

OFTEC Information Sheet

How to operate your own complaints process



Every business has to deal with situations where things go wrong from a customer's point of view. However, it has been shown that if you handle the complaint successfully, your customer is more likely to remain loyal and to recommend you to others. Accepting a complaint does not mean that you are admitting you are at fault, you are saying that you will investigate their concerns and get back to them.



Most complaints are a simple misunderstanding of the contract details and/or expectations of the customer. Take time to make sure your customer understands what is included in the contract and where the physical location of appliances etc. will be. If the contract requirements change whilst you are carrying out the works, take time to explain what this means and how it will be dealt with.

This information sheet is designed to help small enterprises establish an in-house complaints procedure for their business. If a complaint is made against you or your business, by using these guidelines, you will be able to demonstrate that you have taken appropriate steps to manage complaints effectively and to rectify the problem.

The steps set out below are some key points to help you achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency and to be able to respond in a professional manner.

1. Be open to complaints

This could be achieved by adding a simple paragraph to your final invoice such as:

"Your satisfaction with the work we carry out is very important to us. If you are dissatisfied with our work, please let us know... we would like to put it right"

Complaints should not be viewed negatively; they are your opportunity to explain your actions and to improve your services. People willing to complain are rare and may alert you to an ongoing

problem experienced by others who just chose to take their business elsewhere.

2. Records

Log and record complaints together with any subsequent information you may receive. This will help you deal with the complaint more efficiently and will provide evidence of actions taken should the complainant decide to escalate their concerns. An example log can be found overleaf.



3. Acknowledgement

Always acknowledge receipt of any complaint promptly. If you did not receive the complaint in person, send them a receipt by post, or e-mail. If you can, the personal approach of a telephone call may suffice and diffuse the situation before it gets out of control. It is a good idea to log both the time and date of all communications.

4. Assess the complaint

Make an assessment of the complaint for validity and possible impact. Is it a safety issue that needs immediate attention or can a timescale for rectification be negotiated with the complainant? Identify who would be the best person to deal with the complaint and give them all relevant information.

5. Resolution

Complaints should be handled courteously, sympathetically and swiftly. Try to resolve the complaint as soon as practically possible. If this is not possible and you need to make further investigations into the nature of the complaint to decide what your best course of action is, make sure you keep the complainant informed.

6. Information

Keep in contact with the complainant and inform them of what you propose to do to rectify their complaint. Don't let them think they are being ignored. Evaluate the customer's response - "is it likely the customer will be satisfied by your actions you offer?". If the answer is yes, act promptly to take the action that the complainant reasonably expects. Remember to bear in mind the best practice within your industry. OFTEC produces a range of Home Guides that may help you to explain to the customer why you have had to do something in a specific way.

7. Conclusion

When you have done all that is possible to resolve the complaint, let the customer know and record your findings. If at this stage the complaint is still not resolved, explain your decision to the customer and suggest any other possible alternatives available to them.

Finally, always review complaints you receive on a regular basis to check if you are getting a recurrence. If this is so then you may need to investigate additional/refresher training for staff, or you may need to change your processes and/or suppliers.

Sample complaints log

Complaint number	Date received	Received from	Receipt acknowledged	Details	Upheld (Yes or No)	Date closed	Any further action?
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

Example is for information only. We recommend adjusting the columns to allow sufficient space to complete the details required.