

Complaints Procedure

1. What is a Complaint?

1.1 A complaint is:

- An expression of dissatisfaction or concern;
- Either written or spoken or made by any other communication method;
- Made by one or more members of the public¹;
- About MTHA's action or lack of action;
- Or about the standard of service provided;
- Which requires a response;
- Whether about MTHA itself, a person acting on our behalf, or a partnership we are involved with.

1.2 A complaint is not:

- An initial request for a service, such as reporting a leak;
- An appeal against a 'properly made' decision²;
- A means to seek change to legislation or a 'properly made' policy decision;
- A means for lobbying groups/organisations to seek to promote a cause.

2. Principles for Dealing with a Complaint

2.1 When someone complains they inevitably have an issue about a service which has been received or not received. Complaints need to be handled in such a way that the complainant is the focus and not the process itself. It is within this context that the following principles should be applied.

2.2.1 *Accessible and Simple*

- Well publicised;
- Easy to find, understand and use – both for public and staff;
- Simple and clear instructions for the public about how to make a complaint;
- Has flexibility to meet the different needs of different people, ensuring that those who face challenges in access are not excluded;
- Provides information on advocacy and support services;
- The stages in the complaint handling process are kept to a minimum;

2.2.2 *Fair and Impartial*

- Concerns are dealt with in an open-minded and impartial way;
- Complainants are assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their future dealings and contacts with MTHA;

¹ 'member of the public' is defined as anyone in receipt of a service by MTHA or, indeed, denied a service to which they are entitled – this can be an individual or a group of people.

² A 'properly made' decision is one where the relevant laws, policies and procedures have been correctly followed in arriving at a decision e.g. recharging for damage caused in one of our homes.

- Ensures that complainants get a full response and that decisions are proportionate, appropriate and fair.
- The staff complained about are treated as fairly as complainants.

2.2.3 *Timely, Effective, Consistent*

- Within the parameters of what is appropriate and possible, frontline staff themselves should seek to resolve complaints;
- 'Investigate Once – Investigate Well' – when a complaint requires formal investigation, this should be done thoroughly to establish the facts of the case;
- Dealt with as quickly as possible. It should normally take no longer than 10 working days from receipt at the formal stage to resolution. If a complaint is more complex, complainants should be told why it may take longer to investigate and how long it is expected to take. Complainants and staff involved should be kept informed of progress throughout by the person investigating the complaint.
- Consistent so that people in similar circumstances are treated in similar ways.
- Concerns involving more than one public service provider are dealt with in such a way that the complainant's experience is of one system.

2.2.4 *Accountable*

- Provides honest, evidence-based explanations and gives reasons for decisions.
- Information is provided in a clear and open way;
- When concerns are found to be justified, as appropriate, MTHA:
 - Acknowledges mistakes
 - Apologises in a meaningful way
 - Puts matters right
 - Provides prompt, appropriate and proportionate redress
- Follow up to ensure any decisions are properly and promptly implemented.
- Where appropriate, the complainant is told about the lessons learnt and changes made to the service, guidance or policy.
- Ensures that complainants are informed of their right to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman (or of other appropriate routes open to them, for example, Welsh Language Board in respect of complaints about compliance with Welsh Language Schemes, or the Equality and Human Rights Commission).

2.2.5 *Delivers Continuous Improvement*

- Lessons learnt from complaints are gathered and feedback is used to improve service design and delivery.
- Systems in place to record, analyse and report on the learning from concerns.
- The leadership of MTHA:
 - Takes ownership of the complaints process

- Regularly reviews and scrutinises its effectiveness
- Receives regular complaint monitoring reports, and
- Demonstrates what MTHA has done to improve service delivery as a result of complaints
- Regulators have an important role in ensuring that lessons learnt from concerns are implemented satisfactorily and sustained.

3. Complaint Handling Arrangements

3.1 The aim is to provide a common approach for handling complaints by replacing 'process heavy' systems with one that is simple, flexible and places emphasis on getting the most appropriate outcomes for individuals and services. It requires MTHA to take a much more proactive approach to dealing with concerns by focusing on people's needs and not the complaints process itself.

3.2 *A Commitment Statement*

3.3.1 People will find it easy to complain and get things put right when the service they receive is not good enough.

3.3 *The People who may put forward a concern*

3.4.1 Any member of the public, including a young person or child, who has received, or was entitled to receive, a service from MTHA may make a complaint. The same applies if they have suffered due to the inappropriate action or lack of action by MTHA.

