



SHROPSHIRE

Fire and Rescue Service

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**BRIGADE ORDER
ADMINISTRATION
NO. 1**

PART 3

**COMPLAINTS
PROCEDURE**

PART 3 - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of grievance or dissatisfaction received from or on behalf of a member of the public regarding:-

- The action taken by or on behalf of the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- The failure by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, its employees or contractors to respond to a reported problem.
- The standard of services provided by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service or discrimination in their delivery.
- The policies of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer is responsible for ensuring this order is implemented across the Brigade.

The Performance and Quality Manager will be responsible for the day to day operation of the order.

REVIEW

This order will be reviewed annually in April by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Performance and Quality Manager, and as and when organisational changes take place.

Alterations and amendments to this order will be communicated via “The Pink” and will show the date reviewed. The Officer responsible for ensuring the regular review of this order is the Performance and Quality Manager.

THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

ALL complaints received by the Brigade must be passed to the Management Support office at Brigade Headquarters, where the complaint will be recorded. The Management Support office will record and report all complaints to the Executive Officer and the Brigade Complaints Officer (Divisional Officer - Performance & Quality Manager) who will have responsibility for processing and monitoring all complaints. The Management Support Office will draft a letter formally acknowledging the complaint for signing by the Complaints Officer, on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer. This formal acknowledgement will be sent within five working days of receipt of the complaint and will include the name and contact number for the investigating officer and the expected response time.

The Brigade Complaints Officer will appoint an Investigating Officer. In his absence an Investigating Officer will be appointed by the Executive Officer. The Investigating Officer will hold the rank of Assistant Divisional Officer or above.

The investigation will be completed within 14 working days of receiving the complaint and the complaint completed within a total of 28 working days. Where this is not possible an extension of time will be recorded and the Complaints Officer will send a letter to the complainant giving the reason for the extension.

On completion of the investigation a report will be submitted to the Complaints Officer. The Complaints Officer will process the investigation and respond to the complainant on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer. The response will inform the complainant how to take their complaint further if they remain dissatisfied.

When a complaint is received outside normal office hours Fire Control will inform the Principal and Executive Officer. The Principal Officer will record the details of the complaint and report the matter to the Management Support office at the earliest opportunity. Rarely will immediate action be required except for making initial contact with the complainant. However, where it is deemed appropriate the Principal Officer should take action to deal with or resolve the complaint.

MONITORING

Complaints will be monitored by the Complaints Officer to ensure adherence to the procedure. A monthly report will be submitted to Management Board outlining the progress of complaints received and where deemed necessary a Chief Fire Officer's briefing will be provided by the Complaints Officer.

GUIDANCE

Brigade questionnaires relating to standards of service are an important method of gathering qualitative information. Occasionally an adverse comment may be received on a returned questionnaire, however unless the respondent has used the questionnaire as a vehicle to

complain the responses given should not be considered as a complaint. Staff are urged to apply the Brigade's definition of a complaint for further guidance or refer the matter to the Brigade Complaints Officer.

The Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service leaflet "A Staff Guide to Complaints" (Appendix A) outlines simple guidance on how to deal effectively with complaints.

The Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service "A Guide to Complaints and/or Comments" leaflet (Appendix B) gives guidance to members of the public who wish to make a complaint.

APPEAL

Should the complainant still feel aggrieved by the response the Complaints Officer will inform the complainant of his/her right of appeal to the Chief Fire Officer and/or Chair of the Fire Authority.

Why it is important to record every complaint?

At Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service we want to offer a better service to all the customers with whom we come into contact.

Receiving compliments is nice, but receiving complaints is useful – especially because they show us where we are going wrong.

By reporting all complaints and monitoring them we will be able to judge how to make the service better.

Areas that complaints highlight are policy, practice, health and safety, attitudes and responsibility.

By learning from all our mistakes we can plan a better, more efficient service for the future.

We can also pat ourselves on the back when we get it right!

What do we tell our customers about how we handle their complaints?

- We will listen carefully to your complaint and use our procedure to help us deal with it.
- We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days.
- We will tell you the name and telephone number of the person dealing with your complaint.

- We will give you a response within 28 working days; if we cannot give you a complete answer then we will tell you what we are doing to investigate the complaint and how long we expect it to take.
- If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your appeal to the Chief Fire Officer, and/or the Chair of the Fire Authority you can appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman for Shropshire is:
Mrs P A Thomas
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
YORK YO30 5FZ
01904 663200

ENFORCEMENT CONCORDAT

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has adopted the Central and Local Government Concordat. By adopting the Concordat we commit ourselves to providing well publicised, effective and timely complaints procedures, easily accessible to business, the public, employees and consumer groups. In cases when disputes cannot be resolved, any right of complaint or appeal will be explained, with details of the process and the likely timescales involved.

