



RBFRS Policy Document

Policy Information	Details
Policy Name	Complaints, Comments & Compliments Policy and Procedure
Author	Business Support Lead
Owner	Head of Corporate Services
Protective Marking	Official
Version	4
Status	Minor changes only, no formal consultation required
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Policy Statement	Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) welcomes and values any feedback whether it is a compliment, comment or complaint. We are committed to resolving complaints in a positive, thorough and fair manner, to ensure we provide the best service to the people of Royal Berkshire.
Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints, comments and compliments are logged and investigated with due care and that complaints and their outcomes are logged for monitoring purposes.
Scope	This policy applies to all complaints, comments and compliments received from members of the public or organisations. Separate procedures are in place for internal complaints or a complaint against a specific employee.
Supporting Information	Complaints form

Revision History			
Revision	Description	Author	Date
4	Complaint policy updated to reflect minor changes in process for handling complaints, a complaint definition and inclusion of process for Comments and Compliments. Policy template updated.	Business Support Lead	01/2021
Authorisation			
Audit and Governance Committee	Committee approved on 28 January 2021		

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Complaints and Comments Policy and Procedure

Complaints and Comments Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints, comments and compliments are logged and investigated with due care and that complaints and their outcomes are logged for monitoring purposes.

Complaints and Comments Definition

Definition of a Complaint

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) defines a complaint as 'Any communication from outside the organisation expressing dissatisfaction with the service provided or actions taken by RBFRS staff members.'

Where comments are received through social media we will direct individuals to the formal complaints process. We will not discuss personal information via any social media channel.

Anonymous complaints will be reviewed but depending on the information provided, these can be difficult to investigate or resolve effectively, and therefore may not be recorded as a complaint.

Complaints and Comments Responsibilities

The person receiving the complaint must always give their name and designation. They will record the complaint on a complaints form and promptly forward to Business Support.

Business Support will record the complaint on a log and allocate an individual reference number. Business Support is responsible for forwarding the complaint/comment onto the relevant Head of Service/Duty Officer who will be responsible for assigning an Investigating Officer.

The Investigating Officer must record details of the investigation and liaise directly with the complainant. Business Support must be informed of initial contact (within 7 days of receipt of complaint), updates to the case and when the case is to be closed. Copies of all correspondence and an updated complaints form must be provided to Business Support for saving to file.

Complaints and Comments Policy

All members of the Service have access to the complaints procedure and will be ready to act positively towards anyone seeking to complain. To assist this, every complaint will be readily accepted and the information diligently gathered using the [complaints form](#) as a record of the event. Details of the complaints procedure can be provided to anyone seeking them.

If the person receiving the complaint cannot resolve the complaint immediately, they should advise the Complainant that their complaint will be investigated and that they will be contacted within 7 days. If a full response is not possible within 7 days, they will be advised when a response is likely to be given.

During Office Hours, every complaint must be notified as soon as possible to the Business Support Team, attaching the [complaints form](#) with appropriate sections completed. Where the complaint has not been resolved by the person receiving the complaint, the Business Support Team will forward the relevant details to the appropriate Head of Service and Deputy Chief Fire Officer

(DCFO). The Head of Service or Senior Manager will be responsible for allocating an appropriate Officer or Manager to investigate the complaint.

Out of hours, the Duty Officer must be notified as soon as possible. If the person receiving the complaint has been unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the Duty Officer will be responsible for allocating an officer to investigate the complaint. The Business Support Team, appropriate Head of Service and DCFO must be informed via [complaints form](#), for monitoring and recording purposes.

The investigating officer will be responsible for dealing with the investigation, liaising with the complainant (where appropriate) and informing the Business Support Team, Head of Service and DCFO of the outcome, via email and the [complaints form](#). If the complaint is regarding a specific individual then HR advice must be sought.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right to appeal to the Chief Fire Officer or Chief Executive.

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the Chief Fire Officer's or Chief Executive's response, they may appeal to the Fire Authority.

In the event they are not satisfied with the Fire Authority decision, as a final resort, they can refer the complaint to the Ombudsman. The details are available from the [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman website](#).

The Business Support Lead will make an analysis of complaints alongside the DCFO, and this will be reported quarterly to the SPB and then onto the Audit and Governance Committee.

Complaints and Comments Procedure

At all times personnel should be polite to people making complaints regardless of the attitude of the complainant or the nature of the complaint.

COMPLAINTS DO NOT HAVE TO BE MADE IN WRITING

Where possible, endeavour to resolve the complaint immediately.

When receiving any complaint, the following action should be taken:

1. The person receiving the complaint must always give their name and designation.
2. All complaints must be recorded on the [complaints form](#) ensuring that all sections are fully completed. If the complaint is in writing, the complaints form must be attached to it.
3. During office hours (Monday to Friday 09:00-17:00), notify the Business Support Team via email (BusinessSupportTeam@rbfrs.co.uk), with a copy of the complaints form.

For out of hours complaints, the Duty Officer must be notified as soon as possible. If you have been unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the Duty Officer will be responsible for allocating an officer to investigate the complaint.

The Investigating Officer (where applicable), Business Support Team and the appropriate Head of Service must be provided with all the details along with the complaints form via email.

Forward any paper/hard copies directly to the Business Support Team under confidential cover.

4. When the complaint has been investigated the Investigating Officer must record:
 - Details of the investigation (including correspondence, witness statements and notes of telephone conversations).
 - The action taken.
 - The date of the response to Complainant.
 - Whether the Complainant is satisfied or not.

All correspondence, witness statements and telephone notes etc. to be emailed, along with the complaint form, to the Business Support Team and copied to the Head of Service and DCFO. All correspondence (electronic and paper/hard copy) must be kept securely during the course of the investigation and deleted/destroyed within 1 month of close of investigation.

Details of the complaint will still be recorded in the event of the complainant no longer wishing to proceed with their complaint. The details will be recorded as a comment using the same procedure as for complaints.

The Business Support Team will retain comments and complaint files for 3 years after close. Records may be retained for a further period if they have on-going business value or if there is specific legislation which requires the information to be held for a further period. Retention periods of complaints which relate to employees may be determined by employment policies and associated retention periods.

Compliments Policy and Procedure

Compliments Introduction

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) welcomes and values any form of feedback. Where a compliment has been received about the service provided by a member of RBFRS we will, where possible, pass the feedback onto the individual(s) concerned and their line manager. We will also, where appropriate, respond to the sender of the compliment.

Compliment Definition

Our People Strategy sets out our commitment to ensuring that everyone's contribution is valued and positive behaviours are recognised. Our staff are an integral part of the organisation and we share positive feedback to celebrate their achievements. We encourage the recognition of excellent service, for example through our internal publications and nominations for our annual award ceremony.

Compliments Responsibilities

The person receiving the compliment should forward to Business Support for recording.

Business Support will record the compliment, inform the relevant Head of Service and individual concerned (if not already completed), and assess on a case-by-case basis if a response is to be sent to the sender.

Compliments Procedure

1. Compliment is received into the Business Support Team. Compliments do not have to be made in writing, however if received verbally, as much information as possible should be captured and sent to the Business Support Team by email.
2. The compliment will be recorded by a member of the Business Support Team.
3. A response may be sent to the compliment received, which will be assessed on a case by case basis.
4. The compliment will be sent to the individual/team concerned, copying their line manager.

The Business Support Team will retain compliment files for 3 years. Records may be retained for a further period if they have on-going business value or if there is specific legislation which requires the information to be held for a further period.

Policy and Procedure Review

This policy will be reviewed within 2 years of its publication date or when required by a change in circumstances.