



**GREATER
MANCHESTER**
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Complaints

Policy & Procedure

2021

Document Details

If this Policy & Procedure requires updating or editing prior to the review date, please contact the Author.

Document Version Control		
Document Version	Date	Author
1.0	07.10.2016	Paula Jervis
2.0	20.08.2017	Sarah Scoales
3.0	16.10.2018	Joseph Heffernan
4.0	01.04.2022	Andrea Heffernan

Approval Process	
Approval agency	Senior Leadership Team
Policy owner	Andrea Heffernan
Revie Date	01.04.2023

Corporate Aims Supported			
Prevention	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Protections	<input type="checkbox"/>	People	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Response	<input type="checkbox"/>	Principles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Consultation & Engagement	
Involved	Consulted
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Andrea Heffernan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SLT

Equality Impact Assessment

Protected Characteristic	Are there any issues that need to be researched or consulted on?
Age	No
Disability	No
Gender	No
Race	No
Religion & Belief	No
Sexual Orientation	No
Gender Reassignment	No
Pregnancy & Maternity	No
Marriage & Civil Partnership	No
If you have answered yes to any of the protected characteristics you must contact the Equality & Diversity Officer	

Related Documents

Equality Impact Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable
Policy & Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://insidegmca.gmfs.local/key-info/whistleblowing • https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/who-we-are/accounts-transparency-and-governance/freedom-of-information-foi/
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://ico.org.uk/ • Local Government Ombudsman

Scope

This applies to all Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) employees, temporary staff, volunteers, and any other members associated with GMFRS.

It is applied to all corporate complaints received in the organisation, this includes complaints received:

- Email
- Letter

This policy and procedure do not apply to:

- Employee Grievances - this includes complaints made by relatives of persons employed by GMFRS about the treatment they are receiving from GMFRS as employers
- Public Interest Disclosure Whistleblowing
- Freedom of Information requests
- Subject Access Request made under the Data Protection Act

You must refer to those specific Policy and Procedures.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of discontent or dissatisfaction by a member of the public about the standard of service, conduct of its employees or representatives, actions or inactions of Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

Complaints may include:

- Failure to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service
- Delay in providing a service
- Mistakes made in the way we have provided a service
- Failure to act in a proper way
- Provided an unfair service

The definition of a complaint is very broad, and the above list is not exhaustive. Subsequently not every concern raised will be classified as a complaint and may be processed under an alternative policy & procedure or process.

Investigating / Senior Investigating Officer

An Investigating / Senior Investigating Officer is the nominated person to conduct a thorough and unbiased investigation into a complaint.

Local Government Ombudsman

The regulatory environment whom the members of the public can approach if they are not satisfied with the outcome of both an initial investigation and an escalated complaint.

Anonymous Complaints

Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if there is insufficient information available to enable a full and fair investigation.

Varying the Procedure

The Complaints Officer may in exceptional circumstances, vary from this procedure; for example, where vexatious and repeated complaints are made (unreasonable complaints).

Our Promise

- Your complaint will be received positively, however you make it
- We will carry out impartial and confidential investigations
- We will make sure that our staff are trained to handle complaints effectively and will try to deal with your complaint at the first point of contact where we can
- When we have got it wrong, we will apologise and put things right where we can
- We will respond to your complaint within the timescales outlined below
- We will keep you updated on progress, and tell you what will happen next
- We will tell you how we make our decisions
- We will learn from what you tell us and use your feedback to improve our services

The Complaints Procedure

We will always try to resolve complaints on the spot by talking through problems with you, without the need to go through our formal complaint's procedure. This can save a great deal of time, distress, and cost.

If we are unable to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction, then we will tell you how to proceed within the formal procedures outlined below.

- Stage 1 – complaint investigated by a Station Manager or appropriate Manager
- Stage 2 – review by the Director of Corporate Support

Complaints must be made not later than twelve months from the date on which the issue(s), which is the subject of the complaint, occurred or twelve months from the date on which the issue(s) came to the notice of the complainant. However, if there is a valid reason why the complainant did not or could not make the complaint within the timescale, or if there is reasonable possibility for the complaint to be effectively and meaningfully investigated then it should be investigated and responded to.

Complaints Procedure - Stage 1

A complaint will be progressed under Stage 1 of our formal complaint's procedure when:

- We can't resolve the problem informally
- You tell us that you want to make a formal complaint

- We believe it is necessary to use the formal procedure to resolve or respond to the complaint

Complaints at Stage 1 will be investigated by a Station Manager, or appropriate Manager, who was not directly involved in the reason for your complaint.

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days. We will try to provide you with a full response within 20 working days of receipt of your complaint. If this is not possible, we will write to you to let you know why there is a delay, and the estimated time it will take to provide a full response. The full response will advise you how to progress to Stage 2 if you are still unhappy.

