

## Complaints Handling Procedure

This Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is designed to ensure that complaints from clients, customers, or other relevant parties are handled efficiently, fairly, and in compliance with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) regulations. The procedure aims to resolve disputes at the earliest opportunity, maintain professionalism, and safeguard the reputation of the business and RICS members.

### 1. Scope and Applicability

This procedure applies to all employees and members of the firm who provide services that fall within the remit of RICS, including those involved in surveying, property management, valuation, and other related services.

### 2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, raised by a client, customer, or third party about the services provided. It may involve issues such as:

- Quality of service
- Failure to meet expectations
- Miscommunication
- Professional conduct or competence
- Delays in service delivery

### 3. Initial Acknowledgment of Complaint

- **Timeline:** All complaints must be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.
- **Process:** Upon receiving a complaint, the recipient will immediately inform the relevant department or individual responsible for resolving the issue. The complainant should receive a written acknowledgment of their complaint within the 3-day timeframe, confirming receipt and outlining the next steps in the complaint resolution process.

### 4. Internal Investigation

- **Investigation Lead:** The complaint will be assigned to a senior staff member or manager, independent of the service that generated the complaint, for impartiality.
- **Timeline:** The investigation should be completed within 15 working days from acknowledgment. If the investigation is likely to take longer, the complainant should be informed of the delay and provided with an updated timeline.
- **Process:** The investigator will review relevant documents, meet with any involved parties, and if necessary, gather further information or clarify points of dispute. The investigation must be thorough, fair, and impartial.

### 5. Outcome Communication

- **Written Response:** Once the investigation is concluded, the complainant will receive a written response outlining the findings, any actions taken, and whether the complaint has been upheld or dismissed.
- **Timeline:** The complainant will be informed of the outcome within 25 working days of the initial complaint.
- **Resolution:** If the complaint is upheld, the firm will provide a clear explanation of what corrective action will be taken to resolve the issue and prevent recurrence.

## 6. Appeals Process

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the initial investigation, they have the right to appeal the decision.

- **Timeline for Appeal:** The complainant must submit their appeal within 10 working days of receiving the outcome response.
- **Appeal Review:** A separate senior staff member or external independent reviewer will handle the appeal, ensuring no conflict of interest with the original investigation. The appeal should be reviewed within 15 working days, and a final decision communicated to the complainant within 20 working days.

## 7. Resolution of Complaints

Where a complaint is upheld, the firm must take corrective action. This could involve:

- Providing a refund or compensation (if applicable)
- Offering an apology to the complainant
- Implementing process improvements or training
- Modifying service delivery to better meet client needs

## 8. Escalation to RICS

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the firm's final response, they may escalate the complaint to RICS. The firm must provide the complainant with details of how to escalate the matter to RICS, including:

- RICS contact information
- RICS complaints procedure

RICS will review the complaint and the firm's handling of it, and may intervene or provide further advice as needed.

## 9. Record Keeping

- All complaints, including their investigation, outcome, and resolution, will be documented and stored securely for at least 6 years.
- Regular reviews of complaints will be conducted to identify trends and improve the quality of services provided.

## 10. Training and Awareness

- All employees, including new hires, will receive training on the complaints handling procedure and RICS regulations as part of their induction.
- Ongoing training will be provided to ensure all staff remain informed about best practices in complaint handling and customer service.

### **11. Monitoring and Review**

- The complaints procedure will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with RICS guidelines and to implement any necessary improvements.
- Key performance indicators (KPIs) will be used to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the complaints handling process, including response times and customer satisfaction.

### **12. Communication of the Complaints Procedure**

The Complaints Handling Procedure will be clearly communicated to all clients, customers, and relevant parties. It will be included in client contracts, on the company website, and within any client-facing documentation.

This Complaints Handling Procedure is designed to ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a transparent, fair, and efficient manner, in line with RICS professional standards and regulatory requirements.