

Wexford County Council.



Customer Complaints Procedure. August, 2015.

Introduction:

The Ombudsman's Office expects that Public Bodies have well developed complaints handling procedures in place so that, where any faults are identified, a Public Body will move swiftly to make good its mistake and take the appropriate action to ensure that such mistakes do not recur.

Wexford County Council, as part of its commitment to customer service, shares this expectation and has established the following procedure to ensure that Customer Complaints are fully investigated to establish their validity and to process them effectively and consistently in order to reach a reasonable conclusion in the matter. It is also committed to carrying out remedial actions to avoid the reoccurrence of complaints.

Complaints Flow Chart with Appendix:

The procedure includes a Flow Chart and Appendix for ease of reference and guidance and are integral to this protocol.

Complaints Types:

Customer Complaints may relate to actions taken by staff or in respect of services adversely affecting a person. Customers may consider that such actions have been taken without proper authority, on irrelevant grounds or other reasons as set out in Section 4 of the Ombudsman's Act, 1980, or, where the person making the complaint believes the service or behaviour of staff is less than what that customer may expect.

Current Complaints Systems:

This procedure is not a substitute for complaints and appeals procedures currently in place within the Council for cases such as charges, MARP etc. but should the Ombudsman's Office become involved in such cases that correspondence should be handled by the FOI Office.

How Complaints are to be Handled:

1. Verbal complaints made directly to Line Supervisors / Section Heads, whether about a staff member or service, should be handled at that level. If finalised to the satisfaction of all parties no further action is required.

If unresolved the complainant should be advised to submit a written complaint to the FOI Office setting out the details of the complaint.

2. Written complaints should in all cases be referred directly to the FOI Office.
3. On receipt the FOI Office will acknowledge the complaint within 2 to 3 working days and log and forward it to the relevant Director of Service, who will forward it to the Section Head for investigation and to the Council's Solicitor where appropriate if legal action is threatened.
4. The Section Head may, if the complaint is about a staff member, discuss the matter with Human Resources. The Head will give a copy of the complaint to the staff member and request their report on the matter.

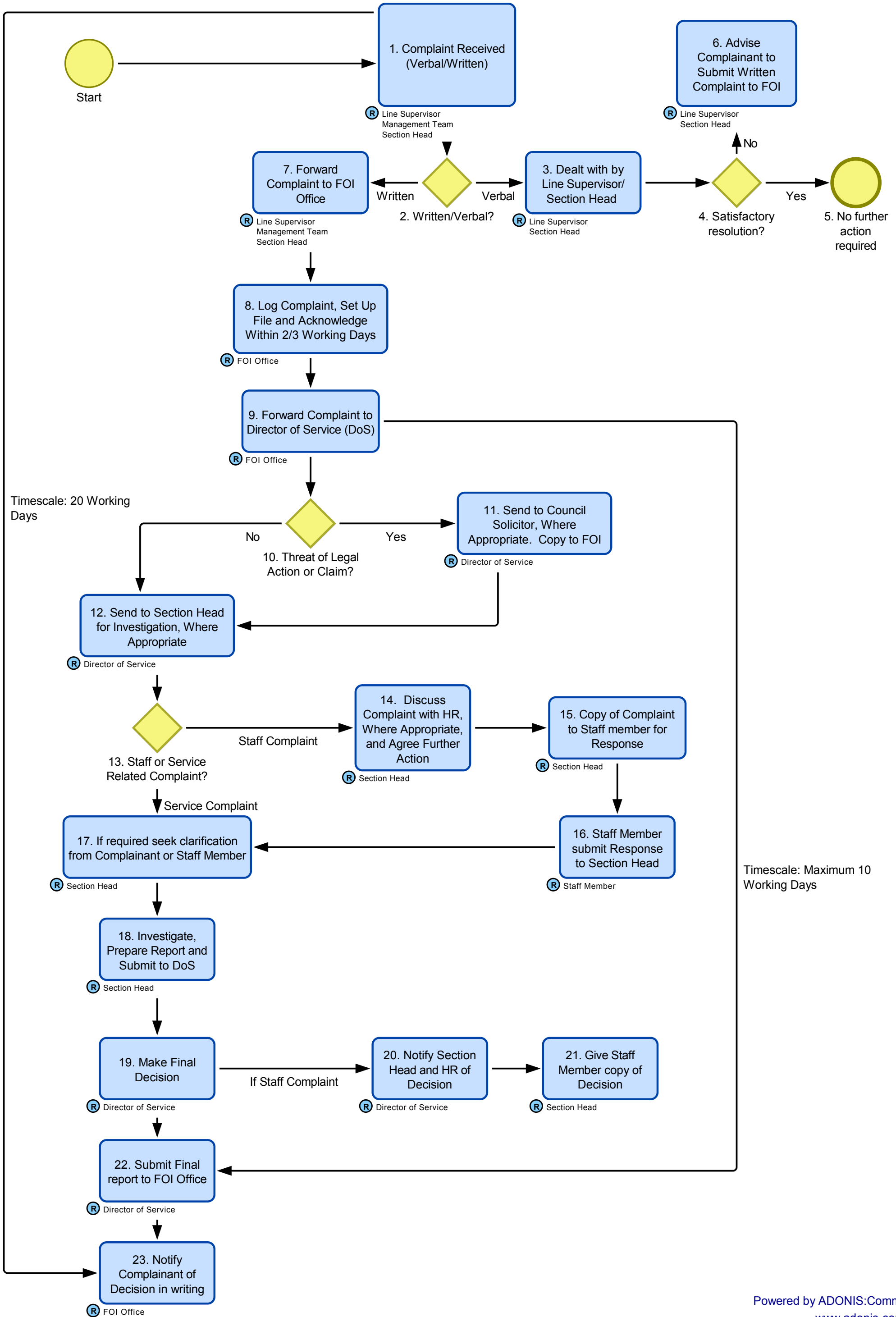
2.

