



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Customer Interaction

SERVICE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Title	Customer Interaction
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Executive summary	This policy outlines how NFRS utilise customer feedback. All personnel are advised to adhere to this policy regarding compliments, suggestions, comments or complaints.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to outline procedures to enable customer feedback. All personnel are advised to follow this process regarding 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, marital status, pregnancy, maternity or paternity, 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

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) has delegated the responsibility for this policy to Business Services Team who will be supported by the Customer Service Team (CST) and Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OFPCC).

The Customer Service Team will be responsible for:

- Collation and formal recording of Customer Interaction (CI), including all concerns and complaints received
- Maintaining up to date complaint and positive feedback data inputting data and attaching relevant documentation
- Quality assurance of correspondence

It is the duty of all employees to ensure that all feedback is communicated to the [Customer Services Team](#) at first point of contact.

It is the responsibility of the assigned Investigating Officer to ensure that all correspondence is forwarded to the [Customer Service Team](#).

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.

2 PROCESS

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

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 CST for collation, further evaluation and analysis; Comments that require a response will be assigned and responded to by the CST where possible.

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 and forwarded to the CST. The CST will ensure that all compliments are properly collated for further evaluation and analysis so that patterns and trends can be monitored. In addition, where appropriate, the compliment will be forwarded to the person complimented, their line manager and consideration given to publication in the weekly bulletin.

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.

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.

The complaints process is administered by the OPFCC on behalf of the Service. This provides an independent and transparent approach to the handling of complaints and ensures appropriate oversight of the Service.

Stages of complaints

There are various stages in the complaints process.

Formal

Stage 1 All complaints received by the Service should be forwarded for the attention of The Customer Service Team within one business day. The Customer Service Team will then assess the complaint to determine the severity. Where the allegations are low level and would not, if proven, justify the bringing of misconduct proceedings, they will deal with the complaint locally where possible. This involves liaising with the Officer Of the Day (OOD) /Assistant Officer of the day (AOD), alongside the Brigade Investigating Officer (BIO), providing a response to the complaint. This may involve an explanation or apology if something has gone wrong. Where the complaint is more complex or could, if proven, justify the bringing of misconduct proceedings, the complaint will require allocation to an appropriate line manager for investigation. The Customer Service Team will contact the Brigade Investigating Officer (BIO), Officer Of the Day (OOD) or the Assistant Officer of the Day (AOD) for advice 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 complaint relates to handles stage 1

Stage 2 If the complainant is not satisfied at stage 1, the complainant is entitled to request a review of the final response issued. This is undertaken by the Customer Service Team, based within the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC). The OPFCC will conduct a review on the handling and outcome of the complaint to ensure that it is reasonable and proportionate. Where a review is upheld, the OPFCC may make recommendations with a view to remedying the dissatisfaction of the complainant. The Service must consider the recommendations and provide a response to the complainant and the OPFCC.

Finally, if the complainant is still not satisfied following the outcome of stage 2, they may take it to the Local Government Ombudsman for further consideration. www.lgo.org.uk.

General advice

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 allegations that could, if proven, justify the bringing of misconduct proceedings, the employee's name(s) should not be recorded. Basic detail should be outlined, and the Customer Service Team 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 procedure [policy A23](#), 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.

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 forwarded to the Customer Service Team:

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

The Customer Service Team will make contact with the complainant within 2 working days of receipt of the complaint to establish:

- The allegations the complainant wishes to make
- The outcome the complainant is seeking

All feedback must be recorded.

The Investigating Officer must make every effort to:

- Conclude the investigation within 28 days.
- Review and keep the complainant and Customer Services informed of progress or reason(s) causing delay (as a minimum, every 7-10 working days unless alternative contact arrangements have been made).
- Ensure that all reports, contact with the customer, or any other relevant issues are recorded and forwarded to the Customer Service Team for quality assurance.
- Complete the investigation report and forward to the Customer Services Team to format and issue to complainant.
- The Customer Service Team will issue the investigation report and a final letter explaining the outcome and findings to the complainant. This will be completed within 7 days of receipt of the investigation report.

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 28 days then the matter will be deemed as closed with no further action recommended.

Should the matter not be resolved under stage 1, the complainant is entitled to have their complaint escalated to stage 2. The complainant should be informed of this entitlement in the conclusion letter and afforded 28 days in which they should submit a request for escalation. Where the complainant does not submit their request in the given timeframe, their request may not be accepted. The OPFCC can accept out of time requests at their discretion on occasions where the complaint subject matter is deemed to be in the public interest or where the complainant was unable to submit the request in time. Upon conclusion of stage 2, the complainant should be informed of their entitlement to raise their complaint with the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

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

3 ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS

The Customer Service Team will monitor the level of feedback on a Quarterly basis to identify any adverse variances and forward a monthly report The Business Services Team.

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

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
Strategic Plan consultation	Annually	CRMP Manager
Community safety schools' visit programme	Continuous assessment Quarterly review Annual report	Prevention, Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager
Post training courses	Following completion of training course	Training Team

4 REVIEW

A minimum of 2 years.

5 DOCUMENT HISTORY

Impact assessments

An Equality and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (EWIA) was completed on:

EWIA	02/09/2025
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing published versions of this policy:

Document control			
Version	Date	Author	Status
1.0		SIM	Published
2.0	Oct 2011	SIM	Published
3.0	Oct 2015	SIM	Published
4.0	Feb 2018	SIM	Published
5.0	May 2019	SIM	Published

6.0	Nov 2021	SIM	Published
7.0	Mar 2023	RC	Review to change complaints procedure to OFPCC
7.1	March 2023	SITL	Never Published
7.2	Sept 2023	SITL	Removed Stage 2 of complaints process leaving 2 stages – Never published
7.3	Sept 2025	GM Business Services	Draft
8.5	Sept 2025	GM Business Services	Consultation comments reviewed
9	Oct 2025	GM Business Services	Published

Appendix A

