

Customer Service – Complaint Handling and Resolution

.....What is a complaint ?



Customer Service - Complaint Handling and Resolution

Who are we and what do we cover?

We are DWP Scotland Complaint Resolution Team and we handle complaints for working age benefits, excluding PIP, DLA and Pensions who have their own complaint handling teams. We are based in Laurieston Jobcentre and currently have ten Complaint Resolution Managers with a wide range and varied knowledge of differing benefits. We deal with working age customers who reside in Scotland.

Who engages with us?

- Working age customers.
- Appointees, or relatives with explicit permission from the customer.
- Third party representatives including Citizen's Advice Bureaux, Welfare Rights Officers, Housing Associations with explicit consent from customers and MPs/MSPs who have implicit consent from their constituents.

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-DWP Complaint Definition is:
- “A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the **service** received”



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• So, what should be classed as a complaint ?



.....Progress enquiries where we have failed to carry out promised actions.

For example: we have not paid the customer the correct amount of benefit, at the correct time.

.....Progress enquiries where there has been a delay.

For example: where the customer has had to contact us repeatedly to find out what's happening with their claim, payment etc.

Challenging a decision – but **only** when the customer feels that we have not followed our decision making processes correctly and/or information provided has been misinterpreted.

Complaints about decision notifications where they are poorly written and/or not easy to understand.

Allegations of poor/unacceptable staff behaviour

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-And what is **not** classed as a complaint ?



- Customer dissatisfaction with policy or legislation is **not** classed as a complaint. We do, however, need to check and provide assurance to the customer that the policy has been applied correctly.
- Unhappy with the decision itself – in these instances the customer should be referred to the appropriate mandatory reconsideration/appeal process.

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Journey of a complaint

- Once & Done – local office level
- Tier 1 – Scotland Complaint Resolution Team
- Tier 2 – Director General level
- Tier 3 – The Independent Case Examiner (ICE)
- Tier 4 – Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)

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- Complaints can be made or received in a variety of ways:
- verbally – either in person or by telephone
- in writing – by email, letter or through their journal
- Via other routes, such as portals (Gov.uk) or mandatory reconsideration requests
- It is for the customer to decide their preferred method to raise a complaint.



- To prevent a complaint from escalating, we make every effort to resolve the complaint as quickly, and at as low a level, as possible.



Timescales and method of contact

We will contact the customer within 48 hours to acknowledge their complaint and gather more information where appropriate.

We aim to investigate and respond to a complaint within 15 working days from the date of receipt.

If we are unable to respond within this timescale, we will inform the customer of the delay and the reason for it.

Our preferred method of contact is by telephone, but we will take into account a customer's preferred method of contact and any reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Staff Behaviour Complaints - Tier 1 Process

- The role of the Accountable Officer (AO) is to assign the Appointed Investigating Officer (AIO) and assure the quality and compliance of the investigation. The AO role falls to senior leaders and they should be independent of the member of staff's immediate line management chain.

The AIO should;

- clarify the precise nature of the complaint. For example, if the complaint is that a member of staff was rude, ask the complainant to explain precisely what was said to them
- gather written statements from the complainant, member(s) of staff and witnesses, give them the opportunity to provide their version of events and explain exactly what happened from their perspective.
- consider all information, to see if it supports/refutes allegation.
- ensure the decision is evidence-based, objective, fair, transparent and recorded.
- provide all information to the AO who, if satisfied, will send to CRT.

Customer Service – Lessons learned and feedback

- Customer Service impacts on everyone and we encourage all of our staff to ‘own’ the complaint and take responsibility to resolve it at as early a stage as possible.
- The “costs” of poor customer service are not just all about financial loss to the DWP and from the public purse itself.



- There can also be a financial loss for our customers, but ‘costs’ may not necessarily **always** be financial. We use ‘Voice of the customer’ case studies at staff and senior leaders’ meetings to show the impact poor customer service can have on a customer’s life. We use customer intelligence to initiate improvements to the customer experience.



Customer Service – Making a difference

So, what differences have we made?

- We highlighted a system flaw preventing new online Universal Credit claims for people with children. The online process was adjusted to fix this.
- We identified that some of our vulnerable customers were not receiving Healthy Start Vouchers and initiated a process to ensure they did.
- We reported an incorrect telephone number for Universal Credit on Gov.uk and this was corrected.
- We have identified underpayments and ensured customers have received their correct benefit entitlement.



Customer Service – Complaint Handling and Resolution.

- And finally,

- We aim to put customer service at the heart of what we do



- We focus on “lessons learned” and possible improvements



- We hope to not just meet our customers’ expectations, but exceed them!

