; and
- Regardless of the circumstances of the individual requiring our services. No judgement must be made on the social, personal or professional standing of individuals to decide the level of courtesy and care they should receive.

The service which WMFS provides to the communities of the West Midlands may result in members of the public wishing to compliment, comment or complain. It is important that they are given every opportunity to do this. This enables us to get a clearer picture of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of our service and learn from these experiences and to effect change.

The procedure outlined in this policy has been designed to make it easier for Service personnel at any location to deal with the receipt of a compliment, comment or complaint and to ensure it is dealt with in an appropriate manner at the most suitable level.

## 2

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to make it easier for Service personnel at any location to deal with the receipt of a compliment, comment or complaint and to ensure it is dealt with in an appropriate manner at the most suitable level.



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The requirements in this policy extend to all WMFS employees and volunteers.

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### RESPONSIBILITY

Strategic Enabler Communications  
Public Relations, Marketing and Events Manager

## 4

### PROCEDURES

#### 4.1 Introduction to the compliment, comment and complaints (CCC) procedure

WMFS has a very positive attitude towards all forms of communication and sees any CCC as a possible opportunity for the improvement or amendment of our overall service – just because a complaint is received doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong, but if it is, we want to put it right.

It is important that all employees understand that the public do not have to submit CCCs in writing to the Chief Fire Officer or confirm one in writing.

The Services Customer Care Standards offer an overview of the process that members of the community can expect from us.

#### 4.2 Courtesy

WMFS employees must always be courteous to callers and should give their name when answering a call. It may not always be immediately apparent what the nature of a call is, and it could require patience to establish if it is a compliment, comment or complaint.

Being courteous does not mean accepting abuse. People who feel aggrieved often feel agitated or angry. The recipient should try and defuse the situation. If this is unsuccessful, then follow the appropriate guidance given in Appendix 1. All employees of WMFS should familiarise themselves with this procedure.

#### 4.3 Completing an electronic CCC

In the event of any CCC being received, an electronic CCC must be raised.

When logging into the home page of MESH, the Customer Care option should be selected from the tiles within the 'My Corner' section.

Click on the raise a CCC icon and then select the appropriate icon for raising either a compliment, comment or complaint. You will be taken into a further menu screen with a



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series of sections to be completed (all of those marked with \* are mandatory fields and must be completed)

The electronic CCC can only be completed by WMFS personnel.

If the point of receipt of a CCC is a fire station or fire control, the caller should be informed that an emergency call may necessitate the rapid termination of the conversation and advised that if the call is terminated for this reason that the caller will be contacted as soon as possible upon their return.

It is imperative that as much detail as possible is taken from callers. When you have all the details, read back to them what you have written and ask them to confirm it is accurate. If the compliment, comment or complaint received is via a letter or email, an electronic CCC must still be completed.

#### 4.4 Criteria for dealing with complaints at point of receipt

Dealing with complaints at point of receipt usually entails being able to give a satisfactory answer to a caller there and then. Most often, these are local issues which can be resolved by a conversation and an informal resolution can be achieved.

It is impossible to list every type of call which could be dealt with at the point of receipt, but if you are unsure, or the call may entail a financial claim, then refer it on to your Group, Station Commander or Department Head, after entering all of the details onto the system. Service Support Administration should also be notified immediately via email to [people.support@wmfs.net](mailto:people.support@wmfs.net) of any insurance claim that may be made against the service and copied into any communication that may have taken place.

#### 4.5 When the electronic CCC has been completed

The following action is to be taken upon the completion of the electronic CCC.

The CCC should either be forwarded to Corporate Communications for further action or referred to the appropriate Group, Station Commander or Departmental Head for further investigation and response to the CCC as appropriate.

For compliments and comments, the individual who has logged the information onto the system may at their discretion choose to send a thank you letter.

All complaints must be acknowledged within three days of receipt by the individual logging the information or referred to the Group, Station Commander or Department Head. Group, Station Commanders or Department Heads should complete their investigations of complaints within ten days of the date of initial contact and then update the system with the investigation and outcome of the initial complaint.

Service Support Administration should also be notified via email to [people.support@wmfs.net](mailto:people.support@wmfs.net) of any insurance claim that may be made against the service and copied into any communication that may have taken place.



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## 4.6 Advice for Group, Station Commanders or Department Heads

Compliments, comments or complaints received which relate to another Command Area, Station or Department should be sent to the relevant Command Area, Station Commander or department for action.

Most complaints which reach you can be investigated directly. However, if the complaint is about:

- You personally
- A more senior officer
- A member of the Fire Authority
- A politically sensitive issue

you should forward the complaint to the Corporate Communications team ([public.relations@wmfs.net](mailto:public.relations@wmfs.net)), who will deal with it appropriately.

