

## STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

*These Principles are not a checklist to be applied mechanically. The Statement of Principles are overarching basic principles that public bodies' complaints handling procedures should reflect and comply with.*

**To provide good complaints handling public bodies should:**

### **1) Start off right**

- Ensure effective leadership and governance of complaints.
- Create a culture that embraces complaints.
- Ensure staff are equipped and appropriately trained to handle complaints.
- Provide a simple and time bound complaints process.
- Ensure clarity of process, roles and responsibilities.
- Provide a point of contact.
- Manage complainant's expectations.

- Ensure effective and timely communication.
- Signpost complainants to advocacy and support services, where appropriate.

## **2) Fix it early**

- Address complaints early and acknowledge mistakes.
- Provide an apology, where appropriate.
- Provide prompt, appropriate and proportionate remedies.
- Consider alternative methods of resolution.

## **3) Focus on what matters**

- Put the complainant at the heart of the process.
- Accommodate different complainant's needs, where possible.
- Help the complainant access and use the procedure.
- Listen, respect and treat complainants with dignity.
- Provide a safe, secure and confidential service.
- Inform complainants if timescales cannot be met and why.

#### **4) Be fair**

- Ensure fair investigations in accordance with law and guidance.
- Provide impartial and objective complaint handling.
- Deal with complaints within the agreed timescale.
- Ensure thorough and proportionate investigations.
- Deliver complete and appropriate responses.
- Provide clear and evidence-based outcomes.
- Ensure complainants and staff complained about are treated fairly.
- Ensure consistency from case to case, where appropriate.

#### **5) Be honest**

- Be open and accountable.
- Keep full and accurate records.
- Provide full, honest and clear reasons for decisions.
- Publish service standards for handling complaints.

## 6) Learn and Improve

- Regularly review complaints handling procedures.
- Provide complaints handling training for relevant staff.
- Regularly publish complaint outcomes and use feedback to help improve service delivery.
- Record, analyse and learn from complaints.
- Review the complainant's journey and satisfaction.
- Promote complaints handling networking opportunities with stakeholders.

*\*Where 'complainant' is mentioned above, this refers to the complainant and the complainant's family (where appropriate).*