

**Standard operating procedure for handling complaints**

**1. Aim**

- 1.1. Corporate correspondence (CC) receives complaints by email, letter and fax. To be able to reply to complaints, CC needs comments about the test or examiner in question from the test centre where the incident happened. CC wants to ensure it involves the correct people in drawing together an accurate and timely response to a complaint to ensure it achieves the correct outcome with the response to the complaint.

**2. Objective**

- 2.1. The initial objective is to ensure that everyone involved in the complaints handling process understands the correct procedure and works to it. The wider objective is to understand what drives our complaints and to ensure that we deal quickly and efficiently with any underlying problems to ensure we offer the best level of service and keep complaints to a minimum.

**3. Ownership of procedures**

- 3.1. CC owns and will maintain these procedures and update them as and when necessary.

**4. Frequency**

- 4.1. These procedures will apply on a daily basis when dealing with complaints at all stages of the complaints process.

**5. Procedural information**

- 5.1. There is not an automatic assumption that a complaint is justified or that the examiner is at fault. But we do need to make sure we have taken into account the views of the complainant, the examiner who conducted the test and any other relevant people. When CC receives a complaint about a driving examiner (DE), it sends the complaint to the test centre manager (TCM) for comment, copying the sector manager (SM) into that email for information. It is for the TCM to decide at that stage how to compile a response to the complaint and whether to involve the DE at that stage, but the default position should be to involve the DE from the outset unless there is good reason not to, to ensure the DE being complained about has the chance to have his or her say. It is preferable, where possible, for the person being complained about to be included so that he or she feels supported and valued.
- 5.2. The purpose of informing the SM of a complaint about a DE is to ensure that requests for information about complaints are not overlooked if the TCM is on leave. It is also to help the SM manage his or her sector.
- 5.3. CC will send with the complaint a pro forma (Annex A) for the TCM to complete. The proforma will set out the main points to which a response is sought, but the TCM is free to provide further comment if he or she feels that would be helpful. The TCM should complete the complaint response pro forma (seeking DE input as appropriate) within CC's timescale and send it back to CC. The TCM must copy to the SM and the DE the response email he or she sends back to CC.
- 5.4. CC will draft a response to the complaint based on the response received from the TCM. CC will send the response to the complainant and at the same time, blind copy the DE, the TCM and the SM into the reply. If CC allows a free test or

a gesture of goodwill that is not necessarily a criticism of the DE. CC is content to explain, on request, why it has made a gesture of goodwill or given a free test.

- 5.5. If any DE receives three complaints in any rolling 12 month period, the TCM must arrange a one-to-one meeting with the DE to review the complaints. There is no automatic assumption that there is an underlying problem (complaints could be malicious, for instance) but a one-to-one is necessary to ensure not only to address any possible issues the TCM has identified through the complaints, but also to protect the DE. The SM will not be involved in the one-to-one, but will be aware it has been triggered and will be informed of its outcome and any recommendations the TCM has made. The TCM will deal with any conduct issues in line with the DSA staff handbook. If the TCM judges development is required, he or she is encouraged to consider using the coaching services of the Operational Development Team, but the full range of development opportunities should remain within scope.
- 5.6. If a complaint is received direct at the test centre, the TCM or officer in charge must send it to CC in Newcastle for action. TCMs must not reply direct to complaints received at the test centre.
- 5.7. Where the TCM or a more senior examiner conducted the test or has been complained about, these procedures will apply but each action in the process will move to the next person in the line management chain as appropriate.

## **6. Outputs/deliverables arising from procedures**

- 6.1. TCMs must keep copies of complaints electronically for two years for audit purposes. They must also complete the complaints summary log on a monthly basis, which is available in the Document Library on Dashboard. TCMs are responsible for disposing of electronic complaints records after two years.
- 6.2. CC will compile and send out to each SM a monthly report from Respond<sup>1</sup> of all the complaints received during that month for his or her sector. Although SMs are copied into complaints as they come in, the report will give an overview of complaints and categories of complaints received during the month. A SM may ask CC to produce other reports or ad hoc information to help them manage complaints in his or her sector. Again, SMs need to handle and process data in line with the agency's data retention policy and ensure that they dispose of complaints or reports after two years.

## **7. Validation of outputs**

- 7.1. CC will ensure as far as possible that the statistical information it provides about complaints in each sector is accurate. Each SM will need to verify the information.

## **8. Interpretation of outputs**

- 8.1. Once an SM is content that the information they have is accurate, it is for him or her to decide how to use that information to manage his or her sector.

## **9. Risk**

- 9.1. The risk of not applying this procedure is that SMs would not be sighted about the level of complaints in their sectors and would be unaware of any underlying problems. Poor customer service could result and DSA's reputation could be compromised.

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<sup>1</sup> The Agency's correspondence handling system

Not protectively marked

## **10. Training**

- 10.1. CC staff will be trained to follow this procedure before it is introduced officially.  
Field staff will also be trained before its introduction.

## **11. Related topics**

- 11.1. SOPs on handling and reporting of correspondence.