



## **Complaints Policy**

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Approved by:	Steve Thomas
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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 It is important to us that our customers value the WLGA and the services we provide.
- 1.2 In providing our services we aim to:
  - a. Deal with you courteously, efficiently and promptly.
  - b. Provide you with appropriate advice and information.
  - c. Deliver in line with your requirements and expectations.
  - d. Keep you informed.
  - e. If we are not able to provide what you want, explain why.
- 1.3 We recognise that feedback, in the form of compliments or complaints, can help us continue to improve the services we provide.

## **2. Definition of a complaint**

- 2.1 We have defined a complaint as being 'an expression of dissatisfaction (whether written or spoken) by an individual or group of people about any aspect of WLGA services'.
- 2.2 The above definition would include:
  - a. Failure to provide a service which the WLGA is required to or has decided to deliver;
  - b. Neglect or delay in responding to a request within specified timescales;
  - c. Failure to follow agreed WLGA policies, rules or procedures;
  - d. The unhelpful attitude of an employee; and
  - e. Malice, bias or discrimination.
- 2.3 However, you cannot use this procedure to complain about our decisions on requests for access to information made under data protection or freedom of information legislation.
- 2.4 The WLGA is required to comply with specific standards around the Welsh language. Specific information relating to these standards and how to complain if you think the Association hasn't done what it should have done in relation to the standards is included in **Annex 1** to this policy.

### **What is not a complaint?**

- 2.5 Whilst the following are important, we do not consider these to be 'complaints' for the purposes of this policy. That said, they will be welcomed and responded to appropriately outside of this policy.
  - a. A first request for information on services or an explanation of the WLGA's services or policies or a decision;

- b. Representations about the merits of or disagreements with the WLGA's policy decisions;
- c. A comment e.g. compliments or suggestions as to how services could be improved; views, perhaps adverse, about the WLGA's stated policy or provision);
- d. Concern about matters that are not the responsibility of the WLGA;
- e. Items already subject to investigation by the WLGA's Management Sub Committee or internal audit investigation;
- f. Allegations of financial impropriety, fraud and/or corruption, which will be dealt with via the WLGA's Fraud Policy; and
- g. Issues that are, or might be subject of a criminal or civil proceeding.

### **3. Who can complain?**

- 3.1 Anyone receiving or seeking a service from the WLGA is welcome to complain under this policy.
- 3.2 We welcome complaints in Welsh and English and will treat these equally.
- 3.3 All complainants will be treated fairly and without prejudice, irrespective of the background, language needs and circumstances of the person making the complaint. This does mean that we will need to ask relevant questions to ensure that there is no discrimination occurring in our complaints process, but you need only answer the questions if you wish to do so, all we ask is that you understand that we have to ask them.
- 3.4 We aim to ensure that no-one is excluded from the complaints procedure because of any difficulties they may have in representing themselves. Wherever possible we will point people in the direction of suitable assistance to make their complaint. This may include advice and/or advocacy.

### **4. The complaints process**

#### **Stage 1: Informal resolution**

- 4.1 If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you're dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.
- 4.2 Complainants may wish their complaint to be 'fast tracked' straight through to internal investigation (Stage 2). This may particularly be so if there have been disagreements with staff directly responsible delivering the service.

#### **Stage 2: Internal Investigation**

- 4.3 If you are unhappy about the service we have provided, please tell us. You can do this either:
- in writing (by letter or e-mail); or
  - by telephone.
- 4.4 You may also ask to discuss your complaint in private.
- 4.5 We will formally acknowledge your concern within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- 4.6 Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 6 months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns when they are fresh in everyone's mind.
- 4.7 Your complaint will be investigated and we will respond to you directly within 20 working days. We will respond in writing explaining what we have done, what we have found and what we will do as a result of your complaint. In some exceptional circumstances we may require an extension of time to investigate fully and should this be the case we will let you know within that 20 working day period.
- 4.8 We will also explain what to do if you are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, including details of who to contact should you wish to take the matter further.
- 4.9 If, following Stage 2 you feel that your complaint has still not been resolved, then the complaint will be passed to the WLGA's Management Sub Committee (or, if your complaint relates to our Welsh Language standards, the Welsh Language Commissioner) for consideration.
- 4.10 All complaints received and their resolution will be recorded for management and improvement purposes. Complaints and their resolution may be reported to the WLGA's Audit Committee and the WLGA Management Sub Committee.
- 4.11 All complaints relating to the Welsh language standards will be reported annually in our Annual Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

## **5. Staff training**

- 5.1 Staff have been provided with training in terms of both the standards under which we are under a duty to comply, what compliance means for our organisation, and what their individual role in that is.
- 5.2 Staff are familiar with the complaints procedure and how to deal with complaints appropriately.
- 5.3 Relevant staff will be kept informed of any complaint(s) received and will participate in investigations where necessary. They will be informed of the

outcome of complaint(s) and where necessary, and staff will be subject to further training if this is found to be an issue.

## **6. Review of the complaints policy**

6.1 This policy will be reviewed as part of a regular policy review programme.

6.2 The policy may, however, be revised immediately following:

- a. A change in working practices.
- b. A complaint relating to the policy which, following investigation, is upheld.

## **Contact details**

If you have any questions about our complaints policy, please telephone, email or write to us:

Welsh Local Government Association  
Local Government House  
Drake Walk  
Cardiff  
CF10 4LG

Phone: 029 2046 8600

Email: [enquiries@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@wlga.gov.uk)

[www.wlga.gov.uk](http://www.wlga.gov.uk)

## **Annex 1**

### **How to complain about our compliance with Welsh language standards**

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (the Measure) introduced sets of standards which certain organisations, including the WLGA, must adhere to.

We received a compliance notice in 2016 which detailed the standards which apply to us with imposition deadlines of either 30<sup>th</sup> March or 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 for each standard. A list of the standards that we are under a duty to comply with, along with information about how we will comply and how we will monitor this can be found in the 'About Us' section of our website ([www.wlga.wales](http://www.wlga.wales)), or is available from our offices.

From the imposition dates we have a legal duty to comply with the relevant standards and understand that failure to do so may result in complaints from the public and our customers and/or investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

If you want to complain about how we have responded to the relevant Welsh language standards, you can use our normal complaints policy.

You should tell us which standard(s) your complaint relates to. You should also explain how you feel we have not complied with the relevant standard(s). We will respond as detailed in our complaints policy.

We welcome complaints in Welsh or English and will respond in the language you choose. Your choice of language will not delay our response. Where necessary, we will arrange any necessary translation to enable you to complain in your chosen language.