

## **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

Ross and Roberts treat complaints very seriously; therefore we investigate them thoroughly and promptly. This ensures the correct outcome and prevents a relatively minor complaint from becoming a serious one. Our Company Directors are kept fully informed of complaints received and are involved in the process throughout.

### **Complaints Procedure**

We have a three stage process, mirroring that of most local authorities, whereby if the complainant is dissatisfied with the result of the investigation into their complaint, the complaint will be passed to an appropriate senior manager and ultimately a Company Director for resolution.

#### **TELEPHONE COMPLAINTS:**

The initial telephone contact will be with the customer service operator. In instances where the customer service operator is unable to deal with the matter, the complainant will be passed to the Office Supervisor or Manager. Where the complaint cannot be resolved during the telephone conversation, the complainant will be asked to put their complaint in writing for further investigation.

At all times the complainant will be given the opportunity to speak to the Client Manager should they wish to.

All complaints, however received, will then follow the procedures detailed below:

#### **WRITTEN COMPLAINTS:**

Complaints may be made

- by letter via the post
- by email
- by fax
- in person
- through our website.

The complaint will be registered and allocated the next sequential complaint number.

An initial acknowledgement letter will be issued within two working days informing the complainant that an investigation will take place and that a formal response to the complaint will be sent within the next five working days. As a company we wish to ensure that any investigation is conducted as thoroughly as possible, and therefore some complaints of a serious nature may take a little longer for a full investigation to take place. If we need more time to answer the complaint we will keep the customer advised as to how long it will take.

If the complaint is being dealt with by a **Councillor or MP**, a formal response will be sent within 48 hours.

All replies to complaints are unique bespoke letters created for each complaint as it is received and the contents of our reply will depend on the nature of the complaint and result of our investigation into it.

### **Stage 1**

The investigating officer will research and consider the complaint, collecting all relevant information and data and draft a response. Within three working days, the complainant's letter, supporting information and proposed reply will be forwarded to the Compliance Officer for verification and for the response to be sent.

If, after due consideration and in the opinion of the Complaints Officer, the complaint is warranted or of a serious nature, the complaint will be passed to a Company Director/Managing Director for resolution.

### **Stage 2**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the result of the investigation into their complaint, the complaint will be re-investigated by the Compliance Manager, who will scrutinise the initial investigation and decision and has the authority to overturn it if necessary. A response will be sent within 5 days of receipt of the complaint.

### **Stage 3**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complaint will be passed to an appropriate Company Director for resolution. The nature of the complaint will determine which Director conducts the further investigation.

Complaints referred by the Council will enter the process at stage 3, and will be investigated by a senior manager who will discuss the case with either the External Operations Director or Internal Operations Director, as appropriate. The Director will approve the decision and content of the reply before it is sent.

### **After Stage 3**

If, after their complaint has gone through the 3 stages of our process, the Complainant is still not satisfied, they may contact the Civil Enforcement Association (CIVEA). Our stage 3 reply letter will explain how this can be done. Being a member of CIVEA, we comply with their code of practice and the complaints procedures they offer enables a further investigation into the matter. The complainant will therefore have access to a review of their case which is independent of Ross & Roberts. The independent panel's review decision is binding on Ross & Roberts.

## **Recording and monitoring of complaints**

Once a complaint has been dealt with, the case notes and letters are filed in sequential number order and a note is placed on the account file. Each case is assessed and a central record is made to identify whether the complaint was founded or not and what corrective action was required as follows:

- Complaint not founded - No Action,
- Complaint founded – Training and Development needed,
- Complaint founded – Serious Breach and Disciplinary action taken

Complaint statistics are presented to the Management Team each month and details are periodically required by CIVEA.

## **Complaints made to an Enforcement Agent**

All Enforcement Agents are given training on how to deal with complaints during their induction period when they first join the company. How they deal with the situation will depend on the complaint being made and against whom. At all times the Enforcement Agent will endeavour to try and resolve the complaint in the best and appropriate manner.

## **Complaints made to third parties**

Ross & Roberts will respond to complaints raised by Councillors or MP's within 48 hours providing authorisation has been given by the debtor to enable us to divulge details of their case. We will keep the Council fully informed where third party contact has been made. We are happy to discuss with and advise the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or similar organisations where the Council are happy for us to do so and again with the appropriate authorisation from the debtor.

## **Customer Survey Questionnaires**

Although no one likes to receive complaints we do feel that customers who complain can be used as a positive and help us by identifying weak areas in our process and assist us to develop in the right way.

As part of our monitoring process and to help us learn from the Enforcement Agent/customer experience, we send out questionnaire (survey) forms to debtors, asking them for details on such things as the Agent's manner, appearance and whether a payment was made by them and receipt given. All responses are monitored and should any follow up or remedial action be necessary, this will be taken up with the staff member concerned.

Our website also has a "Public Feedback Questionnaire" for debtors to complete and we also have a separate questionnaire for our Clients to use.