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**GROUNDWORK THAMES VALLEY  
CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE**

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**JANUARY 2005**

## **1. POLICY**

- 1.1 Groundwork Thames Valley welcomes and actively seeks feedback regarding our service and activities. If you feel you have been badly or unfairly treated, or that the service we have provided is below a satisfactory standard, please contact us using the procedure attached. Groundwork Thames Valley takes all complaints seriously and will work hard to ensure that the matter is resolved.
- 1.2 Any complaints with regard to the environmental impact of the Trust's activities will be dealt with promptly and effectively by the Manager for Environmental Business. Please contact us by using the procedure attached.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **2. STAGE ONE: Informal Complaint.**

- 2.1 If you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received a less than satisfactory standard of service, you should contact the member of staff who has been working with you and detail the nature of your complaint. Every effort will be made to resolve the matter as speedily as possible and to your satisfaction.
- 2.2 Every reasonable effort will be made for the response, whether oral or written, to be given within 10 working days of the receipt of your complaint.
- 2.3 A brief record of your complaint will be made on file (using the Customer Complaints Log – If the complaint was resolved). This constitutes a resolution of the complaint.
- 2.4 If you are still dissatisfied, you may proceed to Stage Two of the complaints procedure.

### **3. STAGE TWO: Formal Oral Complaint.**

- 3.1 If you are still dissatisfied, please ask to speak to your contact's line manager to discuss your complaint. The response, whether oral or written, should be within 10 working days of the receipt of your complaint.
- 3.2 A brief record will be made on your file (using the Customer Complaints Log) detailing how the complaint was resolved. This constitutes a resolution of the complaint.
- 3.3 If you are still dissatisfied, you may proceed to Stage Three of the Complaints Procedure.

### **4. STAGE THREE: Formal Written Complaint.**

- 4.1 If you feel your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may lodge a formal complaint in writing to :
- 4.2 Mick May, Executive Director, Groundwork Thames Valley, Colne Valley Park Centre, Denham Court Drive, Denham, Uxbridge, Middlesex. UB9 6PG
- 4.2 You will receive an acknowledgement within five working days that your complaint has been received and is being investigated. The Executive Director will work with you and the appropriate member of staff to resolve the complaint and agree action points. We will probably talk to you over the phone and arrange face-to-face meetings where necessary. Any agreed action points will be confirmed in writing to you.
- 4.3 A brief record will be made on the Customer Complaints Log of how the complaint was resolved. A copy of the log and any correspondence will be kept on file. This constitutes a resolution of the complaint.
- 4.4 If you are still dissatisfied, you may proceed to the final stage, Stage Four of the procedure.

### **5. STAGE FOUR: Complaints Panel.**

- 5.1 The final stage of this procedure is to lodge your complaint with a Complaints Panel drawn from the board of Groundwork Thames Valley. Board members of Groundwork Thames Valley are non-remunerated trustees of the organisation. They are therefore independent of the staff body.
- 5.2 We will ask you to lodge your complaint in writing and explain why you found our attempts to resolve the complaint at stage three unsatisfactory. Formal complaints can be made in writing to the Company Secretary at the address given in Stage Three.
- 5.3 You will receive an acknowledgement within five working days that your complaint has been received and is being investigated.
- 5.4 A complaints panel comprising of three board members and attended by the Executive Director and relevant line manager will meet at the earliest opportunity (within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint) and agree what action should be taken. A representative of this panel may contact you to gain further information or to invite you to attend the meeting if appropriate.
- 5.5 The panel's decision and agreed action will be communicated to you in writing within 5 working days of the meeting referred to above. If this is unlikely to be possible, you will receive a reason in writing for the delay within a 5 day period.
- 5.6 A brief record will be made on file (using the Customer Complaint Log) of how the matter was resolved.
- 5.7 This represents from the prospective of Groundwork Thames Valley the furthest we can reasonably be expected to take your complaint.

