

## 1. **SWFRS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

- 1.1 South Wales Fire & Rescue Service is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our services. We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we will put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you are entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we will apologise and, where possible, try to put things right for you. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.

## 2. **WHEN TO USE THIS PROCEDURE**

- 2.2 When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below.
- 2.3 This procedure does not apply to 'Freedom of Information' or data access issues. Please contact our Data Protection Officer at South Wales Fire & Rescue Service, Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, CF72 8LX or by emailing [dataprotection@southwales-fire.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@southwales-fire.gov.uk)

## 3. **INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

- 3.1 If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things straight away. If you have a concern, please raise it with the person that you are dealing with. They will try and resolve it for you there and then. If there are lessons to learn from addressing your concern, the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff cannot help, they will explain why, and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

## 4. **HOW TO EXPRESS CONCERN OR COMPLAIN FORMALLY**

- Ask for a copy of our M5 complaints form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern formally.
- Get in touch with our complaint contact point on 01443 232000 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- Email us at [swfs@southwales-fire.gov.uk](mailto:swfs@southwales-fire.gov.uk)
- Use the contact us form on our website at [www.southwales-fire.gov.uk/contact-us/](http://www.southwales-fire.gov.uk/contact-us/)
- Write to us at: Business Support Supervisor, Business Support Unit, South Wales Fire & Rescue Service, Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, CF72 8LX.
- To report a Business Fire Safety Concern please get in touch with our Business Fire Safety team on **01268 909408** if you want to make your complaint over the phone. Or complete the form on this link

<https://www.southwales-fire.gov.uk/your-safety-wellbeing/in-business/report-fire-safety-concern>

- 4.1 Copies of this policy and the M5 form are available in Welsh and English and available in large print.

## 5. **DEALING WITH YOUR CONCERN**

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within five working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
  - We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any requirements, for example, if you need documents in large type.
  - We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
  - We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.
- 5.1 Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 6 months. This is because it is better to investigate your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.
- 5.2 We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to explain why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.
- 5.3 If you are expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

## 6. **INVESTIGATION**

- 6.1 We will tell you who we have asked to investigate your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from the relevant service area to investigate it and respond to you. If it is more serious, we may pass the complaint to our Resolutions Team to investigate.
- 6.2 We will set out our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we are right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.
- 6.3 We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we will:
- Let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate.
  - Tell you how long we expect it to take.
  - Let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and

- Give you regular updates, include telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.
- 6.4 The person who is investigating your concerns will firstly aim to establish the facts. The extent of the investigation will depend upon how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.
- 6.5 In some instances, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.
- 6.6 We will look at relevant evidence. This could include information you have provided, our case files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies, any legal entitlement and guidance.

## **7. OUTCOME**

- 7.1 If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we find. If necessary, we will produce a report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.
- 7.2 If we find that we made a mistake, we will tell you what happened and why.
- 7.3 If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.
- 7.4 If we make a mistake, we will always apologise for it.

## **8. THE OMBUDSMAN**

- 8.1 If we fail in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can investigate your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:
- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the service provider.
  - Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.
- 8.2 The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:
- Phone: 0300 790 0203
  - Email: [ask@ombudsman.wales](mailto:ask@ombudsman.wales)

- The Website: [www.ombudsman.wales](http://www.ombudsman.wales)
- Writing to: Public Service Ombudsman for Wales  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae  
Pencoed  
CF35 5LJ

8.3 There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office deals with complaints about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

## 9. **LEARNING LESSONS**

9.1 We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. Our senior management team considers a summary of all complaints at least twice a year and is made aware of all serious complaints. The HR and Equalities Committee will receive a report biannually also considers our response to complaints biannually and will report to the Fire Authority at least once a year.

9.2 Where there is a need for significant change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

## 10. **WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU**

10.1 In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

10.2 We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood, and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands, or unreasonable persistence.

**M5 - Queries, Complaints and Compliments Form**

**Please note:** The person who experienced the situation should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please also fill in Section C.

If you do not provide your contact details, we will be unable to update you on the outcome.

**A: The Situation - about your query, complaint or compliment**

**Please provide as much information about the situation as you can. Such as:**

- Name of the department/section/service being provided / people involved.
- What do you think they did wrong, or failed to do?
- What do you think they did right?
- Describe how you personally have been affected.
- What do you think should be done to put things right?
- When did you first become aware of the situation?
- Have you already put your concerns to the frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so:
- If it is more than six months since you first became aware of the problem, please say why you have not complained before now:
- If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.

Please continue on additional pages as necessary.

**B: Your details**

Name:	
Title:	
Address	
Postcode	
Your email address:	
Telephone:	
Please state below how you would prefer us to contact you:	

**Your requirements:** if our usual way of dealing with queries, complaints and compliments makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English or Welsh is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

**C: Making a complaint on behalf of someone else: Their details:**

**Please note:** We must be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person who has experienced the situation.

Name:	
Title:	
Address	
Postcode	
Your email address:	
Telephone:	
Please state below how they would prefer us to contact them:	

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

When you have completed this form, please send it and any accompanying evidence to:

Business Support Supervisor  
Business Support Unit  
South Wales Fire & Rescue Service  
Forest View Business Park  
Llantrisant  
CF72 8LX