

Training from the Local Government Ombudsman



The Commission for
Local Administration in England

Dealing well with complaints is a vital part of good customer care. Local authorities are becoming more and more aware of how good complaint handling can improve customer relations, help their organisations to learn and improve, and maximise public value.

Over more than three decades of complaint investigation we have developed an unequalled overview of the way local authorities deal with complaints – and a unique perspective on what constitutes good practice in complaint handling. In response to an increasing demand from authorities for us to share our knowledge and experience with them, and as part of our role in promoting good administration, we are now offering a range of training courses on dealing with complaints – all devised by us with the particular needs of local government in mind.

Details of the courses

All our courses are presented by experienced LGO investigative staff, so participants can be confident that their presenter has genuine practical expertise in complaint handling and can draw on a fund of real knowledge about the theory and practice covered.

In addition to the courses which we describe below, we are currently developing new courses applying good investigative practice to different subject areas of complaints. We are also working to produce a menu of training modules from which authorities will be able to select the ones which they think best meet their particular needs.

The charges we make for our 'off the peg' courses just cover our costs in delivering training (see below for more details). We believe they represent very good value for money.

Effective Complaint Handling

'Effective Complaint Handling' is a one-day course we have developed specifically for local authority staff who deal with complaints as a significant part of their job. It is aimed at people who handle complaints in the higher stages of an authority's complaints procedure, after the informal stage and up to the point of making a final decision on the complaint.

This is the course for which we've had greatest demand to date, and it has been extremely well received.

The aims of this course are to help participants -

- define complaints accurately
- identify and use sources of information
- make and communicate robust decisions
- resolve complaints quickly and appropriately

The training day is designed to be interactive, and involves a variety of activities and materials. It begins with participants drawing on their own experiences of customer care, and concludes with an exploration of the benefits of good complaint handling to their organisation.

Much of the training day is centred around a case study which illustrates and informs about the various stages of complaint handling. Participants are given basic details of a fictional but realistic complaint. They are then asked to define the complaint; to collect, analyse and evaluate information about it; to reach a reasoned decision, including a proposed remedy; and to consider how to communicate the decision to the complainant. At all stages the presenter offers guidance and insights on applying the LGO's principles of good practice.

Effective Complaint Handling in Social Services complaints

This course applies the principles and practice of good complaint handling to investigating complaints under the current statutory social services complaints procedures. It has been devised for senior social services staff and independent investigators who deal with Stage 2 complaints. The central case study uses a social services complaint which raises and addresses crucial issues in this field of investigation.

'Effective Complaint Handling' courses in other specific subject areas are being researched and developed. For further information contact us.

Good Complaint Handling for Front Line Staff

Front line staff have a crucial part to play in the early identification and resolution of complaints. Their dealings with customers who are unhappy with services can often determine which issues will end up being pursued as formal complaints, as well as influencing complainants' views about the authority.

The one-day course which we have devised for front line staff aims to help them develop their awareness and understanding of -

- issues in good customer care
- factors which make the experience of complaining a good or bad one
- their role in
 - distinguishing complaints from other contacts e.g. service requests
 - assisting customers to clarify their complaints
 - managing expectations, for the benefit of the authority and its customers
 - settling complaints rapidly where appropriate, and
 - improving services and customer satisfaction

A central element in the training day is the use of a case study. In this exercise front line staff home in on the way they can affect the course and even outcomes of complaints as well as customer experiences of the process.

Tailored Events

As well as providing these course packages we will carry on responding positively, where our resources permit, to request from authorities for us to devise courses tailored to their particular needs. In such cases we have to charge for course development time as well as course delivery. We will be able to supply an estimate on request.

Prices

Our 'Effective Complaint Handling' courses (generic or subject specific) and the course in 'Good Complaint Handling for Front Line Staff' are available at the following prices:

One-day course for a group of up to 15, with one presenter:	£750
One-day course for a group of up to 30, with two presenters:	£1270

[Prices exclude VAT. No extra charge made for trainer's travel and expenses. Prices assume you will supply the venue for the course. Full details of venue requirements and of our terms and conditions for supplying training provided on request.]

Smaller authorities with fewer than 15 staff to put forward for training may wish to get together with neighbouring authorities to hold a regional LGO training event, and so share the costs.

For further information or bookings please contact Anne Carus at our York office:

**Local Government Ombudsman's Office, Beverley House, 17 Shipton Road,
YORK, YO30 5FZ**

tel. 01904 380226 or e-mail a.carus@lgo.org.uk