



COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

The company endeavours to provide its stakeholders with quality services at all times. It recognises, however, that there may be areas where these services can be improved or occasions when they fail to meet the expectations of customers. This procedure is provided to deal with comments and complaints received from customers in a fair and consistent manner.

- 1.1. This procedure has been established by the Countrystyle Group to record and respond to comments and complaints received by customers, members of the public and other stakeholders.
- 1.2. All comments and complaints will be dealt with impartially, objectively and professionally and those making the comment / complaint will not be subjected to adverse treatment by Countrystyle as a result.
- 1.3. Where appropriate, this procedure may invoke other procedures in existence with Countrystyle or its agents including disciplinary and capability procedures.

2. DEFINITION OF A COMMENT / COMPLAINT

- 2.1. A comment / complaint is an expression (of satisfaction, dissatisfaction or a suggestion) by one or more customers about the company's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the company itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the company.
- 2.2. A person making a complaint or registering a comment will be referred to as the complainant for the purposes of this procedure.
- 2.3. Comments / complaints can be received by any of the following forms of communication:
 - By Telephone
 - By Letter
 - In Person
 - By E-mail
- 2.4. The company recognises that sometimes customers may complain but without describing their letters as complaints. The company will endeavour to identify such submissions which have not been formally described as complaints and these will be treated as such.
- 2.5. A complainant should be encouraged to provide their name and contact details. Such details provided by the complainant shall be treated as confidential and,

wherever possible, only made known to those who need to consider the complaint. Countrystyle will recognise complaints or comments received anonymously as part of this procedure although there may be practical difficulties in concluding an investigation.

3. EXCLUSIONS FROM THIS PROCEDURE

- 3.1. This procedure does not apply to comments or complaints received from Countrystyle employees. The Countrystyle Grievance Procedure is in place for these purposes.

4. REGISTER AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1. A register of all comments and complaints shall be maintained electronically within the Customer Services Section.
- 4.2. Comments or complaints must be forwarded to the manager of the relevant Section in the first instance. Where the manager receiving the complaint cannot identify the relevant Section, the complaint shall be forwarded to the Customer Account Manager.
- 4.3. Details of complaints shall be copied to the General Manager and a Director, where a complaint is:
 - potentially in relation to a criminal act or fraudulent activity
 - potentially a high profile or sensitive complaint for some other reason
- 4.4. All complaints in relation to claims of criminal or fraudulent activity or breaches of the company's Procedural Rules shall be reported to the Managing Director.
- 4.5. The register will initially record relevant details regarding the complainant and the nature of the complaint. Where a high level of confidentiality is required, this information may be truncated or omitted from the central register but must be recorded elsewhere.
- 4.6. The register will identify the manager to whom the complaint was made and the manager or section responsible for dealing with the complaint.
- 4.7. The register will be updated as necessary to show the progress of the complaint.
- 4.8. All staff dealing with any stage of a complaint shall be mindful of the need to treat the complaint as confidential.

5. COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

- 5.1. Comments and complaints should be dealt with quickly, thoroughly and with due regards to the importance of time in respect of the particular complaint.
- 5.2. The complainant should be kept informed of the progress of their complaint.

6. MAINTAINING, MONITORING AND REPORTING

- 6.1. The progress of individual complaints shall be the responsibility of the relevant manager who should ensure that the central register is updated at regular intervals.
- 6.2. Standard Reports shall be generated from the register on a monthly basis by the Customer Services Section to provide managers with information on the levels and progress of complaints and where necessary to prompt further action.
- 6.3. Complaints not of a contractual nature shall be reported to Managers by exception.
- 6.4. Information collated from customer questionnaires regarding satisfaction with the service provided shall be analysed on an annual basis or more frequently if required.

7. IMPLEMENTING AND PUBLICISING THE SYSTEM

- 7.1. This procedure shall be recognised by the company and its agents.
- 7.2. The system is advertised effectively to its customers (Appendix1)

8. TRAINING

The Company will ensure that all staff are familiar with the Comments and Complaints Procedure. This procedure will be included within the induction process for new staff and managers where relevant with an annual review / refreshment for all staff.

9. INVESTIGATING A COMPLAINT

9.1. Serious Complaints

The way in which a complaint is treated and investigated will depend upon the nature and seriousness of the complaint. Allegations of criminal behaviour require special care to ensure that officers dealing with the complaint do not hamper any subsequent investigation by the police.

Therefore, where an allegation of criminal behaviour, including fraudulent activity has been made, the Managing Director shall be informed.

9.2. Conducting an Investigation

In carrying out an investigation, manager should consider the nature of the complaint and the level at which it is being considered. For example, low level complaints being considered which can be completed quickly should not be hampered by unnecessary procedural issues. In contrast, serious complaints or complaints of a contractual nature should be investigated formally and appropriate documentation produced to record and assess the allegation.

In conducting a formal investigation, the following guidance should be considered for incorporation:

- a. Check for previous complaints from this person.

- b. Contact the complainant to:
 - Clarify the complaint
 - Set out in writing the complainant's understanding of the complaint
 - Clarify the outcome sought
 - Assess any special needs or support the complainant may have.
 - Explain the procedure involved in dealing with the complaint and provide with a copy of the company's Comments and Complaints procedures.
- c. Gather information on relevant legal, contractual, policy and administrative background relating to the complaint.
- d. Assess that appropriateness of using the Comments and Complaints Procedure in this instance and consider possible alternatives including legal action and police involvement. This assessment should be reviewed throughout the term of the investigation as more information is gathered to inform the process.
- e. Consider how the complaint may be resolved without further investigation.
- f. Assess which activities of the company are associated with the complaint and consider the suspension or deferment of the activity until the complaint has been resolved.
- g. Obtain all relevant documentation in relation to the complaint.
- h. Establish the relevant sequence of events and identify and interview those staff, and managers most directly involved.
- i. Prepare a conclusion to the investigation which may include recommendations and any proposed remedies.



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Countrystyle Group Limited is committed to improving the quality of the services it provides to you.

We want you to tell us how we can improve and welcome your comments and feedback on our services. We also need to know if you have a complaint about any service which we or our contractors provide because this gives us an opportunity to improve our service to you.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Your comment or complaint will be taken seriously, dealt with as quickly as possible and where appropriate, investigated fully.

- We will provide a response within 5 working days.
- We will provide you with details of the outcome of your complaint within 28 days.
- We will identify a named officer to act as your contact.
- We will respect your privacy.

HOW TO CONTACT US

You can make a comment or complaint by contacting the Authority at:

Countrystyle Group Limited
Stanford Bridge Farm
Station Road
Pluckley
Ashford
Kent
TN27 0RU

Tel: 01233 821200
Fax: 01233 820044
info@countrystylegroup.co.uk