



**Isle of Man  
Government**

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**Isle of Man Government**

**COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

**COMPLAINTS HANDLING – POLICY AND  
MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Firm on minimum standards, flexible on process

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## Council of Ministers Policy on complaints

The Council of Ministers is committed to continuous improvement for the public service to deliver smaller, smarter Government.

Customer feedback is a valuable tool in helping to understand residents' and customers' expectations of service delivery, and plays an essential part in identifying service improvements across government.

Effective complaints handling should -

- Provide a complainant with access to an open and responsive complaints-handling process
- Enhance the ability of the government to resolve complaints in a consistent, systematic and responsive manner, to the satisfaction of the complainant and the organisation
- Enhance the ability of government to identify trends, eliminate causes of complaints, and improve efficiency
- Create an environment in which continuous improvement is a significant and growing influence on the work of government, so that over time it becomes an integral and indispensable part of it

The complaints handling procedure should help government do its job better, improve relationships with customers and enhance public perception of the government. It will help keep the customer at the heart of the process, while enabling us to better understand how to improve services.

### Overview

This document sets out the Council of Ministers policy on complaints handling and prescribes the **minimum standards** Department's **must** adhere to when dealing with complaints from members of the public. The Policy is supplemented by the following documents that deal with selected aspects of complaints handling –

1. Complaints Handling – Internal Guidance for Government Staff including minimum standards
2. Complaints Information for the Public
3. Policy on dealing with abusive, persistent or vexatious complaints and complainants

Departments, Boards and Offices are requested to use these documents when developing a complaints handling system or when evaluating or monitoring an existing system.

## **Departments, Boards and Offices must have complaints handling procedures that:**

### **Are visible:**

Information about how and where to complain should be well publicised to the public.

### **Are accessible:**

A complaints-handling process should be easily accessible to all complainants. Information should be made available on the details of making and resolving complaints. The process and supporting information should be easy to understand and use. The information should be in clear language allowing people to complain in a variety of ways for example by telephone, email, the internet or by post. The process should be flexible enough to ensure that the vulnerable are not excluded by proscriptive requirements such as an absolute requirement for a complaint to be in writing. Where necessary information should be provided in an alternative format.

### **Are transparent:**

Clear information for the public about how the complaint will be handled in the form of a complaints leaflet - Internet and paper versions should be made available. The customer should understand who has dealt with the complaint. There must be a clearly established timeframes and a clear and reasonable escalation process for dealing with complaints

### **Are effective:**

A complaints-handling process must ensure the fair and timely resolution of complaints.

### **Are efficient:**

A complaints-handling process that resolves complaints as quickly as possible, preferably on first contact if the complaint is straightforward. There must be regular internal reporting so that any unresolved complaints can be escalated if necessary. Staff should have access to written complaint handing guidelines and procedures.

### **Are responsive:**

All complaints must be recorded in a systematic way so that the data can be used for analysis and management reporting. By recording and using complaints information in this way Departments can identify and address the causes of complaints and better quantify the resources req.

## Minimum Standards

The purpose of these minimum standards is to ensure consistency of responses to members of the public.

The following outlines the minimum requirements of a complaints procedure that **must** be in place in each Department, Board and Office:

- A designated individual or individual(s) must be identified for the purposes of dealing with customer complaints
- All complaints whether received verbally or in writing, or considered under the persistent or vexatious policy, must be logged
- All complaints must be considered seriously including anonymous ones as long as enough information is provided
- Stage 1 Frontline - complaints should be responded to within 5 working days either resolving the matter or explaining that the complaint is to be investigated and giving an indication of the anticipated timescale
- Stage 2 Investigation – complaints should be acknowledged within 5 working days with a full response provided no later than 20 working days from the time the complaint is received unless there are clear and justifiable reasons to extend the response period, again you must give an indication of the anticipated timescale
- Stage 3 Appeal to Chief Executive Officer – having regard for the grounds of the appeal the Chief Executive Officer should endeavour to resolve the matter within 21 working days of escalation of the complaint.
- Information gathered from complaints **must** be used to inform service improvements or to update internal policies and procedures, or you should be able to evidence why this was not required.

**Please Note:** *The contents of this document do not take precedence over statutory procedures in Departments, Boards and Offices. Where there are separate, established complaints procedures for particular services such as planning, benefits etc. then they should continue to be used. However Departments should consider the minimum standards issued by the Council of Ministers to inform any established procedures.*