



MANAGEMENT CIRCULAR

89

Education Services, City Chambers, 40 John Street, Glasgow G1 1JL

February 2022 Management Circular No. 89

To Heads of all Educational Establishments

Dealing with Complaints

1. Glasgow City Council has a standard procedure for managing customer complaints that complies with guidance from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. All councils in Scotland have adapted their approach to managing complaints in line with this guidance.
2. Complaints provide valuable customer feedback and may be made to any member of staff. A Council standard form for complaints is available on Glasgow City Council's website: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/complaints>. Appendix 1 of this Management Circular illustrates the Model Complaints Handling Procedure.
3. The procedure aims to provide a quick, simple, and streamlined process for resolving complaints early and locally. There are two routes to resolution within Education Services:

Front line resolution (Stage 1)

For issues that are straightforward and easily resolved. A key performance target as set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is to resolve these in **five working days or less**.

Investigation (Stage 2)

Undertaken for issues that have not been resolved at the frontline or are complex, serious or "*high risk*". A key performance target as set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is to ensure a response is provided within **20 working days**.

The need for an investigation may arise as a result of Stage 1, or a complaint may require Investigation from the start. Education Services staff have been trained as Investigating Officers.

4. This Management Circular contains guidance on how the customer complaints procedure is administered in Education Services and provides templates for standard documentation when dealing with complaints.

The formal complaint management system is used across Glasgow City Council family. The Corporate Customer Care Team update this on behalf of Education Services. Education schools and centres do not have access to this system for direct input and standard pro-forma has been designed for the capture of information locally (Appendix 2).

* Schools refers to all Units, Early Years, Primary and Secondary Schools.

5. What is a complaint?

- 5.1 A complaint is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the local authority's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the local authority'. A distinction should be made as to whether it is a complaint or enquiry when a customer makes contact.
- 5.2 Any member of staff may receive a complaint from a customer. A complaint may be made locally (in school for example), or to the Corporate Frontline team. It may be made verbally, face to face or in writing. Complaints may also be made via social media. Complaints made via social media should be directed to the link below.

This link takes you to the Council's complaints policy:

www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=16133

- 5.3 It should be noted that for Education Services there are several areas where a parent or carer may wish to make a complaint, but other forms of redress are more appropriate, for example school exclusions, placing requests and exam results. Appendix 4 provides guidance on areas outwith the definition of a 'complaint' and details of alternative redress. (Appendix 8 – 11 has sample letters for these types of complaints. School headed notepaper should always be used).
- 5.4 Education Services is legally required to record all complaints received and to provide annual performance statistics to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Reports generated using the information recorded on the complaints system are essential in meeting this requirement.

6. Who deals with a complaint?

- 6.1 The aim is for schools or centres to respond to complaints at the first point of contact (Stage 1). Complaints that are not received locally (for example, by the Education Customer Services) will be referred to the appropriate establishment for action.
- 6.2 If the complaint requires investigation (Stage 2) the Executive Director of Education will appoint an Investigating Officer, it will usually, but not always be the link officer for the school. The appropriate head of service will respond to the complaint within the necessary timescales.

7. How to deal with a complaint

- 7.1 A summary of the Model Complaints Handling Process is provided in Appendix 1.

7.2. Frontline Resolution (Stage 1)

Where a complaint is received verbally, face to face or in writing, it must be responded to within five working days. If, however, this cannot be achieved, the timescale in exceptional circumstances can be extended. This can be done in agreement with the customer. You should write to the customer to advise why we cannot investigate their complaint within five working days, using the template in Appendix 6. In addition to Appendix 2, an additional template, Appendix 3 has been provided to assist with Frontline Resolution stage if required. This is not a mandatory form. A standard letter is provided in Appendix 7 for a response to the complainant. Your written response must advise the parent or carer how to

take their complaint to a second stage if they wish to do so. Please send a copy to the Customer Care Team at Education.CustomerServices@glasgow.gov.uk who will update the Complaints Record System.

You can choose to acknowledge the complaint, or if a complainant asks for a written acknowledgement using the template in Appendix 5.