Occasionally, you may have started an investigation before it becomes apparent that it involves one or more of the above criteria and that it should therefore be investigated centrally. Stop the investigation and send all information to Corporate Communications, [public.relations@wmfs.net](mailto:public.relations@wmfs.net).

## 4.7 Legal claim

Service Support Administration should also be notified immediately via email to [people.support@wmfs.net](mailto:people.support@wmfs.net) or via telephoning 0121 380 6966/6901 of any complaint which could result in legal action or a compensatory claim against WMFS.

## 4.8 Investigations

Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, an investigation into a complaint should always include the investigating officer speaking to the complainant, as well as the person or persons to whom the complaint is directed. Investigating officers should endeavour to ensure that they do not adopt a 'defensive attitude' and remember that the complainant has a right to complain and may well be justified.

## 4.9 Correspondence and visits to complainants

Group, or Station Commanders and Department Heads should (except when a legal claim is involved) write to complainants, informing them of the outcome of the investigations and may also, if appropriate, visit complainants to further aid any investigation. The person or persons to whom the complaint was directed should always be advised of the outcome.

## 4.10 Further advice

If you require help and advice regarding any aspect of this procedure or to request assistance in translation, interpretation then please contact Corporate Communications at Fire Service Headquarters on phone numbers 0121 380 6102.



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### APPENDICES

#### APPENDIX 1 - ABUSIVE CALLERS

##### 1. Abusive phone callers

The action to be taken when receiving an abusive phone call is as follows:

- If a phone caller is abusive, then you should calmly inform them that if they continue to be abusive, you will terminate the phone call.
- If they continue to be abusive, terminate the call.
- Fill in as much detail as possible on the electronic CCC form including that you terminated the call and why.
- Refer to your Station, Group Commander or department head or, contact Corporate Communications at Fire Service Headquarters.

##### 2. Abusive personal callers

The procedure to be used when dealing with an abusive personal caller is as follows:

- If a personal caller is abusive, calmly inform them that if they continue to be abusive, you will ask them to leave the premises.
- If they continue to be abusive, calmly ask them to leave.
- If they still continue to be abusive and refuse to leave, inform them if they do not leave you will call the Police.
- If their behaviour continues, call the Police and ask for assistance.
- When the situation allows, fill in as much information as possible on the electronic CCC including your actions, then refer to your Station or Group Commander or department head or, contact Corporate Communications Fire Service Headquarters.

#### APPENDIX 2 - ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

##### Investigation of Complaints

- Any CCC referral will be found by accessing the Activity Assistant tile on the MESH homepage and the CCC alert will appear on the front screen. An email will be received to advise that a CCC has been referred on. The CCC can also be viewed by accessing the Customer Care tile on MESH and entering 'My Referrals'.
- Most complaints, which reach you, can be investigated directly. However, if the complaint is about you personally, a more senior officer, a member of the Authority or a politically sensitive issue, please refer to Corporate Communications who will advise/respond to it appropriately.
- Please ensure that you contact the complainant to acknowledge the complaint within three working days of receipt.



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- Legal claims – Administration should be informed immediately by telephone on 0121 380 6891 and then informed in writing of any complaint which could result in legal action or a compensatory claim being made against the Service.
- Investigations into a complaint should always include speaking to the complainant as well as the person/persons to whom the complaint is directed. Investigating officers may if deemed appropriate visit complainants to ascertain or explain the situation.
- Support can also be obtained by speaking to your Business Partner located in People Support Services.
- During an investigation, Investigating Officers should try to ensure that they do not adopt a defensive attitude and remember that the customer has a right to complain and may well be justified.
- Investigations should be completed 10 working days (where possible) after the initial acknowledgement at which point the Investigating Officer should inform the complainant of the outcome. If the investigation is going to take longer then please let the complainant know when to expect further information.
- If you find for whatever reason that the complaint cannot be resolved, please contact Corporate Communications who will advise on further action.
- Upon completion of the investigation the CCC should be updated with the outcomes and actions as necessary. Any paperwork that needs to be retained should be kept confidential and may be forwarded to Corporate Communications for retention.
- At all times GDPR regulations must be adhered to in relation to the personal information held.
- If you require any advice on the investigation of complaints, please ring the Corporate Communications on 0121 380 6102.





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### DOCUMENT CONTROL AND AUDIT

<b>Audit</b>	
Responsible SET Member Accountable	<b>Corporate Communications</b>
Authorised by	<b>Mark Hamilton Russell</b>
Direct enquiries to	<b>Policyofficers@wmfs.net</b>
EIA (Date Completed & Name)	<b>Complete. TBC</b>
PIA (Date Completed & Name)	<b>Complete TBC</b>

<b>Review History</b>		
<b>Version #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reviewed By</b>
1.0	1/11/2018	Alison Newis, Corporate Communications

<b>Amendment History</b>					
<b>Version #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Amended By</b>	<b>Section Amended</b>	<b>Amendment</b>	<b>Reason for change</b>