

# Grant Palmer Limited

## Complaints Policy



## Handling complaints well

Grant Palmer is committed to providing a quality service that meets the needs and expectations of its customers.

Managing complaints well when things go wrong is central to improving our services and the image of Grant Palmer in the customers' eyes. How we deal with our customers and their complaints, and how we learn from their experiences says a lot about our organisation.

The proper handling of complaints is not solely the responsibility of the Customer Services section. Everyone in the organisation needs to contribute to:

Handling complaints effectively  
Learning the lessons from them  
Improving performance

For the customer there are three things that matter if there is a problem or if something goes wrong:

*Where do I complain?*

*How do I complain?*

*How seriously will my complaint be taken and dealt with?*

This policy outlines Grant Palmer's commitment to managing complaints well through a complaints system that is:

**Easy to access**

**Speedy**

**Confidential**

**Informative**

**Simple**

**Fair**

**Effective**

**Monitored and audited**

This system is supported by detailed procedures and trained staff.

### **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction.

If the person contacting us thinks it is a complaint then it is, whatever we may think.

Someone may also make a comment about part of our service that we could improve and not call it a complaint. This comment is equally important and will be listened to, recorded and used, where possible, to improve service quality.

A complaint or comment may be about service delivery or policy. We must tell customers who want to complain about services and/or policy how to go about it.

### **Why get complaints handling right?**

Information from complainants is free feedback about our services.

Handling complaints properly shows how important customer care is to Grant Palmer. It shows that we:

*actively listen to our customers*

*learn from our mistakes*

*are continually trying to improve our services*

## **The Complaints Policy**

### **Making it easy**

Our complaints system must be easy to access and well advertised. There is little point in having a system if no one knows what it is or how to use it. People need to know how to complain and to feel it is worthwhile.

People will only complain if they feel that we listen to their complaints and act on them. Grant Palmer's policy is to tell customers clearly that:

- ◆ We welcome complaints
- ◆ We will investigate all complaints thoroughly and fairly
- ◆ Wherever possible, we will find an appropriate solution

- ◆ We will use information from complaints to improve our services

To achieve the above:

### **We tell customers how to complain**

We aim to tell all customers and potential customers how to complain by giving names and contact details of who to contact with any complaint.

### **We tell customers what they need to know**

Customers need to know the standards they can expect from Grant Palmer. If people do not understand what our service offers, they will not complain.

### **We tell customers what results to expect**

We will explain to customers how their problem will be sorted out. Whenever possible, this solution will be based on what the complainant wants.

### **Making it accessible**

Our complaints system welcomes complaints from people with physical, sensory or learning disabilities and from anyone whose first language is not English or from people who have a reading difficulty or cannot read at all.

Our complaints procedures take into account our responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), which deals with disabled people's access to goods, facilities and services.

### **Removing barriers to complaining**

We will tell people that they can ask a friend or relative to help them with a complaint, or even make it for them, and that this will not affect the way we deal with their complaint.

People may also not complain if they fear the organisation or staff will discriminate against them in future. We will make clear to customers that they will not suffer as a result of any complaint and ensure monitor

### **Speedy**

Grant Palmer's complaints policy emphasises the need to deal with complaints within **10** working days. It is important, therefore, that customers are informed about the different stages of the complaints process and what they can do if they

are still not satisfied with the reply. The two main stages of this complaints process are:

- ◆ An on-the-spot reply ('informal')
- ◆ Investigation and reply

**It is important to keep customers informed of what is happening to their complaint. To keep them fully informed they will receive:**

- ◆ Confirmation that the complaint has been received
- ◆ A full reply to their complaint
- ◆ Updates if a full reply cannot be given on time

### **Confidential**

Grant Palmer's Complaints Policy ensures confidentiality so that:

- ◆ Customers are not discouraged from making complaints
- ◆ Accusations against staff are known only by those staff and others investigating the complaint

Managers, however, will not use the need for confidentiality to avoid drawing up and publishing information about complaints. Similarly, we will be positive in responding to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.

### **Informative and simple**

Grant Palmer's Policy in replying to complainants, is that replies will:

- ◆ Aim to answer all points of concern
- ◆ Be factually correct
- ◆ Avoid jargon
- ◆ Contain full contact details
- ◆ Tell the person what to do next if they are still not satisfied
- ◆ Be signed by the person who will address any further queries raised by the same customer on the particular area.

## **Fair**

We will ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly. The policy is that the procedures for investigating complaints are:

- ◆ Open, advertised and understood by all those involved in the complaint
- ◆ Fair, not biased towards anyone involved
- ◆ Thorough, involving finding out the relevant facts, talking to everyone involved, and checking details where possible
- ◆ Consistent, treating people in similar circumstances in similar ways. Everyone involved should be equally informed of the decisions reached

This policy also ensures that staff are treated fairly if a complaint is made against them.

Within this context, however, the complaints procedures are separate from any disciplinary procedures. There may be times when a complaint does lead to disciplinary action but, as a general rule, complaints will be handled under their own procedures.

## **Effective**

There are two main reasons for having a complaints policy. These are a) to provide guidelines for remedies for customers and b) to improve services. To provide remedies for customers we will:

- ◆ Give customers the information they need to identify services that are below standard
- ◆ Offer a suitable remedy
- ◆ Ensure that staff are aware of the options for remedies
- ◆ Try to make sure the remedy is, where possible, what people want
- ◆ Recognise that most people want to prevent the same thing happening to themselves again and to others
- ◆ Both staff and customers will be informed of what actions are available for finding a satisfactory outcome to a complaint. These options include, at least:
  - ◆ An explanation

- ◆ An assurance that the same thing won't happen again (if practical)
- ◆ Details on what actions will be taken if relevant
- ◆ Appropriate redress (e.g. an apology, a refund, a goodwill gesture, etc.)

While Customer Services' staff are empowered to provide the appropriate redress, Grant Palmer does not regard this as an alternative to putting things right. To ensure that the complaints procedures are effective in improving our services these are designed to:

- ◆ Provide a clear picture of customers' views of the service and the improvements they want
- ◆ Record complaints consistently and in detail and provide data for analysis of results
- ◆ Channel the information to those who can take action to prevent problems happening again
- ◆ Give feedback to customers who complain, other potential users and staff on what action has been taken

To be effective, staff will be trained in having the right attitudes to handling complaints. This involves:

- ◆ Actively listening to people who have a complaint
- ◆ Recognising that handling complaints is an important part of customer care and of each member of staff's job
- ◆ Understanding the benefits of handling complaints well and the results of handling them badly
- ◆ Welcoming complaints as an opportunity to put things right for customers and to improve services

### **Monitored and audited**

To achieve the required effectiveness of this complaints policy, systems have been established to record complaints information in a form that is:

- ◆ Consistent and detailed, covering all formal complaints and as many as possible of the complaints handled informally

- ◆ Simple and practical
- ◆ Useful, allowing Grant Palmer to monitor and respond to complaints, and highlighting areas where services appear to be failing.

It is our policy for this information to be passed regularly to senior managers.

- ◆ We take complaints seriously and that it is worth making a complaint
- ◆ We have made improvements as a result of complaints

## **Redress**

As part of valuing customers and customer feedback we will seek to provide appropriate redress when things go wrong because of a failure on the part of Grant Palmer. This may be in the form of postal orders, a cheque or weekly tickets. We cannot be held responsible for consequential loss or where disruption has been caused beyond our control.

## **Contact Details**

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