

Deputy I Gardiner  
Chair of Public Accounts Committee

***Via Email***

25<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Dear Deputy Gardiner

**PAC - Handling and Learning from Customer Feedback/Complaints Review**

Thank you for your letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024. As requested, please find to follow the responses to the questions raised by the Public Accounts Committee for consideration.

**1. How have you ensured that the Government-wide Customer Feedback Policy has been fully implemented across all departments?**

ELT Quarterly reporting is in place which aligns to overall performance against the Customer Feedback Policy. A Quality Assurance framework is also in place which measures policy adherence based on complaints received.

Mandatory online training is given to all new starters which informs colleagues about the customer feedback policy and their role in ensuring feedback is logged and acted upon.

The Customer Experience team deliver training sessions across GOJ to refresh colleagues on the customer feedback policy.

There is an annual review of the policy which is consulted on with all departments in GoJ and also approved at the cross GOJ Customer Experience Board.

**2. Can you advise the Committee of any services that currently sit outside the Customer Feedback Policy, and please can you specify what the differences are within these services processes and how are these monitored and evaluated?**

No government services sit outside the Customer Feedback Policy. The policy does however detail areas which are not in scope of the policy. These are usually where there is an alternative, more appropriate route for customers to follow (e.g. decisions where there is a formal right of appeal such as planning or benefit decisions).

**3. What processes and metrics are in place for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of handling customer feedback and complaints?**

GOJ has both qualitative and quantitative processes and metrics in place for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of customer feedback and complaints.

Measures include:

- Customer satisfaction of complaint handling and outcome (A survey is sent to every complainant when a complaint is closed on the Government feedback system).
- How we performed in respect of the following, measured monthly as part of departmental feedback manager quality assurance review:
  - Quality of communication
  - Policy adherence
  - Process adherence
- Complaints closed within agreed timeframes

#### **4. How frequently is this evaluation conducted, and what improvements have been identified as a result?**

Customer Surveys and Quality Assurance is an ongoing process within departments. Results are reviewed monthly within departments, and at the cross GOJ Feedback Managers group. ELT have quarterly reporting of this evaluation.

Improvements identified include:

- Improved communication with complainants during the process of their complaint, including better agreement with customers on expectations and timeframes from the outset
- Improved method of early resolution e.g. telephone calls and meetings can be more effective than only responding in writing.
- Timeliness of complaint response has improved as a result of reporting and renewed focus in this area
- Increase number of feedback including complaints directly logged/recorded by colleagues

#### **5. We note from the 2023 Customer Feedback Summary that 16% of complaints were unable to be resolved across Government. Please can you provide further details as to the spread of these unresolved complaints across the various Departments?**

Complaints classified as 'unable to resolve' have the following definition within the Customer Feedback Management System:

*This is a scenario where we have attempted to resolve with the customer however we are not being able to move further through the process.*

During 2024, on review of the categories for complaint closures and in consultation with the Department Feedback Managers this wording has changed from 'unable to resolve' to 'outcome not achievable'. The new definition is:

*This refers to a situation where we have not taken a complaint forward because it is not possible for us to achieve what the customer wants us to do as a result of their complaint (e.g. where their desired outcome is unreasonable), where we have insufficient information to take any action and the customer remained anonymous, or where the complaint was submitted beyond the specified timeframe for lodging complaints.*

The split across GoJ is;

Department	Percentage of complaints classified as 'unable to resolve'	Number of complaints classified as 'unable to resolve'
CAB	9%	10
CYPES	5.5%	6
CLS	18.5%	21
I&E	55%	63
JHA	6%	7
T&E	6%	7

**6. How does this system interface with the introduced single online reporting system, and what benefits or challenges have been observed since its introduction?**

The online form at [gov.je/feedback](http://gov.je/feedback) where customers can submit feedback in relation to any area of government is directly linked and automatically populates the Customer Feedback Management System. This online system has been popular with Islanders since its introduction and feedback is that it is a lot easier to access and navigate than previously fragmented different approaches within departments. There have been no noticeable challenges with the online form.

**7. What training and development initiatives are in place for staff handling customer feedback/complaints?**

There is a programme of training and development initiatives available to colleagues handling customer feedback and complaints.

- Mandatory online training for all new starters explaining the policy, how to log and handle feedback received
- Customer service skills which includes developing tools and techniques for managing expectations and challenging situations, and developing communication skills that will support colleagues delivering news customers might not want to hear.
- Early resolution to complaints for front line colleagues
- Complex Complaints handling training which focusses on colleagues who respond to complex complaints that are not resolved at first point of contact in terms of how to investigate and resolve complaints.

The Customer Experience team have delivered the following 'lite-bite' training sessions in 2024 to a range of GOJ colleagues

- The Value of Customer Feedback
- Understanding the Customer Feedback Policy
- The Customer Feedback Management System
- The Customer Experience Dashboard
- ACE+ (Accessible, Consistent, Easy, Think Ahead)

In addition, the Customer Experience team support any adhoc training requests from GoJ departments. The following have been delivered in 2024 –

- The Customer Experience Dashboard for I&E
- The Value of Customer Feedback and Understanding Customer Experience Training - 2 sessions for Planning Officers and 1 session for Building control.
- Introducing the Customer Feedback Management System to schools and follow up training in schools
- In person school visits for bespoke training and demonstrations
- The Customer Feedback Management System for T&E

**8. How does the Government ensure that staff are adequately equipped to manage complaints in a consistent and effective manner?**

The training and development programme outlined in the previous question supports staff to ensure that complaints are managed in a consistent and effective manner.