5. The Section Head will investigate and if needed may seek further clarification from the complainant or staff member as needed. Thereafter, he shall prepare and present a report to the Director of Service who will make a final decision on the complaint.
6. Following the final decision on the matter the staff member will be notified of it by the Section Head as will the complainant by the FOI Office.
7. The notification to the complainant will state:
 - a. Whether there is validity in the complaint,
 - b. What actions are being taken to ensure there is no re - occurrence of valid complaints, and
 - c. Giving the option of seeking an investigation by the Ombudsman.
8. Should the complainant refer the complaint to the Ombudsman's Office the FOI Office will acknowledge receipt, log and forward the request to the Director of Service as in step 3 above.
9. In order to ensure consistency in handling complaints the following time frames apply:

From Receipt of Verbal Complaint to Satisfactory Resolution:	3 Days.
From Receipt of Logged Complaint by DoS to Decision back to FoI:	10 Days.
From Receipt of Complaint to Issue of Decision to Complainant:	20 Days.
10. A quarterly report will issue to Management Team showing complaint details, dates, actions taken, etc. Where more serious complaints are made they will be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive immediately.

ends.

Customer Complaint Procedure - As Adopted by Management Team, Aug 2015



<u>Task Box No.</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	
1	Complaint Received:	Can be Verbal or Written and Made to to Section Head, Line Supervisor DoS, HoF, Co. Secretary.	
2	All written Complaints to be: Forwarded to FOI Office.	See Task Box 7.	
3	If Verbal Complaint:	Section Head or Line Supervisor to Handle it.	
4	Is Verbal Resolved Satisfactorily?	Yes.	TB 5
5		No Further Action Needed.	
6	Is Verbal Resolved Satisfactorily?	No. Section Head / Line Supervisor to advise Complainant to Submit Complaint in Writing To FOI Office.	TB 6
7	Written Complaints.	All to be Forwarded to FOI Office.	TB 7
8		for Logging & Acknowledging. Time Frame: 2 - 3 Days.	TB 8
9	FOI to Forward Complaint to DoS.		TB 9
10	DoS to Examine Complaint to see if Threat of Legal Action Exists.		TB 10
11	If Threat Exists: DoS to send it to Solicitors.	Copy to Fol.	TB 11
12	If No Threat Exists: Dos to Send it to Section Head.	Copy to Fol.	TB 12
13	Complaint Relates to a Staff Member or Service.		TB 13
13	Staff Complaint.		
14	"do"	Section Head May Discuss with HR &	TB 14
15		give a Copy to Staff for Response.	TB 15
16	"do"	Staff Member to give Response to Section Head.	TB 16

17	"do"	Clarification May be Sought by Section Head or Staff Member.	TB 17
18	"do"	Section Head to Investigate and Report To DoS / HoF.	TB 18
19	"do"	Final Decision by DoS:	TB 19
20	"do"	Advise Section Head and HR.	TB 20
21	"do"	Section Head to Advise Staff Member of Decision.	TB 21
N.B.		Staff Member May Avail of Appeals / Grievance Procedures	
22	"do"	DoS to Send Final Report to FOI: For Confidential Filing and to	TB 22
23	"do"	Notify Complainant of Decision.	TB 23
13	Service Complaint.		
17	"do"	Section Head May Seek Clarification from Complainant.	TB 17
18	"do"	Section Head to Investigate and Report To DoS / HoF.	TB 18
19	"do"	Final Decision by DoS:	TB 19
22	"do"	DoS to Send Final Report to FOI: For Confidential Filing and to	TB 22
23	"do"	Notify Complainant of Decision.	TB 23

TIME FRAMES:

From Receipt of Verbal Complaint to Satisfactory Resolution.	3 Working Days.	TB 1 to 5
From Receipt of Logged Complaint by DoS to Decision Back to FoI.	10 Working Days Max.	TB 9 to 22
From Receipt of Complaint to Issue of Decision to Complainant.	20 Working Days.	TB 1 to 23.

ends.