3.4.2 Where a concern is notified by a young person or child, the responsible body must provide them with such assistance that they may reasonably require in order to pursue the concern. This should include making the young person or child aware of the help that could be provided by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

3.4.3 A concern can also be put forward by someone on behalf of another person, as follows:

- a. Someone who has died
- b. A child
- c. Those who lack capacity (as defined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (1));
- d. They have been asked to do so by the person affected

In the case of b, c and d, MTHA must be satisfied, as far as the circumstances of the person affected allow for it, that the representative is acting with the authority of that person and if possible, obtain their signature to confirm this.

3.4.4 This procedure is not the means for a member of staff to raise employment issues. There are other internal mechanisms for these types of concerns, for example, whistleblowing, bullying or grievance procedures.

3.4 *Roles*

3.4.1 **The Board** should ensure that the policy is adopted and in place. It is not appropriate for the Board to be involved in the investigation of individual complaints. However, it should receive reports on the number and type of complaints received, their outcomes and any remedial action taken as a consequence. It is for the Board to determine how frequently it should receive such reports; however, this should be at least twice a year.

3.4.2 **The Tenant Service Standard Group** will receive reports on the number and type of complaints received, their outcomes and any remedial action taken as a result.

3.4.3 **Responsible Officer** – The Director of Operations is the Responsible Officer with responsibility for ensuring the policy is adopted and the guidance is followed.

3.4.4 **The Governance Manager** is responsible for co-ordinating responses to all complaints which are not resolved at the informal stage.

3.5 *Resources*

3.5.1 MTHA will ensure that the necessary resources are made available to enable delivery of the policy, this includes:

- Staffing
- Training
- Complaint handling administration systems

3.6 *Accessibility and publicising the complaints procedure*

3.6.1 Our goal is to ensure that the complaints system is accessible to everyone.

3.6.2 Our 'Complaints Commitment Statement' and complaints process are widely publicised. This is done by:

- Promoting the existence of the procedure, together with appropriate contact details, on a regular basis in any newsletters that the organisation publishes;
- Producing a bilingual complaints information leaflet (see 3.8);
- The leaflet should be available at all public reception areas and common areas where service users may frequent, and made widely available to the our staff;
- The leaflets should also be circulated to the local offices of relevant advice and advocacy organisations operating in our area;
- The complaints procedure should be published at a prominent and easily accessed area of MTHA's website (ideally via a link on the home page).

That in addressing accessibility:

- The complaints procedure information will be made available in alternative formats such as on CD, in large print, Braille etc upon request;
- Basic literature is available in the common ethnic languages in our area including Welsh, Polish and Portuguese
- That we have in place arrangements so that we can call upon translation/interpretation services (including British Sign Language)

For people who may need advice/support in making their complaint, MTHA keeps a comprehensive list of relevant advice and advocacy organisations operating in our area. Advice should be provided to complainants who require/request such support as to which organisation(s) is likely to be the most suitable to support them. (A decision on which organisation would be best placed to assist could be based on the nature of the complaint, or on the nature of any disadvantage faced by the complainant – e.g. language, disability etc).

3.7 *The complaints information leaflet/complaint form*

3.7.1 Our leaflet will be as per this policy.

3.7.2 In raising a concern, ideally people should complete the complaint form either printed version or webform.

3.7.3 However, people may prefer to present their complaint by telephone, e-mail, or in person (or other method). In doing so, staff dealing with the complaint should ensure that they have gathered the same information as being sought on the complaint form and ensure that it is recorded appropriately.

3.8 *The complaints procedure*

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

This stage offers the opportunity for informal engagement at the point of service delivery to seek to resolve complaints either at the time the concern arises or very shortly thereafter. This stage should be part and parcel of front-line service delivery and not viewed as separate from it. This first step will normally be an explanation or other appropriate remedial action by frontline staff.

- Staff should be empowered and trained to deal with complaints as they arise with the aim of resolving issues on the spot. This training can be provided during their induction period.
- Staff should be trained to recognise the seriousness of a complaint and understand when it should be transferred to a more senior member of staff.
- Staff may receive complaints that do not involve their own service, but that of another department. In this instance, direct the complaint to the appropriate Line Manager or Governance Manager, who can advise the complainant appropriately.

