



PSPS

Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd

Feedback and Complaints Policy

21/10/2024

1. Document Control

Version Control

Issue Number	Issue Author	Issue Date	Reason for Issue
0.1	M Elsom	01/06/2021	Initial draft for review
0.2	M Elsom	01/06/2021	Further developed following CX engagement
1.2	M Elsom	July 2024	Review and edits to account for planned SELCP policy changes and the new LGO Complaints Code

Approval Control

Issue Number	Approval Authority	Name	Approval Date	Due for Review
1.0		PSPS Board	12/07/2021	July 2024
2.0		PSPS Board	21/10/2024	October 2026

Policy Governance

Responsible	Head of Corporate Services
Accountable	PSPS Board & Chief Executive
Consulted	PSPS – Senior Leadership Team Councils – Information Manager and Data Protection Officer
Informed	PSPS Employees Members of the public

1. Policy Overview

PSPS has a proud history and culture built around the provision of high-quality professional services and the delivery of outstanding performance. This is embedded as part of the company's mission statement, focus and values.

This policy defines Public Sector Partnership Services Limited's (also referred to in this policy as 'PSPS' or 'the company') commitment to ensuring all customers are given the opportunity to provide feedback on performance, service delivery and employee conduct, and to ensure that PSPS responds promptly, transparently, and demonstrates a willingness to learn and improve from customer feedback.

2. Context

PSPS is a Local Authority Trading Company, owned by three shareholding councils – East Lindsey District Council (ELDC), South Holland District Council (SHDC), and Boston Borough Council (BBC). Most of the services provided are either to or on behalf of the councils, including:

- services to employees of the councils, through the provision of HR, Finance, ICT, Procurement and Contracts, and Corporate Health and Safety advisory services.
- services to residents of the councils, through the provision of front-facing services in Customer Contact, and Revenues & Benefits.

PSPS will also provide services to other customers and organisations through the provision of contractual arrangements, for which the service recipients are customers to PSPS directly. For example, PSPS delivers a Telecare-Lifeline service to some residents.

PSPS may occasionally provide contracted professional services to other organisations, such as for Procurement, Health and Safety, HR or Financial Services. These should be underpinned by a Service Level Agreement, which will separately define escalation process for service standard related issues.

3. Policy Commitments

We aim to provide our customers with high quality services.

We welcome feedback from our customers, and we remain committed to ensuring that accessible feedback mechanisms are in place.

When dealing with a dissatisfied customer, our employees will seek to resolve the issue at the first point of contact in a prompt manner, making every effort to prevent escalation to a formal complaint.

We will follow our shareholding Councils' policies and associated procedures for customer feedback, where it relates to services provided on their behalf.

We will aim to understand the root cause of any issue raised and, when appropriate, to change the way we work to provide a better service in the future.

We will adopt a learning focused culture and avoid unnecessary blame. Our employees will be accountable for their actions and behaviors, but we also recognise that occasionally mistakes are made. We will seek to rectify these and take steps to avoid mistakes reoccurring.

Any complaint about the quality of service from an employee of the company, or their conduct, can be logged via corporate.services@pspsl.co.uk

4. Feedback – District Councils' Residents

Any feedback received in relation to services we provide on behalf of the councils should be dealt with according to the respective Council's policy and procedures.

PSPS will respond to Stage 1 complaints about PSPS services unless the council opts for a different appointment from within the council. A suitable representative - normally a People Manager - from the relevant PSPS department will respond to the complaint.

If the customer is dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response, the Councils' appointed Client Liaison Officer is responsible for coordinating a response and they may respond themselves, delegate to an officer in the employment of their respective Council or request a representative of PSPS' Senior Leadership Team to respond.

5. Feedback – Council Employees

This policy does not cover discussions relating to performance failure or general service provision to the councils, such as failure to meet agreed KPIs as set out within Service Level Agreements (SLAs), which are covered separately within the **Master Service Level Agreement** (Master SLA) between the Company and its shareholding Councils.

It is, however, acknowledged that employees of the Councils may be suitably dissatisfied and/or have an issue not covered by the Master SLA process. These issues can be raised as a formal complaint and PSPS will respond according to the processes defined in Feedback – PSPS Procedure.