## **GENERAL**

Notwithstanding anything contained in sections 2,3,4, and 5, if the Project Officer or the HR & Office Manager takes the view that the complaint is of a sufficiently serious nature, the process above should be streamlined and discretion should be used to escalate the matter to the Executive Director.

## **APPENDIX 2: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF**

### **FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY.**

#### **Why should you care about Customer Service?**

- ✓ **YOUR CUSTOMER** is the most important person in your business.
- ✓ **YOUR CUSTOMER** is not an interruption of your work, they are the purpose of it.
- ✓ **YOUR CUSTOMER** has feelings and emotions, just as you do.
- ✓ **YOUR CUSTOMER** is not dependent on you – you are dependent on them.
- ✓ **YOUR CUSTOMER** deserves the most courteous & attentive treatment you can give.
- ✓ **YOUR CUSTOMER** is your family, friends, neighbours, co-workers etc.
- ✓ **YOUR CUSTOMER** keeps you in business and basically pays your wages.

#### **The laws of Superior Service**

- ✓ Initiate customer contact as soon as possible.
- ✓ Make every effort to learn about your company's goods and services.
- ✓ If you cannot answer customer questions, look up the answer or ask for help.
- ✓ Careful listening is essential to superior service. Be an effective listener.
- ✓ If in doubt, ask what a customer needs or wants, ask questions!
- ✓ Use positive statements. Don't tell the customer what they don't need to know.
- ✓ Keep an open mind when dealing with difficult customers. Never prejudge a customer in any way.
- ✓ Smile, make direct eye contact and speak in a sincere, friendly manner.
- ✓ Get to the point using clear language and explanations. Avoid using jargon/slang.
- ✓ Make your customers and their satisfaction your Number 1 priority.

#### **How to master the Art of Customer Service**

- ✓ Dress for success. Make your appearance professional.
- ✓ Take pride in serving your customers and in yourself.
- ✓ Radiate confidence. Have faith in your worth and your skills. Enjoy your successes and learn from your mistakes.
- ✓ Maintain your enthusiasm. Strive to remain positive in all situations.
- ✓ Care about the person you serve. Create a loyal clientele just by taking a genuine interest in people.
- ✓ Don't take rejection or a complaint from a customer personally.
- ✓ Continue to learn and improve your skills.

#### **Seven methods for defusing a difficult situation**

1. **LISTEN:** carefully and with interest.
2. **EMPATHISE:** put yourself in the customer's place. What service would you want?
3. **ASK QUESTIONS:** in a mature, non-threatening way that requires the customer to think about their answer.
4. **APOLOGISE:** on behalf of the company without blaming yourself, or another colleague/partner organisation etc.
5. **REPEAT:** the situation back to the customer to check that you have understood fully.
6. **SOLVE:** the problem by identifying solutions to satisfy the customer. Tell the customer what you **CAN DO**, not what you can't. If you cannot solve the situation, find someone who can.
7. **COMMUNICATE:** ensure the customer is fully informed throughout the process, including letting them know when the process is delayed.

**APPENDIX 3**

**Customer Complaint Log**

**Customer Details**

Name	
Address	
Telephone No.	
Project Title/ Reference No.	
Nature of Complaint	

**Stage One: Informal Complaint** (to be completed by the project contact within 10 working days)

Action Taken			
Signed		Date	

**Stage Two: Formal Oral Complaint** (to be completed by the Line Manager within 10 working days)

Action Taken			
Signed		Date	

**Stage Three: Formal Written Complaint** (to be completed by the Executive Director)

Written acknowledgement sent by:		Date	
Action Taken			
Signed		Date	

**Stage Four: Complaints Panel** (to be completed by the Company Secretary)

Written acknowledgement sent by:		Date	
Panel Member		Position	
Panel Member		Position	
Panel Member		Position	
Panel Member		Position	
Panel Member		Position	
Panel Member		Position	
Action Taken			
Signed		Date	

Please ensure that a copy of the completed Customer Complaint Log and all relevant documentation is sent to the HR & Office Manager for filing/monitoring.