- In a similar vein, staff may receive a complaint that not only involves their own service but that of another section/department. In this circumstance, the complainant should be referred to the Governance Manager.
- If a complainant is not happy with the outcome of their complaint at the end of the informal stage, staff must advise complainants how to progress their complaint to the formal investigation stage.
- Complainants may wish their complaint be 'fast-tracked' straight through to an internal investigation (Stage 2). This may be particularly so if there have been disagreements with staff directly responsible for delivering the service. It is the complainant's prerogative to seek to take their complaint directly to Stage 2 of the procedure and front line staff should advise how they may do so.
- Frontline staff should be trained and encouraged to provide appropriate information on advice and advocacy support at Stage 1 of the complaints process. However, it is recognised that they may not have (nor could they be expected to) have the breadth of knowledge of all organisations for all types of help available, e.g. Shelter Cymru.
- The Governance Manager should be a source of support for frontline staff in respect of local resolution.

The informal resolution stage should be done as quickly as possible and within 10 working days. If it is not possible to resolve the concern within the relevant timescale, then the matter should be escalated to the formal investigation stage.

An example of the type of concern that can be resolved at the informal resolution stage is:

- An appointment was made for a boiler to be fixed and the tenant complains that no-one turned up on the appointed day.

However, an example of the type of complaint that should not be resolved at an informal stage is:

- The concern involves issues where it appears a service failure has occurred due to an obvious systemic problem.

Stage 2 – Formal Internal Investigation

'*Investigate once, investigate well*' is the principle for this stage of the process. Emphasis is placed on one investigation to deal thoroughly with the concerns raised, rather than multiple investigations at different levels in the organisation which can result in protracted and sometimes open ended investigations. However, the Stage 2 element of the complaints process is intended to be flexible to respond appropriately to the complaint. 'Investigating well' also means conducting an investigation in a manner that is proportionate to the nature and degree of seriousness of the complaint. Proportionate means that for those complaints not so serious in their nature, the investigation may not need to be so detailed.

The following sets out how a complaint should be dealt with at Stage 2.

- Stage 2 complaints should be sent by the complainant to the Governance Manager. Any member of staff who receives a complaint should forward it to the Governance Manager promptly, at least within 2 working days.
- Having formally received a complaint at Stage 2, an acknowledgement should be sent by the Governance Manager as soon as is possible but within a maximum of two working days.
- If the complaint is 'out of time' – i.e. the issue being complained about is older than six months (from the time that the complainant first became aware of the problem), consideration should be given as to whether there are good reasons as to why it should nevertheless be accepted.
- The Governance Manager should offer to discuss the matter with the complainant, including:
 - Helping the person making the complaint to understand the process;
 - Confirming with them their preferred method of communication and what they want as an outcome to making the complaint;
 - Providing advice of relevant advocacy and support services if they need help in making their complaint.
 - Defining what exactly the complaint is about and what the complainant would like to happen to close the complaint
- Depending on the nature of the complaint it may be necessary to obtain the complainant's permission to access their personal file. If the complainant refuses to give permission, then it should be explained to them that this will have an effect on the ability to conduct a thorough investigation.
- If the complainant is complaining on behalf of someone else, consideration will need to be given as to whether consent is needed to investigate the complaint.
- Having satisfied themselves that they sufficiently understand the details of the complaint, the Governance Manager should:
 - Grade the seriousness of the complaint to decide on the appropriate level of investigation;
 - Identify an officer within the organisation with sufficient seniority, credibility and independence from the source of the complaint to undertake the investigation, usually this would be the Governance Manager;
 - When deciding on an 'investigator', take account of whether the investigation will need to span across more than one service and the level of seniority required to investigate across all those areas.
- Having recorded the complaint on the complaints handling system on receipt, the Governance Manager should keep track of (and record) progress and take responsibility for monitoring smooth running of the investigation, ensuring that timescales are met. The stage 2 complaints process should normally be

completed within 10 working days. Where this is not possible complainants must be informed of the reasons and be agreeable to any extension. In any event, there should be regular contact with the complainant, updating them on the progress of the case.

- A complainant may withdraw their concern at any time, however MTHA may continue to investigate if it feels that it is necessary to do so.
- It is recommended that the Governance Manager produces a portfolio of specimen documents/templates to assist those in the complaints process, these could include:
 - A form for frontline staff for logging relevant complaints at the informal stage;
 - An acknowledgement letter;
 - A framework for 'update' letters to the complainant;
 - Interview request letters (e.g. for the investigator when requiring meetings with staff involved);
 - A template for investigation reports.

