



# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

*Customer Interaction*

## SERVICE INFORMATION SYSTEM

<b>Title</b>	<b>Customer Interaction (CI)</b>
<b>Category</b>	<b>Administration</b>
<b>Number</b>	<b>A18</b>
<b>Status</b>	<b>v6.0</b>
<b>Action</b>	<b>All Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) personnel</b>
<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Service Information Manager (SIM)</b>
<b>Security classification</b>	<b>Official</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	This policy outlines how NFRS utilise customer feedback. All personnel are advised to adhere to this policy with regard to compliments, suggestions, comments or complaints.

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<b>Job title</b>	<b>SIM</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>November 2021</b>
<b>Review due</b>	<b>November 2023</b>



### 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to outline procedures to enable customer feedback. All personnel are advised to follow this process with regard to compliments, suggestions, comments or complaints.

NFRS aims to provide the highest standards of service in all aspects of service delivery as set out in the following:

- NFRS Customer Charter
- Departmental Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

All feedback will be welcome regardless of how it is presented, and the Service will ensure that clear and relevant information about how the customer may make their views known and our standards of service delivery are widely available in a variety of formats.

In meeting these aims, the Service will treat the public with courtesy and respect, ensuring that all complaints are treated confidentially until the outcome is known. After this, appropriate levels of confidentiality will be maintained in each case.

NFRS is committed to giving an equal service to all. This means that we will not discriminate against anyone because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, political or religious belief or sexual orientation. Staff must be aware and respond to individual's specific needs.

Our aim is to ensure that all our customers can express their views on the services that we provide.

All employees will be given sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to perform their work activities safely and competently.

Our policies, procedures and standards will be reviewed as a minimum every two years to ensure that:

- Information is current and relevant
- Our procedures are effective
- Customers' views have been considered
- Improvements are fed into business plans
- Performance is published

### 2 ORGANISATION

The Chief Fire Officer has delegated the responsibility for this policy to the SIM, who will be supported by the Service Information Team (SIT).

The SIT will be responsible for:

- Collation and formal recording of CI
- Inputting data and attaching relevant documentation
- Quality assurance of correspondence



- Customer surveys and CI reports

It is the duty of all employees to ensure that all feedback is recorded onto the Workflow database under CI at first point of contact.

It is the responsibility of the assigned Investigating Officer to ensure that Workflow is kept up to date and all correspondence is forwarded to the SIT for quality assurance and input onto the CI database.

At times, when dealing with complaints from customers, staff may experience stressful situations.

Managers and supervisors must assess risks and enforce compliance with safe systems of working and effective procedures.

They will do this by ensuring adequate supervision, selecting suitable work practices and equipment for all activities and by identifying individual training needs and ensuring that these are addressed.

All employees are responsible for taking care of their own health and safety and not being careless or negligent towards other people when at work.

They must co-operate with safe working systems and procedures and report any dangerous situation or shortfalls in these procedures to the management team.

### 3 PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

In order for the Service to improve we must seek feedback from our customers.

This may be in the form of:

- Compliments
- Comments or suggestions
- Complaints

Comments, suggestions and compliments are feedback which can be a useful source of information about how others see us and how we are serving our customers.

The aim of this policy is therefore to ensure:

- a) Complaints are dealt with effectively and the recurrence of any problems are prevented
- b) Suggestions are checked for means of service improvement
- c) Performance information on complaints and compliments is collated and published in our CI report and on the [NFRS website](#)

#### 3.1 Comments

Comments could be in the form of advice/improvement suggestions from a customer that we could do something better or a question that warrants a service



specific response. The Service will check each comment to identify ideas that can be used to improve service delivery.

All comments or suggestions received must be passed to the SIT for further evaluation and analysis; they will be recorded appropriately i.e. NFRS employee suggestion scheme or Workflow which are on our intranet (FirePlace).

Comments that require a response will be assigned and responded to by the appropriate department/SIT.

### 3.2 Compliments

This is praise from a customer because we have done something well. The Service will use this information to identify and publish best practice.

All compliments, in whatever way that they are presented, should be recorded onto Workflow. SIT will ensure that, where applicable, compliments received will be published in the NFRS weekly bulletin, so that teams and individuals can receive recognition.

### 3.3 Complaints

The Service is justifiably proud of its reputation for service delivery, quality and value for money. However, on occasions things can go wrong, which results in customers expressing their dissatisfaction.

The Service defines a complaint as a representation from a member of the public or from an organisation that alleges that the Service has failed to do something, has done something wrong or acted unfairly or discourteously.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the person making the complaint feels aggrieved with the Service. Dealing with complaints courteously and effectively can do much to restore the person's confidence in the Service for the future.

When a complaint is made, the Service will take action to ensure that it is considered quickly, fairly and confidentially using the formal complaints procedure and will offer redress in appropriate circumstances.

#### Stages of complaints

There are various stages in the complaints process.