7.3 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should be referred to Stage 2 of the Complaints process, preferably submitting their complaint in writing along with the reasons why they remain dissatisfied and what they would like to happen as a result of their escalation of the complaint. As in Frontline Response, complainants can choose to make these verbally and this should be referred to the Customer Services Team at the aforementioned email address.

7.4 Investigation Stage (Stage 2)

A complaint must be escalated to the investigation stage when:

- the frontline resolution has failed; the customer remains dissatisfied and requests an investigation into the complaint. This may happen immediately, or up to 12 months after the event.
- the issues raised are complex and require detailed investigation.
- the complaint is about the headteacher or head of establishment

7.5 Take particular care to identify complaints that might be considered serious, high risk or high profile. These may require particular action or raise critical issues that could need direct input from the Senior Management Team.

7.6 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman defines potential high-risk or high-profile complaints as those that may:

- involve a death or terminal illness.
- involve serious service failure, for example major delays in providing, or repeated failures to provide a service.
- generate significant and ongoing press interest.
- pose a serious risk to local authority operations.
- present issues of a highly sensitive nature, for example concerning:
 - a particularly vulnerable person
 - child protection.

7.7 All complaints requiring investigation should be referred to the Customer Care Team at Education, Customer Services who will record them on the complaints record system and forward to appropriate officer for investigation. These complaints will be acknowledged by the Customer Care Team within three working days and the investigating officer must respond within 20 working days. A Stage 2 letter will be signed by the appropriate head of service.

7.8 If, after investigation, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response, they can refer their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. They will be advised of this as part of the response to the investigation stage.

7.9 Adhering to the specified response times for a complaint is important to conclude a complaint satisfactorily and to avoid unnecessary referrals to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. However, complaints are often received close to extended school breaks often making it difficult to respond within 5/20 days. In this situation, the Education Customer Complaints Team within Corporate Services will contact the complainant to advise that it may not be possible to conclude their complaint within specified timescales and will seek agreement from the complainant to have the time extended. However, an extension to response times is not automatic in this situation and the complainant may refuse and still refer their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

7.10 Resolving Complaints

We may resolve a complaint by agreeing any action to be taken with the customer, without making a decision on whether to uphold/not uphold.

There should be a clear record of the resolution agreed and signposting to the next stage.

7.11 Supporting Staff

Schools and lead officers must share relevant parts of the complaint and response with any staff members complained about.

At Stage 2, staff members must be given information about the complaint process and support available and kept updated on any timeframe extensions.

7.12 Contact from MP's/MSPs/Elected Members

Existing procedures for enquiries should be dealt with through the agreed MLU procedures. However, where a complaint is brought by an MP/MSP, it should be dealt with in line with the Complaints Handling Procedure.

7.13 The Customer Care Team process Education Services complaints on our behalf. If you require any guidance on complaints please contact them and they will be happy to answer any queries you may have.

8 Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

8.1 All staff within Education Services work hard to work with parents and carers of our children and pupils in a professional and helpful manner. However, sometimes, with or without good reason, we are faced with behaviours that are unreasonable and unacceptable. People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. The circumstances leading to a complaint may result in the customer acting in an unacceptable way. Customers who have a history of challenging or inappropriate behaviour, or have difficulty expressing themselves, may still have a legitimate complaint.