Each government department has a Department Feedback manager who has responsibility for ensuring department compliance with the customer feedback policy, cascading relevant internal training and learning, and implementing any lessons learned from quality assurance undertaken.

A complaints handling manual provides colleagues with guidance on how complaints should be dealt with.

**9. What measures have been taken to ensure that the feedback/complaints systems are user-friendly for members of the public?**

Members of the public have a range of methods by which feedback can be provided online, telephone, in person. Feedback received in closer to home events and cluster group meetings have informed changes made to the policy and systems used for feedback.

An example of this is the recent child friendly policy which was designed and has been launched to ensure that providing feedback is more user friendly for this group of islanders.

**10. Has any research or feedback been conducted to gauge public trust and confidence in these systems? If so, what were the findings?**

The post complaint survey includes questions which indicates trust and confidence in the complaints system. This year to date, 435 surveys have been sent with 99 responses.

The findings to the survey include:

- 61% of complainants who replied to the survey find the process of contacting us about their complaint very easy or easy, 14% find it neither easy or difficult and 25% find it very difficult or difficult.
- 42% of complainants who replied to the survey were satisfied that their complaint was dealt with in a timely manner, 6% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied and 52% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- 41% of complainants who replied to the survey were satisfied with the overall handling of their complaint, 10% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied and 49% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.

## **11. How does the Government ensure that learning from customer feedback/complaints is implemented and that subsequent improvements are evidenced?**

The Customer Feedback Management System has the facility to log improvements and learning from feedback/complaints. Departments are responsible for tracking their learning and improvement actions.

Departmental Feedback Manager monthly meetings have a specific focus on learning from customer stories which inform best practise across GoJ departments. These learnings are reported and discussed at the Customer Experience Board and Quarterly ELT reports.

To help ensure that that learning from feedback is implemented and to close the feedback cycle we have a 'You said we did' campaign on social media with monthly examples on what changes are made from feedback provided. An example of this is

***You said...** the Les Quennevais sports centre hall is too noisy at 7am when the doors are opened during classes. **We did....**we've moved the fans into the spinning studio so the doors can be kept closed*

## **12. Could you provide examples where customer feedback has led to significant changes or improvements in services?**

Feedback received regularly leads to continuous improvements across many services. Although in some cases this might be considered small tweaks, this is important as the positive impact can be felt across a number of future customers of a service.

Some examples of continuous improvements are highlighted in the social media campaign and via this page [What we do with your feedback \(you said, we did\) \(gov.ie\)](#)

The themes from complaints have highlighted and led to improvements to –

- better online information and digital offering (for example improved Student Finance HE2 form)
- improving communication (written and verbal) for a 'right first time' approach
- improvement and maintenance of premises and facilities
- increased customer service training delivered to promote a more consistent and positive customer experience

## **13. How does the Government assess the value for money in the management of customer feedback/complaints systems?**

Management of customer feedback and complaints is seen as a key priority and business as usual across all GOJ departments. If we focus on learning from feedback and handling complaints well, GOJ can deliver a better and more efficient service. I therefore believe that time spent in this area is a solid investment of resource.

## **14. Are there any measures in place to ensure that resources allocated to handling complaints are used efficiently and effectively?**

Chief Officers allocate resource to this important area, based on what is appropriate to their service area. The focus and priority is to develop a good customer service/experience culture where we can prevent putting resource in to complaints and one in which it is everyone's responsibility to resolve queries/complaints at point of contact.

There is the network of Departmental Feedback Manager roles who have a focussed responsibility on feedback alongside other responsibilities which vary between departments.

**15. What progress has been made in implementing the relevant recommendations of the Comptroller and Auditor General in relation to handling and learning from complaints reports 2020 and 2023?**

The recommendations from the 2020 report have all been implemented.

There is one outstanding recommendation from the 2023 report – Recommendation 1. This recommendation is with HCS for completion and due by December 2024

**16. Could you highlight any areas where these recommendations have resulted in tangible improvements in the complaint handling process?**

These recommendations have resulted in tangible improvements in the complaint handling process which include -

- GOJ now has a child friendly complaints process ensuring children know their feedback is welcomed and how to give it.
- The development of a training and development programme has supported creating a standardised approach across Government in how we handle, resolve and answer complaints.
- The implementation of the quality assurance framework and KPIs has supported the journey and improvement to complaint handling.
- The development and introduction of Departmental Feedback Manager network which includes roles and responsibilities across GoJ for colleagues handling complaints
- There is a complaint handling manual to support colleagues with consistent handling of complaints across GoJ

**17. Can you please provide a summary of how government has responded to the Complaints Board recommendations that have been made over the past 5 years?**

There is no central record of how government has responded to the Complaints Board recommendations and therefore we cannot answer this question.

I hope this information addresses the questions put forward by the Committee.

Yours sincerely



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