Complaints Investigations

- A complaint investigation should be a fact finding exercise which is impartial, open and transparent and proportionate to the seriousness of the complaint. For serious complaints, a plan needs to be drawn up enabling the complaint to be investigated systematically.
- However, even though the complaint has reached the Formal Internal Investigation Stage, there may still be potential for resolving the concern to the complainant's satisfaction through a 'quick fix' and without having to undertake a full and lengthy investigation. Consideration should be given to the possibility of this.
- Consideration should also be given to as to whether face to face meetings and/or mediation could be a means to resolving the complaint.
- Evidence gathering can include:
 - Correspondence (letters and emails)
 - Notes of telephone conversations
 - Organisational policies and procedures
 - Good practice guidance
 - Records (including those specifically relating to the complaint under consideration and training records of all staff involved in the complaint)
 - Legislation
 - Interviews (including detailed notetaking)
 - Site plans and visits
 - Photographic evidence
 - Recordings in various formats (eg phone, video, CCTV)
 - Obtaining professional/expert advice

- Training records of relevant staff
- Recommendations arising from investigations should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed (SMART).
- At the end of an investigation a written outcome such as a letter or email should be produced, and in more serious cases a report. Where a report is produced this should include where appropriate:
 - The scope of the investigation
 - A summary of the investigation
 - Details of key issues, setting out a brief chronology of events leading to the complaint);
 - Those who were interviewed (including setting out to what degree the complainant, and if appropriate, any affected relatives, advocates, etc were involved in the investigation).
 - Conclusion
 - If the complaint is found to be justified/upheld
 - How it happened – i.e. what went wrong
 - Why it happened – i.e. the root cause of the problem (e.g. human error, a systemic failure);
 - What impact did it have on the complainant;
 - If a systemic failing has been identified, an explanation of actions taken to put things right, with a view to ensuring the same problem does not occur again
 - If appropriate, an apology
 - If appropriate, an offer of redress
 - If the complaint has not been upheld, there should be an explanation of why this conclusion has been reached, demonstrating that it has been arrived at based on the evidence gathered.
- Overall, the report should demonstrate throughout that the complaint has been taken seriously, that the investigation undertaken has been fair and, in accord with the seriousness of the complaint, proportionately thorough.
- Even in cases where an investigation upholds the complaint and offers remedy/redress, it may be that the complainant remains dissatisfied for some reason. Therefore, in all cases, the report should inform the complainant that if they remain dissatisfied then they have the right to seek an independent external consideration of their complaint. Information about making a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and other appropriate complaint handlers including the Welsh Language Board should be provided.

The Final Steps

The fact that complaints will vary in the degree of seriousness has already been referred to. MTHA should decide at what level decisions on recommendations in the

report can be taken and who should sign off on the complaint (i.e. who should sign any report or letter).

There will be times when it would be appropriate for the Governance Manager to do so, other times the responsible Director, and then other times the Chief Executive. MTHA should establish a level of delegation in this regard. Further, the CEO should ideally see a copy of all final correspondence sent out in respect of Stage 2 complaints. However, where this is impractical, it is recommended that the Governance Manager provides the CEO with frequent reports.

In cases where a complaint has been upheld and there is a clear systemic issue, the appropriate Director or Manager should ensure that an action plan is devised setting out how the recommendations will be implemented and identify who will be responsible for ensuring their implementation. When it affects them, frontline staff should be involved in this process. Any systemic issue found or suspected in relation to any Health & Safety or Life Safe Compliance processes must be immediately reported to the Director and CEO. The plan should also include arrangements for confirming to the complainant that changes have been implemented and make provision for the monitoring and evaluation of new arrangements introduced to assess their impact.

On closing a complaint case, the Governance Manager should ensure that working documents used during the course of the investigation are retained in an orderly fashion and stored securely. If the complaint becomes the subject of further external investigation such as by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, these working documents may be needed as MTHA's evidence. Complaint case records should be retained for at least one year following closure at the end of Stage 2.

An Independent Person

It may be for that for some investigations, it is considered appropriate to include the involvement of an independent person in the Stage 2 investigation. It is the responsibility of the Governance Manager to ensure that the organisation has a pool of suitable people to call upon where necessary.