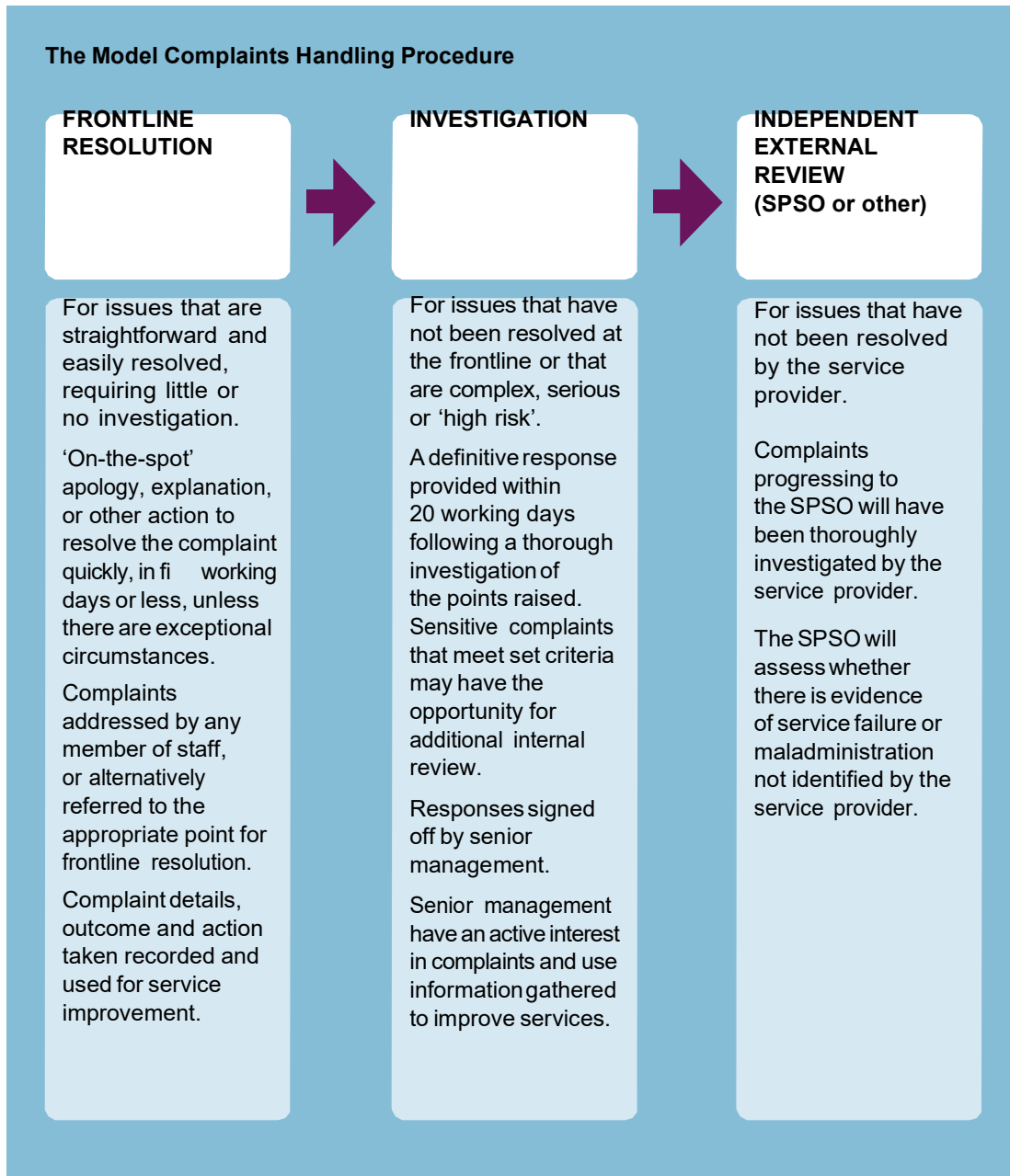
8.2 A customer's reasons for complaining may contribute to the way in which they present their complaint. Regardless of this, we must treat all complaints seriously and properly assess them. However, we also recognise that the actions of customers who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on time and resources or unacceptable behaviour towards our staff. We will, therefore, apply our policies and procedures to protect staff from unacceptable behaviour such as unreasonable persistence, threats or offensive behaviour from customers.

8.3 Where we decide to restrict access to a customer under the terms of an unacceptable

actions policy, we have a procedure in place to communicate that decision, notify the customer of a right of appeal, and review any decision to restrict contact with us. This is intended to give the customer the opportunity to demonstrate a more reasonable approach towards us.