6. Feedback – PSPS Procedure

Any complaint other than those covered above should be dealt with according to the policy principles defined below. Sources of other complaints may include:

- Complaints from PSPS' own customers, such as those accessing our Telecare-Lifeline service.
- Complaints made by former employees of the company, where the company's people policies no longer apply but the person in question still wishes to formally raise an issue or complaint for consideration. Consideration should be made at the point of logging such complaints whether it is better dealt with under the remit of the Grievance or the Whistleblowing Policies.

Service Requests and Complaints

A **service request** can be defined as any request that PSPS provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision.

A **complaint** can be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.

Service requests are not complaints but may contain expressions of dissatisfaction. We encourage our employees to try and deal with and resolve service requests before a complaint is made. A complaint may be raised when the individual expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.

Exclusions

Under normal circumstances any complaint made within 12-months of an issue occurring will be accepted. Not accepting complaints is rare, but a very small minority of complainants may make complaints that are vexatious, abusive or unreasonably persistent. Examples may include:

- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff whilst a complaint is being considered.
- Being abusive to staff in writing or verbally, including the use of social media and harassment of staff.
- Refusing to accept the decision, i.e. repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision.

PSPS reserves the right to refuse to engage with complainants we reasonably consider to be vexatious, abusive or persistent. When a complainant has been deemed as such, the relevant Head of Department will make recommendation to either the Head of Corporate Services, the Chief Finance Officer, or the Chief Delivery Officer, who will decide on what action to take.

Any restrictions will be appropriate and proportionate to the nature of the customer's contacts with the company at that time.

Consideration will be given to the Health and Wellbeing of the complainant, and referral to external support agencies should be considered when appropriate.

Consideration will be given to whether the actions or threats made by a complainant are such that a referral to the Police is necessary or appropriate; for example, where threats of harm are made in direct relation to a PSPS employee.

Accessibility and Awareness

There is no set way to make a complaint and customers can raise their complaint in any way.

We will train and advise our workforce, so they know how to recognise a complaint and how to pass details to the appropriate person within our organisation.

Complaint Handling Process

We consider early resolution of issues as key to effective complaint handling.

When responding to a complaint at the first point of contact, we will:

- clarify any aspects of the complaint we are unclear about.
- deal with all complaints on their merits and with an open mind.
- give the individual a fair chance to set out their position.

- take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

Where we are unable to meet policy timescales, we will inform the complainant and provide the reason for delay.

We will make reasonable adjustments for individuals where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010.

We will not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to do so, as defined under Exclusions. Any restrictions placed on an individual's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

A full record will be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage, including the original complaint and all related correspondence.

Stages

Stage 1

Complaints should be acknowledged and logged at stage 1 within five working days of the complaint being received.

Organisations should provide a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

We may apply an extension to this timescale when judged appropriate because of complexity of the complaint. In such cases the complainant will be informed including explanation of the reason for delay. Any extension should be no more than 10 working days without good reason.

We will seek to respond as promptly as possible. We will address all points raised in the response and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. We will be clear which aspects of the complaint we are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.

At the conclusion of stage 1 we will provide details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.

Any additional complaints raised during stage 1 will be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been provided. Where the stage 1 response has been provided, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being considered, or it would be unreasonable to delay the response, the new issues should be logged as a new complaint.

Stage 2

If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the individual's satisfaction at stage 1, it should be progressed to stage 2, which is the final stage.

Requests for stage 2 will be acknowledged and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.

The person considering the complaint at stage 2 will not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.

We will aim to issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

We may apply an extension to this timescale when judged appropriate because of complexity of the complaint. In such cases the complainant will be informed including explanation of the reason for delay. Any extension should be no more than 20 working days without good reason.

When writing to the individual to complete the stage 2 complaint, we will include the following in plain language:

- the complaint stage.
- our understanding of the complaint.
- the decision on the complaint.
- the reasons for any decisions made.
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right.
- details of any outstanding actions.
- details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman if still dissatisfied.

Putting things right

Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions already taken, or intended to take, to put things right. These can include:

- Apologising
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- Taking action if there has been delay
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- Providing a financial remedy
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

Any remedy offered should reflect the impact on the individual because of any fault identified.

Performance, scrutiny and oversight

We will use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.

We recognise the importance of accountability and transparency to positive organisational culture, and we will report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to our Board of Directors.

We appoint our Head of Corporate Services as the person responsible for overseeing complaint handling performance and assessing any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.

9. Review

This policy should be reviewed at least once every three years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. It may require reviewing more regularly in response to specific changes in the Councils' policies.