



Complaints Procedure

Introduction

FTS Group Limited (sometimes referred to as 'the company', 'we' or 'us' in this document) is dedicated to providing the best possible service and support for all its customers (sometimes referred to as 'you' in this document). This means having a clear, fair, and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against us, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This policy only applies to customers of the company. If complaints are raised by persons other than customers (such as personal representatives), they will be dealt with under stages 1 and 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

All company staff will be made aware of complaints procedures and expected to review this document regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of the most assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

This document explains that procedure, and the steps that it outlines should be referred to and followed by all customers whenever an issue arises that causes them concern. If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, customers will be advised accordingly, given an explanation and provided with revised timescales.

This document does not apply to complaints about:

- *Supplies of goods or services by third parties*
- *Disciplinary issues relating to members of staff*

Each of these follows its own process of complaints and appeals which are outlined in relevant policies.

If there is an allegation or concern about fraud or criminal activity the company may decide to refer the matter to a competent authority including but not restricted to professional or trades bodies of which the company is a member or the Police or other judicial body, in which case any decisions by these authorities will supersede those made by the company and outlined in this document.

Anonymous complaints will not be examined under this document.

1. When an issue or concern first arises

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the company you should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. If the complaint proceeds within the company then you may then be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with your concern.



You may wish to approach the person involved in your original point of contact with the company as they will often be best placed to help you either directly or by identifying which other member of staff or company officer you should be speaking to.

We encourage customers to approach staff with any concerns they may have and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, you should first raise this with the Managing Director either in person or in writing, and a meeting can be arranged with the Managing Director to discuss the issue at hand.

If your complaint is about the Managing Director, you should raise your concern in writing with the Company Secretary.

1.2 Initial informal meeting

Once a concern has been raised you may be invited to attend an informal meeting with a member of staff or the Managing Director/Company Secretary to discuss your concerns.

You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or other person to assist you or speak on your behalf.

Staff have a responsibility to ensure that you understand any future points of action that have been agreed at the meeting and should make a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed.

All staff will do their best to ensure that your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently but if you cannot come to an agreement, or are dissatisfied with the outcome of your meeting, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Managing Director.

There is no suggested time-scale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion although it would be expected that most issues would be resolved within 10 business days.

2. Formal complaints

In order to ensure that complaints are processed efficiently and effectively we deal with formal complaints in three stages:

Stage 1

If you do not feel that your concern has been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Managing Director. If your complaint is about the Managing Director then you should go straight to Stage 2 of this procedure. Your written complaint should provide sufficient detail of the issues to allow the Managing Director to investigate and respond to the complaint. You should also set out what you feel would resolve the complaint.



The Managing Director should acknowledge your complaint in writing within 3 business days. They may already be aware of the situation. They will outline their decision if there is one to be made, and any action to be taken as a result of your complaint.

The Managing Director may call you in for a meeting to discuss the issue outcome, possible solutions, or to explain what has or will happen as a result of your complaint. The Managing Director will keep a record of all interactions with you and other staff, meetings and decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, the Managing Director will talk to that employee. If it is an allegation of fraud or criminal activity a formal investigation may be instigated by the company or other external agencies. Please refer to the appropriate external agency in such circumstances for an outline of their procedures.

The Managing Director will respond to you in writing within 10 business days outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right to take the matter further and the steps to be taken.

Stage 2

If, having spoken to the Managing Director, you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint or your complaint is about the Managing Director, you may lodge your complaint with the Company Secretary. The complaint must be in writing and it should explain your concern in sufficient detail and the steps that have lead up to you taking this course of action. You should also set out the actions you feel would be necessary to resolve the complaint.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, that employee will be given the opportunity to write a response, which will be sent to the Managing Director or Company Secretary as appropriate within 10 business days of the complaint being lodged with them.

The Company Secretary will respond to you in writing within 10 business days outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right of appeal and how you can start your appeal.



3. Appeals

Stage 3:

If you would like to lodge an appeal following the outcome of a formal complaint at stage 2, this will be taken to an appeals panel. You should write to the Company Secretary to exercise this right within 10 business days of the outcome at Stage 2. If no request for an appeals panel hearing is received within 10 business days, it will be deemed that the decision is accepted, and the complaint will be closed.

If an appeals panel is requested, the Company Secretary will acknowledge your appeal and make the necessary arrangements and will usually convene the appeals panel within 10 business days from the acknowledgement being sent. Where it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date within that timescale, the company will take reasonable steps to agree a time and date mutually convenient to all parties.

