

6 Step Investigation Process



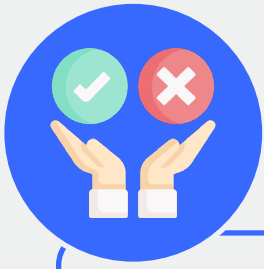
1. Agree

The best practice at this stage is to pick up the phone and speak to the complainant to discuss the complaint. This way, you can really understand what is important to them. It is also important to understand what the complainant wants as a result of the complaint. A good starting point is to understand what would help solve the problem.



2. Investigate

Once you have agreed what the complaint is, you can start planning how you want to go about investigating the allegations that have been made. Here, the main part is gathering evidence and that could be from a range of sources. Perhaps you want to scrutinise policy or legislation, you can listen to phone calls or watch CCTV clips. You may also want to interview the people involved in the complaint. Together all the information will help you reach your conclusion.



3. Decide

Once you have scrutinised all the evidence, you should decide whether to uphold the complaint or not. Every complaint needs an outcome and you cannot partially uphold the complaint. It's not often that complaints are about just one thing, but then, you should step back at the end of the complaint and think if you really agree with the main drive of it. If you do, you should uphold the complaint.



4. Communicate

The best practice here is to pick up the phone and speak to the complainant. There are many reasons why this is a good idea, but above all it is an opportunity to explain all the work that has gone into your investigation, and the steps you took to reach a decision. You can also detail what steps will take place after they receive the complaint letter. As part of your response, the complainant should know what the decision was on their complaint. They should know what happens next and if there are any steps they need to take. They should also understand where they can go if they want to proceed with their complaint.



5. Resolve

This means offering something to the complainant as part of the response to a complaint, and acting on that. That could be paying them a sum of money, or changing a process, or offering them a service. But remember, if you want to offer something to a complainant as a result of their complaint, make sure that happens. Good practice again in relation to this is to call the complainant afterwards. You can also set timetables with complainants so they know when to expect something and this will avoid further work in the future.



6. Learn

Learning lessons is the final step of the six step process. The whole point of having complaints processes is to improve the service we provide. Therefore, at the end of a complaint, it is very good practice to determine what events led to the complaint itself. You can use several techniques to do that. You can do the 'five whys' exercise or use an Ishikawa diagram. You may have a peer review process, or perhaps you have a panel or board that scrutinises your performance and they want to consider all the reasons why complaints have arisen in your service.