#### Formal

**Stage 1** The SIM, the Officer Of the Day (OOD) or the Assistant Officer of the Day (AOD) can advise on the assignment of complaints. For any relating to safeguarding, the appropriate Prevention Team Leader with responsibility for adult or children's safeguarding should be immediately informed. In all such cases the Prevention, Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager must also be notified as a matter of urgency. Usually the department manager of the Service area to which the



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complaint relates to handles stage 1. Investigating Officer undertakes investigation and provides a conclusion using SL039 to SIT for QA and review who will then issue it to the complainant.

**Stage 2** If the complainant is not satisfied at stage 1, the SIT will refer the complaint to the SIM, or in their absence the Duty Gold Cover Officer, who will appoint an assigned complaints investigator to undertake a level 2 investigation (response to be compiled using SL039a and sent to SIT for QA and issuing it to the complainant)..

**Stage 3** If the complainant is not satisfied at stage 2, it will be then be escalated to the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC).

Finally, if the complainant is not satisfied at stage 3, they may take it to the Local Government Ombudsman for further consideration. [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk).

#### General advice

The SIM/Duty Gold Cover Officer must be informed if:

- The complaint is one that could have legal, political or policy implications
- The complaint is made by Members of Parliament, County/Local Councillors
- The complaint is made by the CFO of other fire and rescue services
- In the event of a safeguarding complaint being received out of hours, e.g. a weekend or Bank Holiday, the Duty Gold Officer should be notified immediately so any appropriate immediate action can be taken. The appropriate Prevention Team Leader and the Prevention, Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager should then be contacted and briefed at the earliest opportunity when they return to duty by the assigned investigating officer.

When a complaint alleging that private property has been damaged and the complainant is seeking financial compensation only (once investigated by an assigned NFRS investigating officer), the matter is a claim against the Service.

This therefore must be forwarded to the corporate insurance team and the customer must be informed of this action in writing with a copy sent to the corporate insurance team. This will be recorded as a stage 1 complaint.

Where a complaint relates to personnel behaviour, the employee's name(s) should not be recorded on Workflow. Basic detail should be outlined and the SIM will notify the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) to ensure it is captured on the Service investigation log where necessary.

#### Disciplinary procedures

If anyone handling a complaint thinks that an employee has committed actions normally investigated through the Service disciplinary process, this must be reported to the employee's line manager.



Should a safeguarding complaint involve an allegation against NFRS personnel the appropriate Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) must be followed; SOP C4 - Safeguarding Children and Young People/SOP C5 - Safeguarding Adults.

### Responding to complaints

This section of the policy should be read in conjunction with [appendix A](#) and CI guidance.

Normally complaints will be received via publicised contact points, primarily Darby House (DH), the Northern Accommodation Building (NAB), Fire Control and other Service delivery areas, such as the Prevention team.

Regardless of where the first point of contact is, the person receiving the initial contact will be responsible for ensuring that the following customer details are entered onto the Workflow database under the customer interaction section:

- 1) Name
- 2) Address
- 3) Email address (where possible)
- 4) Preferred contact details
- 5) Full details of complaint
- 6) Monitoring data

The Workflow database will automatically enter:

- Unique reference number
- Date and time of receipt

If the customer wishes to keep the process informal and no further action is required, the person dealing with the initial contact will enter the following details into the Workflow database under the customer interaction section as a comment, with no further action required:

- Nature of the comment
- Actions taken
- Outcome

### **All feedback must be recorded.**

If the customer wishes to make the complaint formal, the complaint will initially be registered at stage 1 and follow the complaints procedure.

Complaints received will be formally recorded through the Workflow database under the CI section and, as far as possible, dealt with immediately.

Where this is not possible the Investigating Officer assigned will inform the SIT, who will then issue the standard acknowledgement letter (SL038).



The Investigating Officer must make every effort to:

- Conclude the investigation within 10 working days
- Review and keep the complainant informed of progress or reason(s) causing delay (as a minimum, every 10 working days)
- Ensure that all reports, contact with the customer, or any other relevant issues are recorded and forwarded to the SIT for quality assurance and inclusion into the customer interaction Workflow database
- Draft a conclusion letter detailing the findings and outcome of the complaint using SL039 and forward to the SIT to format and issue to complainant

Should the matter not be resolved under stage 1, the process will move on to stage 2. The SIT, on behalf of the SIM, will assign an Investigating Officer and a full investigation will be undertaken and a formal response produced (using SL039a).

All correspondence sent should clearly indicate a time frame by which the customer should respond, in whatever format desired. If no such response is forthcoming within 20 working days then the matter will be deemed as closed with no further action recommended.

Should the complaint remain unresolved, all paperwork and correspondence will be forwarded to the OPFCC for further investigation.

If the complaint is still unresolved, the customer has the right to take their complaint to the [Local Government Ombudsman \(LGO\)](#). This decision is final.

In trying to resolve the complaint the Service will:

- Provide a full explanation of the circumstances involved
- Apologise for mistakes made
- If possible, try to resolve the situation
- Take appropriate internal remedial action
- Give feedback to the customer

#### **4 MEASURING PERFORMANCE AND FEEDBACK**

The SIM will monitor the level of feedback on a monthly basis to identify any adverse variances.

In addition, a formal analysis of monthly, quarterly and annual reports will be produced for publication and notification at relevant management forums.