Complaints Procedure - Stage 2

You can ask us to review your complaint at Stage 2 if:

- You are unhappy with how your complaint was handled at Stage 1
- You are unhappy with the response you have received

We need to know which part of the complaint you feel wasn't handled well, and what action you would like to be taken.

Stage 2 complaints will be investigated by the Director of Corporate Support, who will review how your complaint was dealt with originally to decide if:

- The complaint was investigated thoroughly, objectively, and honestly
- The conclusions reached are based on evidence obtained
- The response was reasonable, appropriate, and tried to achieve resolution

You may be contacted during the review to confirm any details or to discuss your complaint further. At the end of the investigation, and within 20 working days of receipt of your request, the Director of Corporate Support will write to you with the outcome of the investigation and any actions resulting from it. The response will advise you how to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if you are still unhappy.

All complaints are dealt with in the strictest of confidence and any personal information is stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. This means that your information will only be shared with the relevant professionals to investigate the nature of your complaint.

Local Government Ombudsman

If your complaint has progressed through both stages of the GMFRS's complaints procedure, and you are still not happy with our response, you can ask the Local Government Ombudsman to review our investigation.

The Local Government Ombudsman is an independent body, who provide impartial and prompt investigation and resolution of complaints of injustice through maladministration by Local Authorities.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about how GMFRS has done something, but they can't question what GMFRS has done simply because someone does not agree with the GMFRS's decision.

Note: The Ombudsman is unlikely to investigate your complaint unless you have given us the opportunity to consider your complaint under our procedures.

Contact details for the Ombudsman are:

- The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Go to www.lgo.org.uk to complete an online complaint form or you can call the LGO Advice Team on 0300 061 0614 for advice, or to make a complaint by telephone.

Apprenticeship Programme

You can progress a complaint regarding your apprenticeship through both stages of the GMFRS's complaints procedure. If you are not happy with our response, you can escalate your complaint to the ESFA Apprenticeship Service Support.

The contact details are:

- Email - helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk
- Telephone - 08000 150 600

Unreasonable Complaints

If we consider that a complaint is unreasonable it will be passed to the Director of Corporate Support, who will consider whether further investigation of the complaint will be carried out.

Unreasonable complaints would include, but are not limited to:

- Sending the same complaint to several points within organisation for response at the same time
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources whilst investigating your complaint
- Refusal to accept a decision that has been made and upheld
- Resubmitting a complaint that has already been dealt with in the last 6 months
- Using abusive, threatening, or libellous language
- If your complaint is considered unreasonable you will be informed in writing and advised of any action to be taken or right of appeal.

A manager will decide whether the circumstances require any restriction of access. They will record the reason for their decision and explain it to you. They will state how long any restriction will apply for before we reconsider.

The sort of restrictions imposed could include:

- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and limited times
- Limiting contacts to one form only (for example, a maximum of one letter or email from you a week)
- Requiring you to only contact us using one named staff member
- Requiring you to formally agree with us how you will behave in future before we continue working on your complaint and/or
- Using an independent advocate to work with you on our investigation into your complaint

After six months we will review whether any restrictions we imposed are still necessary and should remain.

If you continue to behave unreasonably or ignore restrictions we have placed on access to our service, we may decide to end our work on your complaint. In exceptional circumstances we may do so without warning. For example, if you use racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise discriminatory language we may decide to act without warning. We will write to explain the action we have taken.

If we have restricted our contact with you and you make a new complaint, we will decide whether to continue with any restrictions we put in place for the earlier complaint.

