

Working in Hospitality and Catering

Mini case study – Wales Tourist Board: Dealing with Complaints



The contents of this case study are taken from the Wales Tourist Board's 'Food for Thought' practical guide for food and drink providers. The extracts are included with the kind permission of the Wales Tourist Board.

Background to Dealing with Complaints

Staff require training in how to deal with customer complaints.

Complaints need not have a negative effect. Like other forms of customer feedback such as compliments, observations and opinions, they provide opportunities for learning from which you can modify service delivery and improve overall performance.

The Welcome Host customer service programme can provide guidance on handling complaints, resolving problems and obtaining customer feedback.

Effective service can minimise or undo the damage.

Handling Complaints

Here are some pointers:

- *don't be defensive or take the criticism personally*
- *stay calm*
- *pay attention and jot down a few notes if necessary*
- *empathise with the customer (editor's note: this means to show that you understand how the customer feels)*
- *apologise when appropriate – an acknowledgement of the problem and an apology resolves the majority of complaints satisfactorily*
- *if you don't know the answer to the problem, admit it, make a commitment to respond to the customer within a certain timescale, and stick to it*
- *find out what it will take to turn dissatisfaction into satisfaction; does the customer want a refund or future discount?; ask 'will this problem be solved if we?'*
- *make the customer part of the solution not the problem*
- *thank the customer for drawing your attention to the problem and take remedial action*

For further information and useful materials in Welsh and English visit the Wales Tourist Board websites:

www.wtbonline.gov.uk – trade

www.visitwales.co.uk - consumers