The Company Secretary will ensure that all parties to the appeal have access to the same documentation and set out a timetable to support the collation and circulation of documents. Any supporting documentation relevant to the complaint must be submitted to the appeals panel by both parties at least 5 days before the appeals panel hearing.

You are entitled to be accompanied to the appeals panel hearing and should notify the Company Secretary in advance if you intend to bring anyone.

The appeals panel

The appeals panel will comprise of between three to five persons which may include officers of the company but will include at least one person (the chair of the panel) who will be independent of the day-to-day management of the company and who may, depending on the nature of the complaint, be an accountant or solicitor or representative of a trade or professional body of which the company is a member.

No person will sit on the appeals panel if they have had any former knowledge or involvement in the case that is being dealt with at that time. The chair of the panel will be nominated from within the group of panel members. All panel members will be familiar with and have access to the complaints policy.

The panel will give careful consideration to how the complainant can be made to feel most comfortable presenting to the panel.

Appeals procedure

The Appeals Panel will determine the procedure to be followed to ensure that it is best placed to deal with the issues arising from the complaint.

The procedure for an appeal is usually as follows:

1. The complainant and Managing Director will enter the hearing together.
2. The chair will introduce the panel members and outline the process.
3. The complainant will explain the complaint.
4. The Managing Director and panel will question the complainant.
5. The Managing Director will explain the company's actions.
6. The complainant and panel will question the Managing Director.
7. The complainant will sum up their complaint.
8. The Managing Director will sum up the company's actions.
9. The chair will explain that both parties will hear from the panel within 10 business days.
10. Both parties will leave together while the panel decides.
11. The Company Secretary will stay to assist the panel with its decision making.

Note: *There may be some situations where the above procedure is amended so that the panel can hear from the company and complainant separately.*

The chair of the panel/Company Secretary will notify the complainant of the panel's decision in writing within 10 business days of the appeal hearing. The letter will set out the decision of the panel together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The letter may set out recommendations which will be made to the company.

The appeals panel may:

- dismiss all or part of the complaint
- uphold all or part of the complaint
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- evaluate all the evidence available and recommend changes to the company's systems or procedures as a preventative step against similar problems arising in the future.

The panel's decision is final. If you are unhappy with the outcome, you may wish to put your complaint to a professional or trade body of which the company is a member or to an official Ombudsman or other person representing any official registers where the company is recorded.

4. Vexatious/persistent complaints

Whilst it is hoped that this document will reduce any dissatisfaction with the company, it is acknowledged that there may be rare occasions where a complainant continues to be dissatisfied with the company and the outcomes achieved under the complaints procedure.



Where a complainant attempts to re-open an issue which has already been dealt with under the complaints procedure, the Company Secretary will contact them to inform them that the matter has already been dealt with and that either that stage of the policy has been exhausted or that the complaints procedure has been exhausted and the matter is considered closed. Where further correspondence is received on the same matter, this may be considered vexatious and the company will be under no obligation to respond to that correspondence.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the company again about the same issue, the company can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- the company has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, and the company's position has been clearly set out in writing together with the complainant's options
- the complainant is contacting the company repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time
- the company reasonably believes the aim of the contact is to cause disruption or inconvenience
- that the complainant acts or communicates in an inappropriate way towards company staff.

Once the company has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing.

The company will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the company acts reasonably.

5. Records, review and monitoring of complaints

The company will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome.

The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls. This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law.

The company will review and evaluate all complaints no matter how far they are taken or what the outcome to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have been managed any more effectively.

All records of any complaints will be kept confidential but may be inspected where appropriate by trades or professional bodies of which the company is a member or by holders of official registers in which the company is recorded.



The company will review the complaints procedure every 3 years.

6. Contact Details

In the first instance you should contact the member of staff involved in your initial point of contact with the company but in any case you can write to:

The Managing Director, FTS Group Limited, 7 Paignton Close, Middlesbrough, Teesside, TS8 9EG.

If your complaint is about the Managing Director, you should address your complaint to the Company Secretary at the above address.

7. Other Means of Complaint Resolution

We aim to resolve all our customer complaints internally.

If, however, the customer is not satisfied with the final outcome of our complaints procedure and the matter relates to a financial service or product we have provided then the customer can contact The Financial Ombudsman, details can be found at:

<http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk/contact/index.html>

Non-financial complaints can be directed to Trading Standards.

We are a member of the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (the 'BVRLA'), so if the complaint relates to a vehicle hire or finance agreement then the customer may alternatively contact the BVRLA Conciliation Service as an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution service.

Details can be found at www.bvrla.co.uk or by contacting complaint@bvrla.co.uk