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ANNEX 4.3 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD ADMINISTRATION

The Ombudsman's Principles of Good Public Administration set out the standards against which services may be judged in the event of failure of delivery or complaint.

Principles of Good Administration

Good administration by a public body means:

- 1 Getting it right
 - Acting in accordance with the law and with due regard for the rights of those concerned.
 - Acting in accordance with the public body's policy and guidance (published or internal).
 - Taking proper account of established good practice.
 - Providing effective services, using appropriately trained and competent staff.
 - Taking reasonable decisions, based on all relevant considerations.
- 2 Being customer focused
 - Ensuring people can access services easily.
 - Informing customers what they can expect and what the public body expects of them.
 - Keeping to its commitments, including any published service standards.
 - Dealing with people helpfully, promptly and sensitively, bearing in mind their individual circumstances.
 - Responding to customers' needs flexibly, including, where appropriate, co-ordinating a response with other service providers.
- 3 Being open and accountable
 - Being open and clear about policies and procedures and ensuring that information, and any advice provided, is clear, accurate and complete.
 - Stating its criteria for decision making and giving reasons for decisions.
 - Handling information properly and appropriately.
 - Keeping proper and appropriate records.
 - Taking responsibility for its actions.
- 4 Acting fairly and proportionately
 - Treating people impartially, with respect and courtesy.
 - Treating people without unlawful discrimination or prejudice, and ensuring no conflict of interests.
 - Dealing with people and issues objectively and consistently.
 - Ensuring that decisions and actions are proportionate, appropriate and fair.

5 Putting things right

- Acknowledging mistakes and apologising where appropriate.
- Putting mistakes right quickly and effectively.
- Providing clear and timely information on how and when to appeal or complain.
- Operating an effective complaints procedure, which includes offering a fair and appropriate remedy when a complaint is upheld.

6 Seeking continuous improvement

- Reviewing policies and procedures regularly to ensure they are effective.
- Asking for feedback and using it to improve services and performance.
- Ensuring that the public body learns lessons from complaints and uses these to improve services and performance.

These Principles are not a checklist to be applied mechanically. Public bodies should use their judgment in applying the Principles to produce reasonable, fair and proportionate results in the circumstances. The Ombudsman will adopt a similar approach in deciding whether maladministration or service failure has occurred.

Further details on the Principles of Good Administration are available at www.ombudsman.org.uk/improving_services/good_administration/principles.html