



Compliments & Complaints Management Process for Waitakere City Council Employees

Our customers, our focus
Ko te mea nui, he tangata



Waitakere City Council
Te Taiaro o Waitakere

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1 Statement of commitment

Staff within our organisation are expected to uphold the following commitments:

- I provide every customer with a solution or help them understand the options available to them
- All customers are treated as I would wish to be treated myself
- I deliver what I promise
- I take personal responsibility for ensuring plain English communication
- Customers have confidence their issues are being dealt with. I will keep them informed and alert them to any changes
- Any customer issue is my issue, irrespective of departmental boundaries. It is my responsibility to find the issue owner and maintain responsibility for it until then
- I recognise that I am part of a wider team providing customer service. In relation to my own priorities, I will manage the needs of both internal and external customers with thoughtfulness
- I close every transaction by ensuring the customer understands how to make contact again through appropriate channels, should the need arise.
- I am the 'friendly face of Council'
- Any service I provide will be undertaken with integrity, honesty and professionalism. Where it is beyond my scope, I will ensure that issues are escalated appropriately
- I welcome any feedback and see this as an opportunity to enhance services
- I will also ensure that customers privacy, dignity, religious and cultural beliefs are respected

All contractors and service providers working for Council also give this commitment



2 Introduction to the Council's complaints system

Council adopted its inaugural Customer Service Charter in June 2005. The key aim of the Charter is to enhance the experience of customers in their interactions with Council, by providing a set of guidelines and information in relation to requests for service and information, compliance monitoring, compliments and complaints.

The Charter can be accessed on the Econet at Document Central under Internal Policies.

The proper management of complaints is seen as a critical step in meeting our charter obligations and a central database has been developed to allow all complaints to be captured, the responses monitored, complaints analysed and full management reporting to be provided. This information will allow us to identify key areas for improvement enabling us to focus our efforts accordingly.

Note: Complaints relating to individual staff behaviours will be captured in a separate secure database for which access will be restricted.

The complaints process will be managed by the Complaints Process Coordinator, responsible to the Group Manager: Customer Services.

3 Ownership of complaints

Our complaints processes have been designed around an acknowledgement that the real ownership of complaints lies at the operational level.

On this basis, a first time complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate department to respond to the complainant. If the complainant is not satisfied with the initial response, or any subsequent responses, the complaint will be escalated in accordance with the procedures outlined under Section 11 of the Customer Services Charter.



4 Complaints definitions

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Council or its staff affecting an individual customer or a group of customers.

Types of complaints could include a customer advising that:

- their expectations have not been met; or
- their request/complaint has been addressed but not satisfactorily; or
- they have a complaint about a staff member's or contractor's approach and/or attitude; or
- they have left messages which have not been responded to; or;
- feedback has been requested and not given; or
- they may have a complaint about Council's processes or inefficiencies.

What is not a complaint?

A complaint is not:

An initial request for service or information

A request for a new service provision

A request for information relating to Council's policies/practices.

5 Key complaints process steps

In general terms, these are as follows:

- 1.** A complaint is received by a member of staff.
- 2.** The complaint is referred to the Complaints Process Coordinator who will register the complaint and capture details into the complaints database, before allocating the complaint to the appropriate team leader/manager.
- 3.** The appropriate team leader/manager will



investigate the complaint and respond directly to the complainant in writing.

Note: In some cases, the Mayor or CEO may request a draft response for their consideration.

6 Guide to complaints processing

How can complaints be received?

Complaints can be received through a number of channels; the prime ones being:

- By telephone
- By email
- By fax
- By correspondence
- In person
- Comment cards

What do I do if I receive a complaint by telephone?

- 1.** If it is considered that this call falls within our Complaints Process definition, the caller should be asked if they wish their call to be actioned as a complaint. If they say yes, then explain the process to them and raise a complaint using the Complaint Form from the drop down menu on the EcoNet. The form will automatically be forwarded to the Complaints Process Coordinator for actioning.
- 2.** If the caller also insists on talking to the staff member or Manager responsible for this particular service, transfer the call, noting this information on the complaint form.
- 3.** If the customer insists in speaking with the CEO or the Mayor, contact the Personal Assistant of the Mayor/CEO and advise them of the request.

Call Centre Staff only

If a complaint relates to an earlier request for service, in addition to following the above steps, also initiate the normal procedure for follow up



action, e.g. raising an event against the original RFS or a new RFS if the original RFS is closed.

What do I do if I receive an electronic complaint via email or via the Council website: info@waitakere.govt.nz.?

Forward the email to the Complaints Process Coordinator for registration and to initiate appropriate action.

What do I do if I receive a complaint from the customer in person?

At any Council Offices/Service Areas

- 1.** Take the customer aside to gather details, then raise a complaint or arrange for your Admin Support staff to do it using the Complaint Form from the drop down menu on the EcoNet. The form will automatically be forwarded to the Complaints Process Coordinator for actioning.
- 2.** If the customer insists in meeting with the CEO or the Mayor, contact the Personal Secretary of the Mayor/ CEO and advise them of the request.

Out in the Field

Take details from the Customer and when you return to the Council offices, raise a complaint or arrange for your Admin Support staff to do it using the Complaint Form from the drop down menu on the EcoNet. The form will automatically be forwarded to the Complaints Process Coordinator for actioning.

What do I do if I directly receive a complaint in writing via mail or fax?

Central Records

Complaints not forwarded directly to the CEO, should be referred to the Complaints Process Coordinator

All other areas of Council

Forward the complaint to the Complaints Process Coordinator for registration and to initiate appropriate action.

What does the Complaints Process Coordinator do following receipt of a Complaint?

- 1.** Initiates the Complaints Process by raising



a Complaints RFS in GEMS and allocating it to the appropriate team leader /manager for investigation and a response within a stipulated timeframe.

2. Acknowledges receipt of the complaint within three working days by writing to the complainant advising them of the person handling their complaint and supplying the contact details for that person. A copy of Council's Complaints Management Brochure will be enclosed with this letter.
3. The Complaints Process Coordinator will then monitor the complaint to completion. Once it has been determined that the complaint has been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the Complaints RFS will be closed.
4. The Complaints Process Coordinator will provide regular reports to senior management on the types of complaints (and compliments) and the progress status of responses.

Note: If the complaint relates to an individual staff member's behaviour, it will be captured in a separate, restricted access database and forwarded to the relevant Manager/Group Manager/ Director.

What are my responsibilities if the Complaints Process Coordinator allocates a complaint to me?

1. Investigate the complaint and respond to the complainant in writing within either 10 working days, or any earlier timeframe that may be set. However, please note that in some cases you may be requested to prepare a draft response for the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer, in lieu of directly responding to the complainant.

Note: Copies of all responses must be sent to the Complaints Process Coordinator.

2. Advise the complainant in writing if you will be unable to provide a response within 10 working days.
3. Update GEMS or arrange for your Admin support staff to update GEMS with information on what action you have taken.



7 Compliments

What do I do if I receive a compliment about a staff member?

If it is in writing, refer the material to the Complaints Process Coordinator.

If it is received verbally, capture the details and email them to the Complaints Process Coordinator.

What will the Complaints Process Coordinator do following receipt of a compliment about a staff member?

The Complaints Process Coordinator will register all compliments in a database with the compliment also copied to the appropriate Director, Group Manager and Manager.

Periodic reports on all compliments will also be distributed to Senior Management.





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For further information please contact the Council's call centre Phone 839 0400 or visit the website www.waitakere.govt.nz

