



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Service Improvement

Complaints Policy

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Responsible person	Head of Corporate Assurance
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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that complaints or matters of concern are properly administered, recorded, acknowledged and as necessary investigated.

Who is covered by this Policy?

This Policy is **for external complaints only** (members of the public, partners, stakeholders and external organisations), not employees; the exception being if it relates to the processing of their personal data or subject access request outcome.

Employees who wish to make a complaint against another employee or the Service should pursue this via the relevant professional standards policy (for example the Professional Standards Grievance or Conduct policies).

Core Code of Ethics

HFRS has adopted the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services. The Service is committed to the ethical principles of the Code and strives to apply them in all we do; therefore, those principles are reflected in this Policy.

National Guidance

Any National Guidance which has been adopted by HFRS, will be reflected in this Policy.

2. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

HFRS has a legal responsibility under the [Equality Act 2010](#), and a commitment, to ensure it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in any of its functions and services or in its treatment of staff, in relation to race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment or marriage and civil partnership. It also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, employees and service users.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

- To provide a mechanism for employees or members of the public to raise serious concerns or wrongdoing.

Objectives

- To deal with external complaints in a timely and efficient manner, endeavouring to deal with complaints from start to finish within **one calendar month** where possible, whilst adhering to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsmen guidance.
- To treat all complaints seriously and confidentially, acknowledging the complaint **within 5 working days** of receipt, investigate the cause thoroughly and report the outcome back to the originator of the complaint.
- To implement necessary actions where identified.
- To record all complaints in the Complaints Register.
- The Complainant has the right to appeal the outcome of the complaint.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- [Equality Impact Assessment](#)
- Legal References
There are no specific legislative requirements relevant to this policy.
- National Guidance
There is no specific National Guidance relevant to this policy.
- [UK Central Government Complaint Standards](#)
- [LGSCO Guidance on Effective Complaint Handling for Local Authorities](#)
- [Complaints Policy Delivery Guidance](#)
[LGSCO 'Children's Statutory Complaints Process' Guide](#)

5. HOW TO SUBMIT A COMPLAINT

Complaints can be made in writing, electronically or verbally/in person through any of the following methods:

Individuals are encouraged to make their complaint using the [Contact Us form](#) on the website, in writing (by post to The Complaints Officer, Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Summergroves Way, Hessle, HU4 7BB), by email (complaints@humbersidefire.gov.uk), or by telephone (01482 565333).

However, an individual can **submit a complaint to any employee**. It is the responsibility of that employee to take as much detail as possible, including name and contact details of the Complainant and email this through to complaints@humbersidefire.gov.uk as soon as possible.

When submitting a complaint:

1. Please tell us what has gone wrong
2. Please tell us how this has affected you or others
3. Please tell us what you would like us to do

Complaints acceptable under this Policy

An individual's dissatisfaction with:

- the standard of service received
- the conduct by an employee
- the lack of action by the Service
- the processing of their personal data or outcome of their subject access request

Complaints that will not be accepted under this Policy

- Complaint made by employees (except if the matter relates to the processing of their personal data)
- Complaints about Members of the Fire Authority - Please refer to the 'Disclosures about Members' section on the [Fire Authority](#) webpage for further information or speak to the Monitoring Officer.
- Complaints regarding an issue that occurred, or the individual becoming aware of the issue occurring, more than 12 months ago.

- The Complaints Officer may not accept, or progress complaints that they deem unacceptable or unreasonable, especially if it poses risks to Service employees or disrupts Service delivery.

(1) Unacceptable Behaviour

- **Violent, threatening, or abusive behaviour:** Verbal abuse, discriminatory remarks, intimidation, harassment, stalking, or threats to people or property
- **Personal attacks:** Targeting staff with derogatory or defamatory statements, especially online or in public forums
- **Inflammatory or offensive language:** Including racist, sexist, homophobic, or other discriminatory language

(2) Unreasonable Behaviour

- **Unreasonable persistence:** Repeatedly contacting staff without new information, refusing to accept decisions, or contacting multiple people to get a different outcome
- **Unreasonable demands:** Insisting on responses within unrealistic timeframes, demanding to speak only to specific staff, or refusing to follow the complaints procedure
- **Obstructive behaviour:** Refusing to provide necessary information or cooperate with the investigation

(3) Impact on Staff and Services

- **Affects staff wellbeing:** Causes distress, fear, or anxiety among staff
- **Disrupts service delivery:** Consumes excessive time or resources, preventing fair handling of other complaints

6. STAGE 1 - TIMESCALES AND PROCESS

Action	Timescale
Acknowledgement (written or verbal) of receipt and understanding of the complaint	Within 5 working days of receipt
Investigating Officer assigned	Following acknowledgement of the complaint
Investigation concluded and findings reported back to the Feedback Officer	Within 10 working days
Report outcome communicated to the complainant	Within one month of receipt of the complaint

7. STAGE 2 - RIGHT OF APPEAL

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint investigation you can request the complaint be reviewed, by an officer not previously involved in the investigation of the original complaint. This must be made by within 10 working days of receipt of the Complaint Outcome correspondence.

Stage 2 Timescales and Process

Action	Timescale
Complainant appeals the outcome of the Complaint Outcome	Within 10 workings days of receiving the Complaint Outcome
Acknowledgement (written or verbal) of request to have the Complaint Outcome reviewed	Within 5 working days of receipt
Review Officer assigned	Following acknowledgement of the review request
Review concluded and findings reported back to the Feedback Officer	Within 10 working days
Review outcome communicated to the Complainant	Within one month of receipt of the request for the review

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN

The Service endeavours to deal with all complaints in a satisfactory manner, however, should the Complainant remain dissatisfied with the Stage 2 (Review) outcome they can seek independent advice or contact the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#).

9. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Allegation	What is being complained about. An allegation may be made by one or more Complainants about the service they received from an FRS. It may, for example, be about service-wide fire safety initiatives, the organisation of service resources or general service standards. However, it can also be about the conduct of any person working within the service. A complaint case may involve more than one allegation.
Complainant	A person who makes a complaint.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, conduct, or lack of action by the Fire and Rescue Service
Conduct	Acts, omissions, statements, and decisions (whether actual, alleged or inferred).
Conduct Matter	Any matter that is not and has not been the subject of a complaint, which indicates that a member of staff may have committed a criminal offence or behaved in such a way that would justify disciplinary proceedings.
Misconduct	Acts, omissions, statements, and decisions (whether actual, alleged or inferred) that are not in line with Service policy.
Gross Misconduct	Acts which constitute gross misconduct, are those resulting in a serious breach of contractual terms and thus potentially liable for summary dismissal.

More Information

For further information regarding this policy please contact [Corporate Assurance](#).