Complaints Involving Other Legal or Disciplinary Proceedings

Occasionally, complaints received will involve legal or disciplinary proceedings. It may from time to time be necessary to put the investigation of the complaint 'on hold' until the conclusion of those other proceedings. However, it should not automatically be assumed that this is necessary in every case. An assessment should be made (with legal advice sought, if appropriate) to identify whether it is possible to address the subject of the complaint, without impacting unfairly on the other proceedings underway. It is important that if a complainant is in a continued state of disadvantage as a result of likely poor service delivery that every step is taken to conclude this part of their complaint. This will mean that, if the complaint is upheld, it has been demonstrated that MTHA is doing everything it can to return them as soon as possible to the position that they would have been in if that failure had not occurred in the first place.

Complaints involving more than one service provider

There are occasions when a complaint received will involve more than one organisation. In this case the role of the Governance Manager will be slightly different. Having established the elements of the complaint and which organisations are involved, they should contact their counterpart(s) in the other organisation(s) involved. The complaints officers should then decide which of them should lead on co-ordinating the response to the complaint. It would seem sensible that this should be the organisation with the greatest involvement in the complaint. However, it may be appropriate for the organisation with the largest complaints handling resource to undertake this role.

The role of the complaints officer allocated to the complaint in question is to co-ordinate the investigations in each of the service areas involved. The ultimate aim, therefore, is to provide the complainant with a single comprehensive 'joint' response on behalf of all the organisations involved.

There will be complaints where each element is sufficiently distinct and separate so that all that will be required is to set out the details and outcome of each investigation strand and then add an overall conclusion to the response.

However, it is recognised that there will be some cases where the resolution and remedy of a complaint will involve agreement by all involved and that this could lead to tensions and disagreement. Where such disagreements lead to an impasse, it may mean having to refer the problem to senior management within each of these organisations (depending on the seriousness possibly Chief Executives) in order to try and resolve the situation.

Where the impasse still cannot be resolved, it may be prudent to refer the matter at this point to the relevant external independent complaint handler at Stage 3 (e.g. the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales). However, the complainant should be told of this intention, together with the reason for it, and their agreement should be sought before such a referral is made.

Partnership Services

(Whilst not forming part of MTHA's complaints handling procedure, we would need to have regard to the following when forming partnerships with similar or other types of organisations).

The situation in relation to complaints about partnership services is again different, given that not all partners may be subject to this model procedure. Nevertheless, it is good governance practice for every partnership established to have in place at the outset a protocol for dealing with complaints. That protocol should make clear where accountability lies within the partnership for any service delivered – i.e. does responsibility lie with the partnership as an entity, is each partner accountable for specific aspects of the service delivery?

Given that in most public service provider partnerships many members will be subject to a similar procedure, it is recommended that those providers endeavour to agree a protocol with their partners for dealing with complaints in a way that corresponds with this model.

In particular, it is recommended that:

- Partnerships establish a complaint handling process for services that they as a partnership deliver;
- They identify and publicise a single point of contact for complaints in respect of their activities/services
- The person/team identified, co-ordinates the investigation of the complaint on behalf of the partnership. Depending on the nature of the complaint, if the complaint concerns dissatisfaction with the service delivered by one particular partner, it may be more appropriate to refer the investigation on to that particular partner to deal with;
- The partnership ensures that lessons are learnt from complaints received and considers whether there are any that should be shared more widely.

Complaints concerning services that have been contracted out

Even though MTHA may contract out the provision of services to private/ voluntary organisations, this does not absolve us of our responsibility for those functions. The Governance Manager should, therefore, ensure that those responsible for drafting contracts are aware of the need to include as a matter of course a provision for complaints handling. This should include the requirement for organisations contracted to provide services to comply with similar complaint handling arrangements (i.e. the two stages), with the outcome report/letter being copied to MTHA. Such organisations should also inform complainants of the third external stage and their right to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

4. Learning Lessons

4.1 Learning from complaints/continuous improvement

4.1.1 Complaints information should be used to improve an organisation's service delivery and increase its effectiveness.

4.1.2 To support this MTHA should:

- Ensure that all complaint outcomes and their recommendations are periodically reviewed to identify whether there are any patterns to complaints/wider lessons to be learnt that may not be apparent from individual complaints alone. When considering the lessons that can be learnt from an individual complaint, an assessment should be made as to whether:
 - These are limited to the section/department in question;
 - Whether they have an organisation wide implication;
 - Or indeed whether they are ones that should be shared across the whole of the public service in Wales.