- 8.4 Similar to the complaints process, the unacceptable actions process has two stages, a first stage warning letter and a more robust communication that includes actions such as restricting access to services. These letters can be issued individually or as part of a restriction process depending on the circumstance. On the advice of your Head of Service, an unacceptable actions letter can be issued. Stage 1 letters can be issued by heads of establishment and Stage 2 by the Head of Service. It is important that the customer care team are notified when an unacceptable actions letter is issued by an establishment. All notifications of an Unacceptable Action are recorded on the Corporate Unacceptable Actions Register.
- 8.5 Our policy and procedure on unacceptable actions can be accessed here: <http://connect.glasgow.gov.uk/article/19800/Violence-at-Work>

Douglas Hutchison
Executive Director of Education



Complaint Recording Pro-Forma

PLEASE USE BLACK INK AND BLOCK LETTERS

1	Name of School/Centre	
2		
DETAILS OF COMPLAINANT		
If complainant wishes to remain anonymous, please put 'ANON' at Surname		
Title	Forename	
Surname		
Flat/Apartment Number <i>(if applicable)</i>		
House Number	Street Name	
City/Town	Postcode	
Phone	Mobile	
Email		
3		
DETAILS OF COMPLAINT		
Date Received		
Received by	Name	Position
How complaint was received <i>(Please tick the appropriate box to indicate method of communication)</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> EMAIL <input type="checkbox"/> FACE TO FACE <input type="checkbox"/> PHONE <input type="checkbox"/> LETTER		
Please provide details of the complaint below - include what the complainant would like to happen		
4		
DETAILS OF RESPONSE		
Date Complaint responded to		
Who responded	Name	Position
How complaint was responded to <i>(Please tick the appropriate box to indicate method of communication)</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> EMAIL <input type="checkbox"/> FACE TO FACE <input type="checkbox"/> PHONE <input type="checkbox"/> LETTER		
Please provide a summary of action taken to resolve complaint including		
Was customer satisfied with resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date passed to Customer Care Team <i>(where appropriate)</i>

Please email this form to:
education.customerservices@glasgow.gov.uk



Education Services – Complaint Frontline Response Template

Date complaint received:	Date due for response:
Investigating Officer:	
School/EYC:	Head of Establishment:
Summary of Complaint (from system)	
Has further contact been made with complainant? If so, please add additional details:	
Detail Meeting/Contact with witnesses:	
What procedures relate to this complaint, i.e. Care Inspectorate Informed, HANDS, Anti-Bullying procedure (please note, this list is not exhaustive):	
What evidence was viewed as part of the investigation, i.e. accident book, interview notes from bullying investigations, risk assessments, playground supervision rotas etc.	
Investigation notes (please attached any handwritten notes and/or continue on an additional sheet):	

Investigation conclusion:	
Recommended outcome (based on the above):	Upheld/Partially Upheld/Not Upheld/Resolved
Date completed:	Date response letter issued:

CLASSIFICATION OF CUSTOMER CONTACT		
Category	In Scope of Complaints Handling Process	Refer to Standard Letter
Complaints – “an expression of dissatisfaction”	Yes	
Requests for Service	No	
General Enquiries	No	
Information Requests	No	
Freedom of Information Requests	No	
Compliments	No	
Data Protection Requests	No	
Elected Member Enquiry	No	
Consultations, for example, School Closures	No	
Placing Request Appeals	No	Appendix 8
Exclusion Appeal	No	Appendix 9
Scottish Qualifications Authority Exam Appeal	No	Appendix 10
Child Protection Issue	No	Appendix 11
Co-ordinated Support Plan or Additional Support for Learning placing requests (via Additional Support for Learning tribunal)	No	
Attendance Council Appeals (via Court)	No	
Home to School Transport Appeals	No	
Teacher Conduct: issues relating to teacher conduct fall under LNCT Circular 12 procedures. If a complaint is about a teacher’s attitude, the parent can still complain but will not be advised of the outcome in line with LNCT Circular 12.	No	
Internal staff issues, for example, grievance or conduct issues raised by staff	No	

School Headed Notepaper

Name of Addressee
Address
Continuation Line
GLASGOW
G0 0AA

Date

Dear

Complaint - *(insert as appropriate)*

Thank you for your <letter/telephone call/email> of <date>. I am currently gathering information to investigate your complaint.

We aim to respond to your complaint within 5 working days of the date of receipt. However, if you need any further information prior to this please do not hesitate to get in touch and I will endeavour to assist you.

For further information, please refer to the Glasgow City Council website:
<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=16133>.

Yours sincerely

Name
Designation

School Headed Notepaper

Name of Addressee
Address
Continuation Line
GLASGOW
G0 0AA

Date

Dear

Complaint - *(insert as appropriate)*

Thank you for your <letter/telephone call/email> of <date>.

