

# Compliments and Complaints Policy

*Waitaki District Council (WDC) is committed to being accessible and responsive to all customers who approach our offices/sites for assistance and/or with a complaint.*

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Council's policy is intended to give assurance and guidance to both employees and public as to how feedback about Council employees and/or processes will be dealt with, ensuring all current and potential complaints are dealt with equitably and fairly.

## 2. In Scope

- 2.1. Council employees, contractors, volunteers and interns.

## 3. Out of Scope

- 3.1. Elected members. Elected members are covered under the Elected Members Code of Conduct Policy.
- 3.2. Complaints by internal staff about internal staff. It is expected internal matters between staff are discussed with your Manager or Human Resources.
- 3.3. This Policy does not apply to solicited feedback from customers i.e. service surveys.

## 4. Background

- 4.1. Council is committed to being accessible and responsive to all customers who approach our offices/sites for assistance and/or with a complaint. This Policy recognises the need for council employees and the public to have a transparent, robust policy which outlines how feedback is dealt with.

## 5. Key Definitions

- 5.1. **Allegation** - An allegation is an informal suggestion that an incident has occurred. It would generally be made by a person not directly affected, or an informal comment from the affected

party that has given no indication they want their concerns followed up. An allegation would need to be validated with the person directly affected to be recorded as a complaint.

5.2. **Complaint** – A complaint is when a customer informs the Council either verbally or in writing, that they are not happy with the:

- Standard of service they have received
  - Failure of the Council to do something they are required to by law or that they have agreed to do
- Way they have been treated.

If a potential complaint is resolved at the first point of contact then this is not regarded as a 'complaint' but as a business as usual enquiry or discussion and does not need to be recorded.

5.3. **Compliment** - A compliment is when a customer informs the Council either verbally or in writing that they are pleased with the level or standard of service that they have received or the way in which they have been treated by staff.

5.4. **Request** – A request is where a Council employee or the public has identified a need for action. For example, reporting a pot hole in the road or rubbish dumped on Council property.

5.5. All employees should note that WDC has a zero-tolerance policy towards any harm, abuse or threats directed towards them. Any conduct of this kind will be dealt with under this policy, and in accordance with our duty of care and occupational health and safety responsibilities.

## 6. Policy

### 6.1. Types of Complaint

There are two main types of complaints; against

- 1: Council processes
- 2: Council employees.

Often what may appear to be a personal complaint against a Council employee may be a complaint against a process that has frustrated the customer but has been legitimately executed by the Council employee. A personal complaint is a complaint against the way the officer conducted themselves in the execution of their role.

### 6.2. Seriousness of complaints

The Group Manager of the Team concerned or delegated officer will prioritise the complaint as Extreme, High, Medium, Low or Minor depending on the risk to Council and the seriousness, impact and complexity of the complaint.

- Extreme – Include major financial impact, insurmountable loss of community confidence or Court proceedings or criminal action for breach or non-compliance.
- High – Significant financial impact. Loss of community confidence requiring significant time to remedy. Significant breach or non-compliance or multiple breaches or non-compliances resulting in Regulatory action and/or restrictions on Council activities.

- Medium – Possible financial impact. Short-term and manageable loss of community confidence. Multiple related minor non-compliances due to an underlying systemic issue. Significant breach of non-compliance resulting in Regulatory scrutiny.
- Low – No financial impact. Short term loss of confidence among small sections of the community. One off minor Regulatory or legislative non-compliance with no direct impact on the community.
- Minor – No financial impact. Negative feedback from individuals. One off minor regulatory or legislative non-compliance with no direct impact on the community.

### 6.3. Confidentiality

Identifying details of the complaint will be kept confidential. The receiver of the complaint is encouraged to advise the complainant of this policy and procedure for dealing with the matter, but no opinions or solutions are to be offered to them.

### 6.4. Process for Allegations

If an allegation is of significant concern, the manager of the team concerned will validate it with the person directly affected and if necessary the allegation can be escalated to a complaint and recorded accordingly.

### 6.5. Process for Requests

A request is lodged in the council wide Compliments and Complaints Register and allocated to the appropriate business unit for action.

### 6.6. Process for Complaints about a staff member

If a complaint about a staff member highlights a professional or personal concern about an employee after investigation by the team manager, the Group Manager and Human Resources are advised. This complaint will be dealt with through the performance review or disciplinary process.

### 6.7. Process for Formal Complaints

All feedback is recorded in the council wide Compliments and Complaints Register and will be acknowledged within three working days. The expected timeframe for resolution is within ten working days.

6.8. All complaints received will have a quality call to assess if the complainant is satisfied with the outcome of the investigation. This information will be confidential and used to improve the Councils complaint process.

## 7. Appeals

- 7.1. If the complainant is dissatisfied with any explanation or action taken to resolve their complaint, they may request that a review be undertaken. All appeals will be acknowledged within 3 working days and responded to within 10 working days.
- Such review letters will be signed by a group manager, or if necessary the Chief Executive, to make it clear to the complainant the matter has been given high priority. The letter will include a statement and explanation about how further communications relating to their complaint will be dealt with – i.e. “further correspondence about this issue will be read and filed without acknowledgement, unless the organisation decides it requires further action”.
- The review letter to the complainant should also contain advice on their rights of legal redress and their ability to elevate the complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman or to a Court. For more information on alternative dispute resolution, see: <http://www.fairwayresolution.com/our-services/services-for-local-government>.
- 7.2. For complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman the complainant needs to set out the action, decision or conduct that they want to complain about, provide relevant background details, and the steps they've taken to try and resolve the matter. They will need to include copies of any correspondence with the Council. If they need advice on how to make a complaint to the Ombudsman, they can phone them on 0800 802 602 or email them on [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

## 8. Related Documents

- 8.1. Compliments and Complaints Guidelines
- 8.2. Compliments and Complaints Register
- 8.3. Compliments and Complaints Promapp
- 8.4. Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy
- 8.5. Health and Safety Policy
- 8.6. Staff Stress Policy
- 8.7. Unreasonable Complainant Policy
- 8.8. Vulnerable Children Policy

## 9. Related Legislation

- 9.1. Health and Safety Work Act 2015

<b>Policy Owner</b>	People and Culture GM	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Policy Contact</b>	Lisa Baillie	<b>Last Reviewed By</b>	Lichelle Guyan
<b>Approved By</b>	Executive Management Team	<b>Last Reviewed Date</b>	New
<b>Approved Date</b>	12/6/19	<b>Date of Next Review</b>	March 2020 then biannually