A STAFF GUIDE TO COMPLAINTS

Your questions answered...

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or unhappiness by or on behalf of a member of the public regarding:

- Action taken by Fire Service personnel.
- Failure by Fire Service personnel or contractors to respond to a reported problem.
- Standard of services provided by Fire Service personnel or discrimination in their delivery.
- The policies of the Fire Service.

When is a complaint not a complaint?

When it is a request for action to be taken, or for information to be provided.

Who should deal with the complaint?

All complaints should be passed to the Management Support office at Brigade Headquarters as soon as possible where the complaint will be recorded. The complaint will then be passed immediately to the Complaints Officer who has the responsibility of processing and monitoring all complaints. When a complaint is received out of office hours, please inform Fire Control who will in turn inform the Principal and Executive Officers.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO REFER THE COMPLAINT.

POSSIBLE CASE STUDIES

“Your fire station is a disgrace, there’s rubbish on the yard and weeds growing everywhere. We pay for this service, can’t you tidy it up a bit?”

NB: This is not a complaint it is a request for action.

Action: Inform watch commander and tidy up!

“I was in a theatre when a fire safety team of inspectors disrupted the show doing checks on safety.”

NB: This is a complaint.

Action: Take all details and contact information of complainant. Refer complaint within 24 hours to the Management Support office.

“I found the fire officer who came to speak to my class at school rude and bullying. I was very upset about it.”

NB: this is a complaint.

Action: Take all details and contact information of complainant. Refer complaint within 24 hours to the Management Support office.

How should I deal with the person complaining to me?

- Be helpful.

- Remain calm, even if they do not.
- If you cannot refer the complainant immediately to the Management Support office make sure you get all the details of the complaint and write it down while you are talking to the person so that you can double check your facts with them.
- Make sure you fully understand the nature of the complaint.
- Take their name, address and telephone number.
- Tell them who you are and what you are going to do.
- Refer the complaint as soon as possible to the Management Support office who will record the complaint.
- Tell them they will receive a written acknowledgement within five days, which will include the name and telephone number of the person responsible for investigating the complaint.
- Be polite at all times and do not give them another cause to complain by being rude or unhelpful!

(If you are making a complaint, please say what you consider we should do to put things right)

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I have already brought this matter to the attention of:

Name:
.....

At:

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
FAO Brigade's Complaints Officer
Brigade Headquarters
St Michael's Street
Shrewsbury SY1 2HJ
Tel: 01743 260208/260232
Fax: 01743 260270

A GUIDE TO COMPLAINTS AND/OR COMMENTS

About our services...



Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has issued this leaflet to help you if you wish to complain or comment about our service.

It is our aim to offer a better service to all our customers and your comments and complaints will help us to improve in "Putting Shropshire's Safety First".

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has adopted the Central and Local Government Concordat. By adopting the Concordat we commit ourselves to providing well publicised, effective and timely complaints procedures, easily accessible to business, the public, employees and consumer groups. In cases where disputes cannot be resolved, any right of complaint or appeal will be explained, with details of the process and the likely timescales involved.

If you wish to make a complaint, comment or, indeed tell us if we get it right, please write to the Brigade Complaints Officer, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, Brigade Headquarters, St Michael's Street, Shrewsbury SY1 2HJ.

If you are making a complaint, this will be dealt with in accordance with our complaints procedure printed inside this leaflet.

You may prefer to speak directly the Brigade's Complaints Officer by telephoning 01743 260208/260232.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- We will listen carefully to your complaint
- We will provide you with a written acknowledgement of your complaint within five working days.
- We will tell you the name and telephone number of the person dealing with your complaint.
- We will give you a written response within 28 working days; if we cannot give you a complete answer then we will tell you what we are doing to investigate the complaint and how long we expect it to take.
- If you are not satisfied with the outcome you have the right to appeal to the Chief Fire Officer, and/or the Chair of the Fire Authority by contacting the Brigade Complaints Officer (address and telephone number overleaf).
- If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your appeal to the Chief Fire Officer, and/or the Chair of the Fire Authority you can appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman for Shropshire is:
Mrs P A Thomas
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
YORK YO30 5FZ
01904 663200

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS FORM

Please write clearly and provide us with the following information. If you need more space, use extra sheets and attach to this form.

Name:

Address:

Tel. No. (day time):

Compliment Comment Complaint
(please tick the appropriate box)

Details:
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