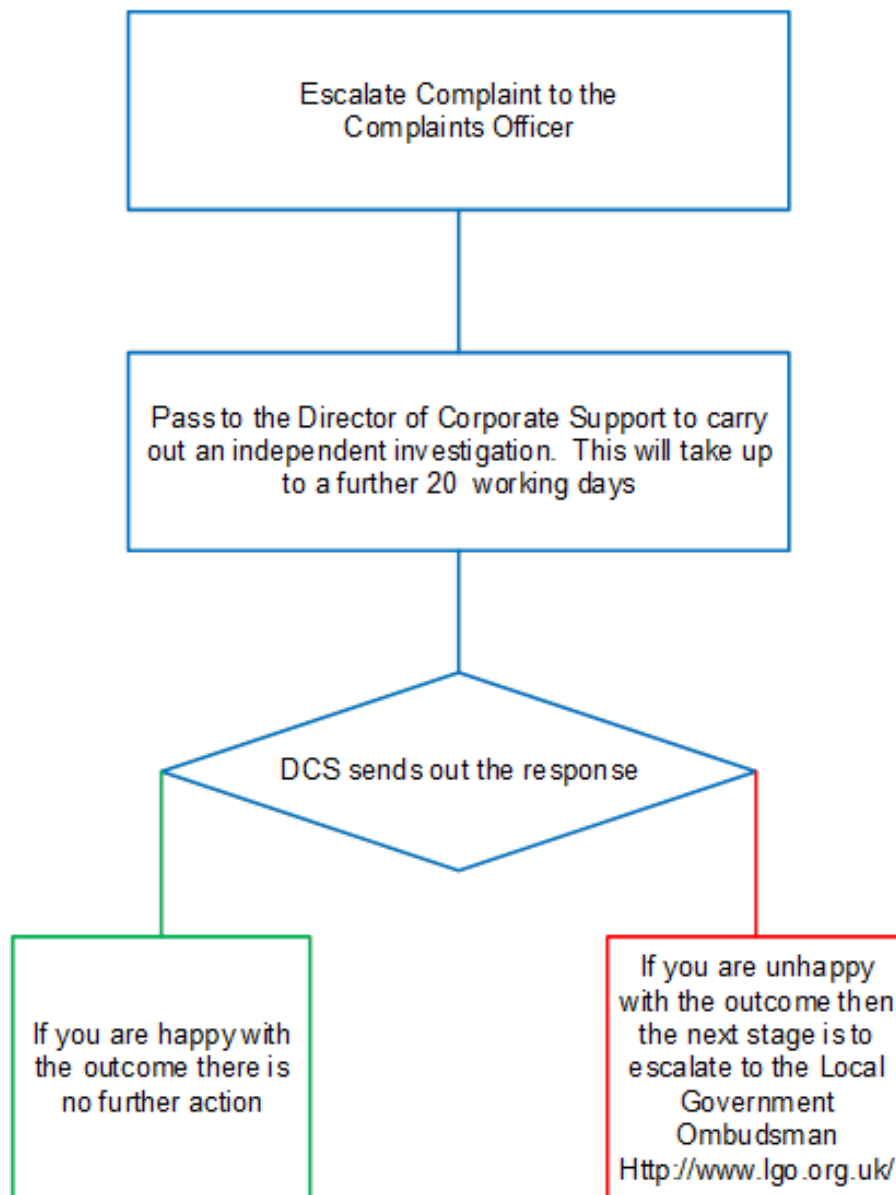
Documentation

GMFRS will only keep your information (Electronically) for 2 years, or for longer if appropriate. The organisation will destroy all hard copies after 6 months. Details of the complaints will be kept on the Complaints Register.

Fairness

We are committed to making it easy for anyone who is unhappy with a service, or experience provided by GMFRS, to tell us about it. By giving us your views, you can help us to improve our services.

Escalation Process



Acknowledgement letter/email

Your Reference
Our Reference Com ~~xxxxxx-xxxx~~
Contact contactus@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Insert name
Address line 1
Address line 2
Address line 3
Address line 4
Address line 5

Date

Dear ~~xxx~~

Re: Complaint

I am writing to you regarding your complaint, which was received by us on ~~xxx~~, in relation to ~~xxx~~

Your complaint has been officially logged with Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service and will be allocated to an Investigating Officer. The whole complaint investigation process usually takes up to 20 working days.

Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service expects the highest possible standards of conduct by its employees and any comments or complaints received relating to an employees' misconduct will be dealt with in accordance with the Service's Disciplinary Procedures following full investigation under the provisions of our policy.

If you need to speak to us in the meantime, you can contact myself at contactus@manchesterfire.gov.uk

~~Yours~~ sincerely,

~~xxx~~
Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service



Chief Fire Officer
Dave Russel, BSc, MIFireE

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
146 Bolton Road
Swinton
Manchester
M27 8US

Tel: 0161 736 5866
www.manchesterfire.gov.uk

Complaint Investigation Form



Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

Complaint Investigation Form

PART A	Key Complaint Details
Title	
Surname	
Forename (s)	
Address	
Telephone number	
Complaint received by	
Date & time the complaint was received	
Method received	
Nature of the complaint:	

PART B	Action Taken
Investigation officer	
Role of Investigation officer	
Initial result of complaint	Resolved Unresolved Withdrawn
Signature of investigation officer	
Action (s) taken:	

PART C	Elevate Complaint action to be taken
Name	
Role of SLT member	
Complaint reviewed	
Any further investigation needed	
Final result of complaint	Satisfied Unsatisfied Withdrawn
Any further comments:	

PART D: Sign Off	Signature
Investigating officer	
Line manager	

ONCE THIS FORM HAS BEEN COMPLETED, PLEASE FORWARD TO COMPLAINTS OFFICER – complaints@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Conclusion letter

Your Reference
Our Reference Com ~~xxxxxx-xxxx~~
Contact contactus@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Insert name
Address line 1
Address line 2
Address line 3
Address line 4
Address line 5

Date

Dear ~~xxx~~

Re: Complaint

I am writing to you in relation to your complaint, which was received by us on

I have fully investigated your complaint and my findings are as follows.

~~Yours~~ sincerely,

Name
Job title
Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service



Chief Fire Officer
Dave Russel, BSc, MIFireE

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue
Service
146 Bolton Road
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