- Ensure that complaints reports are considered on a regular basis by senior management, including an analysis of the data gathered and information on recommendations that have been made for improving service delivery.
- Ensure that the information received by senior management is used to target any problem areas and consider if there is potential to improve policies, procedures and accordingly services.
- Ensure that the Board receives reports giving an overview of complaints received, setting out what changes have been made as a result of complaints information, and following monitoring of their implementation what results have been received.
- Ensure that an annual report on complaints is produced, drawing out lessons learnt over this period and demonstrating how they have contributed to improved service delivery.

4.2 *Recording and monitoring complaints*

4.2.1 Effective approaches to complaint management collect specific data and identify recurring or system wide problems. All feedback and complaints received should be recorded to ensure that a comprehensive evaluation of data can be made.

4.2.2 To support this MTHA should:

- Have a system to collect organisation-wide complaints data;
- Use the system to track complaints and compliance with timescale;
- Data recorded should enable the numbers, types, outcomes and trends of complaints to be captured, to facilitate comparisons with previous periods and identify system wide or recurring complaints;
- The system should also enable points from lessons learned to be captured;
- Write to the complainant detailing the findings of the investigation, providing an apology for any shortfalls and describing what action will be taken to prevent recurrence.

[Note: Frontline staff should be encouraged to report all serious complaints or those with wider learning points that they have dealt with informally to the Governance Manager so that these can be recorded on SDM. This should be regardless of whether or not the complaint has been resolved on the spot. For those serious complaints not resolved, such action will mean that there will be a record of the incident should the complaint progress to Stage 2 of the Complaints Process.]

4.2.3 However, it is not intended that public services providers should have to implement a new IT system for these recording purposes.

4.2.4 To enable the identification of trends both within and across organisations across Wales, when categorising complaints, the following top level complaint subjects should be adopted as listed below:

- Applications, allocations, transfer and exchanges
- Estate management and environment/common areas/hedges and fences etc
- Repairs and maintenance (including dampness/improvements and alterations e.g. central heating, double glazing)
- Neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour
- Tenancy rights and conditions/abandonment and evictions
- Right to buy
- Financial matters – rent arrears, former tenant arrears, service charges,
- Other

5. Staff and Training

5.1 Staff

- 5.1.1 Whilst it is not uncommon for people to look for someone to blame when things go wrong, staff should be assured that this is not the aim of the investigation. It should be made clear that any interview that may take place is to establish facts as part of the investigation of a complaint, and that it does not form part of a disciplinary procedure. (However, a separate disciplinary process could take place if this is appropriate).
- 5.1.2 When requiring staff to attend for interview, they should be told the purpose of the interview, what to expect and what preparation they need to do. They should also be advised that they can bring someone (such as a colleague) for support – although the position of confidentiality and their role should be made clear. They should also be advised as to what will happen after the interview.
- 5.1.3 Being the subject of a complaint is in any event a stressful situation and depending on the circumstances of the complaint and the issues involved, it may be prudent to inform the interviewee of staff support/counselling available.
- 5.1.4 In the same way that it is important to keep complainants informed on progress in the investigation and its outcome, the same is true in respect of staff.
- 5.1.5 As well as informing staff involved of the outcomes of complaints and any recommendations that arise, there should also be a means (staff newsletters, making the annual report available on the intranet) of disseminating to staff how the way they deal with complaints can contribute to better public services. The organisational culture should be that reporting a complaint and action taken is seen as a positive act in that it assists organisational learning. If many individuals (perhaps based in many different locations) deal with a similar type of problem without this information being shared with others, then what may be a deep-rooted systemic problem within the organisation may not emerge to the surface. If frontline staff inform the complainant of this

(intended) action, it is likely to have a positive effect in terms of good customer relations.

5.2 *Training*

5.2.1 The appointed complaints officer, the Governance Manager, should have the skills and competencies and training required to manage the the complaints process and to ensure that investigations are completed in accordance with this policy.

5.2.2 All staff should receive training in this Policy with ongoing refresher training every three years.

5.2.3 The Governance Manager should continually keep under review the quality of investigations undertaken and recommend additional training for staff members, as required.

5.2.4 General training should be included in the induction programme for new members of staff and Board members.

5.3 *Unacceptable Actions by complainants*

5.3.1 The model policy recognises that some people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. It should be borne in mind that there may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. A complainant's behaviour should not be regarded as unacceptable just because they are forceful or determined. However, the actions of complainants who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on an organisation or unacceptable behaviour towards staff. It is these actions that are considered unacceptable. Organisations should therefore have in place an 'unacceptable actions by complainants' policy and ensure that staff receive appropriate associated training. Organisations currently without such a policy, are welcome the use the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales's policy.