



Guildford Advanced Motorists (GAM) – Managing Group Complaints

IAM RoadSmart groups have a responsibility to ensure any complaints received are responded to and dealt with in an effective and timely manner.

Definition of a Complaint: where an Associate, group member or member of the public expresses dissatisfaction with an IAM RoadSmart group, member, product or service, or failure in processes.

Note that failure to pass a test or assessment related to an IAM RoadSmart product such as Advanced Driving or Masters, etc. cannot form the basis of a complaint against an IAM RoadSmart examiner.

Complaints Policy Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that GAM has a complaints process that is flexible and responsive to the needs of individual complainants. In addition, it emphasises the need to communicate effectively with complainants.

This policy seeks to ensure that:

- Complainants are listened to and treated with courtesy, empathy and fairness;
- Complainants are kept informed of the progress and outcome of investigations into their complaint;
- Apologies are given where appropriate;
- Action to rectify the cause of the complaint is identified, implemented and evaluated;
- The group learns from complaints to continually improve relationships, products and services; and
- Complaints handling complies with confidentiality and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

All GAM group committee members must be familiar with the complaints handling process. This includes details of how Associates, members of the public, and group members can make complaints and to whom.

It is normal practice that one group committee member is ultimately responsible for dealing with complaints. They may delegate tasks to another committee member, but they remain responsible.

The committee member delegated to handle the complaint is responsible for:

- Managing the specific complaint;
- Ensuring action is taken to address issues raised in complaints and, where appropriate, identifying improvements to processes and procedures;
- Ensuring group members are aware of, and understand, the Complaints Policy;
- Ensure the complainant is aware of the complaints policy and process;



- Ensure that the person or persons that are the subject of the complaint are made aware of the complaint and provided with the opportunity to provide their version of events on the complaint content;
- Keeping the complainant informed as to progress and resolution of their complaint;
- Ensuring that fair and unbiased review of the complaint is conducted;
- Ensuring all complaints have been logged;
- Identifying improvements to GAM processes and procedures.

Receiving a Complaint

A complainant will be asked to provide full details of their complaint in writing, in an e-mail or a letter, usually addressed to the Group Secretary.

Managing a Complaint

The person in GAM responsible for handling the complaint will:

- Send an acknowledgement within 24 hours (if e-mailed) or to arrive within seven working days if posted;
- if more details are required to investigate the complaint, contact the complainant via telephone or email within two working days after the acknowledgement receipt;
- Contact the person or persons who are subject of the complaint and notify them of the existence of the complaint and content within two working days;
- Ensure the person or persons the subject of the complaint are provided with sufficient time to record their versions of events, normally this should be within 5 working days.

After the first contact, the complainant should expect an update on the progress of the complaint review in writing within 7 days. The full duration of the complaint process should not exceed 28 working days.

If the complaint cannot be resolved within this time frame, the complainant should be given regular updates on the progress of the investigation.

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and no confidential information relating to complaints will be disclosed to any third party without the prior consent of that party.

Role of complaint investigators

Investigators will:

- Ensure they take time to listen and fully understand the concerns of the complainant and the person or persons who are the subject of the complaint, which may mean asking for clarification where elements are unclear;
- Require both the complainant and the persons that are subject of the complaint to submit all responses regarding the complaint in writing with full detail; verbal input is not suitable in these cases;



- Reassure the complainant and the persons that are the subject of it that the group welcomes complaints as a means of enabling GAM service to be improved and that it will be handled in a fair and unbiased manner.

The group committee member responsible for investigating the complaint should:

- Ensure the complainant and the persons the subject of the complaint are responded to within the timescales;
- Maintain an accurate record (with dates) of all communications with the complainant and the persons that are the subject of the complaint;
- Document the original complaint and other relevant information;
- Document the issues considered;
- Document decisions or actions taken; and
- Keep copies of responses and other information collected during the investigation.

Complaint Escalation

Should the complaint be of a serious nature, such as the items outlined in an Anti-Harassment and Bullying policy or of a criminal nature, they should be brought to the immediate attention of the IAM RS Area Service Delivery Manager.

Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they should be advised that their final point of escalation is IAM RoadSmart. All escalations must be notified to the Area Service Delivery Manager.

If IAM RoadSmart considers there are no grounds for appeal the complainant will be informed of this decision in writing within ten working days. If IAM RoadSmart considers there are valid grounds for appeal this will be investigated as appropriate.

IAM RoadSmart will inform the complainant in writing of the outcome of the investigation within ten working days. If for any reason the investigation continues beyond this deadline, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and when they can expect a decision.

Although issues relevant to a particular group should be resolved by, and with the group, support and help are available from IAM RoadSmart who will be happy to give advice in confidence.

Any complaint regarding the conduct of tests or examiners should be forwarded to the Area Service Delivery Manager for investigation and action.

Complaints Process and Procedures

1. Ensure complaint is in writing and bona fide, and ensure anyone who is the subject of a complaint is made aware (Secretary);
2. Receipt and qualification of complaint (Secretary);
3. Acknowledge complaint received (Secretary);
4. Receipt and qualification using Secretary's report (Chairman);



5. If qualified – investigation plan developed – delegated to sub-group if appropriate (Chairman);
6. Sub-group investigate utilising interviews as appropriate and report to Chair a recommendation and/or action plan;

Note: Up to three panellists, normally committee members should form the interview panel. Scripted guidelines are recommended. The complainant and the person or persons that are subject of the complaint can be accompanied by a friend for support but not to play any part in the interview.

7. Committee approval of complaint handling and decision recorded;
8. Complainant and person or persons that are the subject of the complaint are made aware of the committee's decision in writing, together with any actions proposed;
9. All parties are provided with 5 working days to respond to the outcomes.

Best Practice

This process is designed to protect IAM RoadSmart, GAM, and any GAM Member or volunteer complained against as well as the complainant.

- All correspondence must be managed through a single point of contact;
- The process is in confidence;
- The process must be fair and unbiased;
- Correspondence to complainants or persons that were the subject of the complaint must be in writing via either letter or e-mail;
- The GAM committee decision is final and should be published if appropriate.

Examples of sanctions that may be applied by the committee as a result of a complaint:

(Note: this is not an exhaustive list and provided for guidance only.)

- Time bound suspension of member from the group or group activity such as observing, etc.;
- Full quality assurance check before resuming observing or official roles;
- Immediate suspension from group roles during investigation;
- Expulsion from the group;
- Non-participation in the complaints process during investigation of the complaint, then committee to suspend member immediately if required;
- Written apology to the complainant or persons that are subject to the complaint depending on the outcome of the investigation;
- Written warning to the complainant or persons that are subject to the complaint depending on the outcome of the investigation.