

6<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Public Service Provider,

**Good Administrative Practice in dealing with complaints during the Covid-19 Emergency**

I should like to inform you that the Office of the Ombudsman fully appreciates that the Covid-19 emergency is placing unique pressures on all Public Service Providers in Gibraltar.

We, in turn, are therefore keeping the pressure off Public Service Providers, as far as possible, with regard to the follow-up of complaints so that you can concentrate fully on this emergency situation.

However, in light of the pandemic, and although we are mindful of the consequent pressures on public bodies, we must nevertheless continue with our work on the follow-up of complaints received from the users of our public services, especially the cases that may require urgent attention.

The Office of the Ombudsman continues to receive complaints over the phone and by email and our staff continues to address the more urgent issues and provide support and advice to the public where possible.

Please note that it is important that Public Service Providers also continue to respond appropriately to any complaints from their service users during this time of emergency and, in this respect, it is important to note that the Principles of Good Administrative Practice should continue to apply to us all.

The following is intended as an easy guide for Public Services Providers on the most important of these Principles of Good Administrative Practice.

Yours sincerely,



Dilip Dayaram Tirathdas  
Public Services Ombudsman

# **Principles of Good Administrative Practice**

## **1. Getting it right**

Basic record keeping is vital during working, even during an emergency. There should always be a clear audit trail of how and why decisions were made, particularly summarising key reasons for departing from normal practice.

## **2. Being service-user focused**

Where new or adapted policies and procedures are brought in, we must ensure that frontline staff is clear about any new expectations so they give the right advice to service users.

## **3. Being open and accountable**

The basis on which decisions are made and resources allocated, even under emergency conditions, should be open and transparent. Any new criteria, thresholds and timescales should be clear to service users and staff.

## **4. Acting fairly and proportionately**

If you use new or revised policies and processes this should not lead to arbitrary decisions and actions. We need to ensure that there is a clear framework for fair and consistent decision-making and operational delivery.

## **5. Putting things right**

Although complaint-handling capacity will probably be reduced during this time, it is important that Public Service Providers are still able to deal effectively with the most serious and high-risk issues that are brought to them.

## **6. Seeking continuous improvement**

We should continue to use complaints as an effective and immediate form of feedback, even during this emergency situation. Complaints can continue to tell us where new challenges are developing and where things are going wrong.