The SIT will contact all persons who have made a complaint within four weeks of its completion, to determine:

- Customer satisfaction
- Personal data monitoring
- Any areas for improvement

All feedback is anonymous and will be used to inform the business planning process.



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In addition the Service will periodically review its service delivery in consultation with its customers to ensure that we are providing a service in line with customer needs and expectations.

See [appendix A](#) for current feedback process.

It is the responsibility of the department managers to ensure that customer surveys are issued at regular intervals as detailed below:

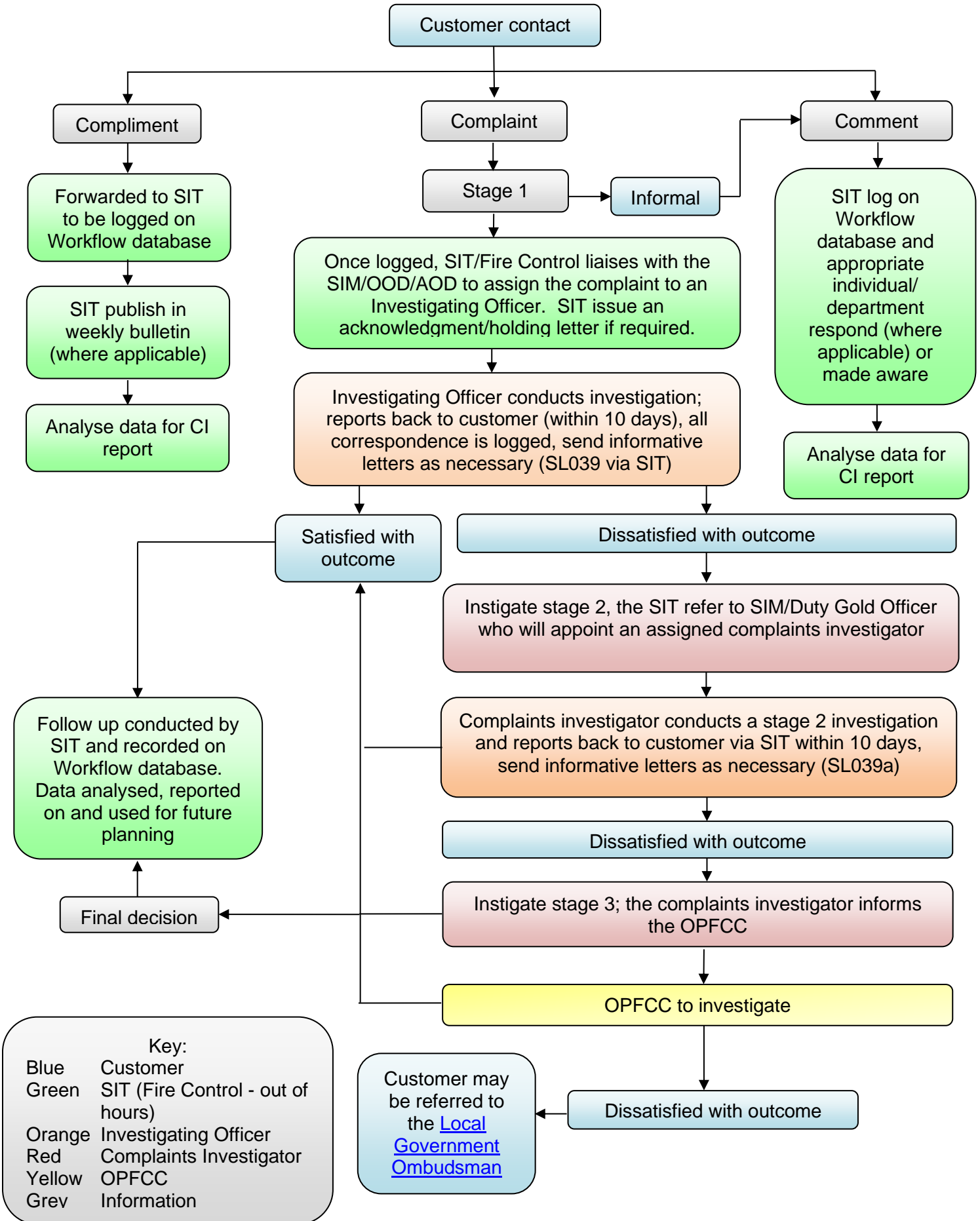
Survey issued	Frequency	Responsibility
<b>Strategic Plan consultation</b>	Annually	CRMP Manager
<b>Home Safety Visit</b>	Available online	SIM
<b>Fire safety inspection</b>	Available online	SIM
<b>After the incident</b>	Monthly	SIM
<b>Community safety schools' visit programme</b>	Continuous assessment Quarterly review Annual report	Prevention, Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager
<b>Post complaint</b>	Issued four weeks after the completion of each complaint	SIM
<b>Post training courses</b>	Following completion of training course	Training Team

## 5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- How to complain to the LGO: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk).



FLOWCHART FOR HANDLING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK



**Key:**

- Blue Customer
- Green SIT (Fire Control - out of hours)
- Orange Investigating Officer
- Red Complaints Investigator
- Yellow OPFCC
- Grev Information