I am presently liaising with colleagues to obtain details of your case and to investigate this matter for you.

We aim to respond to our customers within five working days. However, owing to the school holiday period and absence of key staff at present our response times are approximately <insert as appropriate> working days. If you need to contact me prior to this, please do not hesitate to get in touch and I will endeavour to assist you.

Yours sincerely

Name
Designation

School Headed Notepaper

Name of Addressee

Address

Continuation Line

GLASGOW

G0 0AA

Date

Dear

Complaint - *(insert as appropriate)*

Thank you for your <letter/telephone call/email> received on <date> regarding the above. Having investigated your complaint, I am now in a position to respond to you.

PLEASE INSERT FULL RESPONSE AS APPROPRIATE

Glasgow City Council has now concluded its investigation into your complaint (s). I hope you are satisfied with this response. If you feel the response does not fully answer your complaint, there is the option to have it considered at the next stage of our Complaints Handling Procedure.

Details of how complaints are dealt with may be found on the council's website at:

www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=16133; or you may write to:

Customer Care Team
Customer and Business Services
Glasgow City Council
City Chambers
George Square
GLASGOW
G2 1DU

Yours sincerely

Name

Designation

School Headed Notepaper

Name of Addressee
Address
Continuation Line
GLASGOW
G0 0AA

Date

Dear

Placing Request Appeal Procedure

Thank you for your <letter/telephone call/email> of <date>.

The process for granting Placing Requests is governed by specific legislation to which all local authorities must adhere. As a result, this matter is outwith the scope of Glasgow City Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and I am therefore unable to accept this correspondence as a complaint.

Please see below for links to The Scottish Government's '*Choosing a School*' publication which gives an overview of the national Placing Request procedures and Glasgow City Council's own publication on our placing requests and appeals procedure.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/11/1009358/0

www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=22599

I hope these links provide you with the information you need to carry forward your appeal, however, if you require any further information please contact me and I will endeavour to assist you.

Yours sincerely

Name
Designation

School Headed Notepaper

Name of Addressee
Address
Continuation Line
GLASGOW
G0 0AA

Date

Dear

Complaint: Exclusion Procedures - (*insert name of child/young person*)

Thank you for your <letter/telephone call/email> of <date>.

The process to appeal an exclusion is governed by The Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975 (as amended) and the Education Scotland Act 1980 (as amended). This legislation details the legal requirements each local authority must follow when dealing with an exclusion.

This matter is outwith the scope of Glasgow City Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and I am therefore unable to accept this correspondence as a complaint.

I have enclosed a copy of Glasgow City Council's '*Appeals Procedures for Children and Young People Excluded from School*' which I trust you will find helpful, however, if you require any further information please contact me and I will endeavour to assist you.

Further information on appeals can be found here: www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17863

Yours sincerely

Name
Designation

School Headed Notepaper

Name of Addressee
Address
Continuation Line
GLASGOW
G0 0AA

Date

Dear

Enquiry regarding exam appeal procedures

Thank you for your <letter/telephone call/email> of <date> regarding the above.

The exam appeal process is dealt with by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Exam appeals to the Scottish Qualifications Authority can only be made by a school on behalf of a candidate and Scottish Qualifications Authority will not accept appeals directly from a candidate or their parent or carer.

A guide to the appeals process including details of when a candidate is eligible to appeal can be found on the Scottish Qualifications Authority website at www.sqa.org.uk.

This matter is outwith the scope of Glasgow City Council's Complaints Policy and I am therefore unable to accept this correspondence as a complaint.

I trust this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Name
Designation

School Headed Notepaper

Name of Addressee
Address
Continuation Line
GLASGOW
G0 0AA

Date

Dear

Complaint - *(insert as appropriate)*

Thank you for your <letter/telephone call/email> of <date>.

With regard to the decision to make a Child Protection referral please note that this referral was made in accordance with Glasgow City Council Education Services' Child Protection Policy. A copy of this policy is attached. Please refer to Section 7 where your right to be included in the process is explained further. Is this still current?

This matter is outwith the scope of Glasgow City Council's Complaint Handling Procedures and I am therefore unable to accept this correspondence as a complaint.

Yours sincerely

Name
Designation