

# Handling and Learning from Complaints – Follow Up

## Project Specification

### Background

The way an organisation handles complaints is important. There are significant benefits to doing things well, including:

- providing valuable information about weaknesses in programmes of work, policies and service delivery
- stimulating improvement
- reassuring the public that the organisation is committed to resolving problems; and
- enhancing accountability and transparency.

Conversely, done badly it can:

- fail to produce learning and improvement
- lead to repetition and in some cases exacerbation of the underlying issue
- damage the organisation's reputation; and
- impact on the organisation's relationship with the public and other stakeholders.

In July 2020 I published a report *Handling and Learning from Complaints* which reviewed the development and implementation of the recently introduced Customer Feedback Policy. In summary this review found that:

- the policy in most respects met the requirements of best practice

- responsibility for the management of complaints rested mostly with designated officers within departments, with a small corporate team providing an element of co-ordination but without a defined supervisory role
- a Customer Feedback Management System had been introduced that captures information on complaints across Government
- a single online channel was established for customers to submit feedback, including complaints, about any Government service

but

- there were no standardised corporate procedures to support the implementation of the Customer Feedback Policy. Departments relied on their own procedures that had not been updated consistently to reflect the Customer Feedback Policy
- there was inadequate consideration of the adaptations to corporate activities, including modernisation initiatives, necessary to secure their relevance to Non-Ministerial Departments
- no information was captured and reported systematically to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the complaints handling process; and
- although the 'tone from the top' had emphasised the importance of complaints as an integral part of public service provision, a consistent, shared culture of valuing and learning from complaints was yet to be embedded.

In 2020 I concluded that the Government had taken important steps but that more work was required to secure consistent handling of and learning from complaints. In particular, I identified the need to ensure that:

- staff handling complaints are people with the right skills, experience, training and supervision
- there are appropriate processes, consistently applied, to facilitate the delivery of the Customer Feedback Policy
- the Customer Feedback Management System is developed and its capacity fully used; and
- maximum value can be secured from the analysis of complaints and their handling.

I made 19 recommendations for improvement, all of which were accepted by the Government of Jersey.

In October 2022, as part of the new Council of Minister's 100-day actions, the Government published proposals to establish an independent Public Services Ombudsperson to help resolve complaints about public services in Jersey in a timely and transparent manner.

The Chief Minister subsequently submitted instructions for new legislation to be drafted to create a Jersey Public Services Ombudsperson (JPSO), independent of Government, to resolve complaints about:

- administrative actions
- decisions; and
- omissions or failures to act

which have resulted in alleged injustice or hardship, by specified bodies in Jersey.

The JPSO's principal function will be the investigation of individual complaints by members of the public. It is intended that it will undertake joint investigations with other bodies where appropriate and *'bring forward model complaints-handling procedures for public services and oversee the application of the model procedures it draws up'*.

## The Functions of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG)

Article 11 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014 requires the C&AG to:

- provide the States with independent assurance that the public finances of Jersey are being regulated, controlled, supervised and accounted for in accordance with the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2005
- consider and report to the States on:
  - the effectiveness of internal controls of the States, States funded bodies and Funds
  - the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the way the States, States funded bodies and Funds use their resources; and
  - the general corporate governance arrangements of the States, States funded bodies and Funds; and
- make recommendations to bring about improvement where improvement is needed.

## Objectives of this follow up review

This follow up review will consider:

- the progress made in implementing agreed recommendations
- the extent to which the recommendations as implemented have addressed the improvement areas identified in the report; and
- the adequacy of plans for the implementation of any outstanding recommendations.

## Scope

My review will consider the status of my 2020 recommendations against:

- existing arrangements for handling and learning from complaints; and
- the anticipated impact of the introduction of the JPSO.

The objectives and/or scope of the review may be amended in the course of the review in the light of emerging findings or other matters arising.

## Approach

The review will commence with an initial documentation request. The findings of the document review will be followed up by interviews with key officers and potentially with other stakeholders.

The review will commence in May 2023.

The detailed work will be undertaken by an affiliate engaged by the C&AG.



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