

Introduction

We aim to provide good quality services for everyone but sometimes things can go wrong. If they do, we need to know so we can put them right and learn from our mistakes. We also like to know when we do something well, or a customer has a suggestion about something we could do better.

Who can provide feedback

We encourage anyone that uses or is affected by our services to give us feedback. We also accept feedback from people acting on behalf of someone else, with their consent, such as friends, representatives, or advocacy workers.

Other organisations

Feedback about an organisation providing services on our behalf will be investigated by relevant organisation. We require them to comply with this policy by:

- recording and responding to customer feedback;
- providing us with information when requested;
- maintaining a single channel of communication with us; and
- assisting us with complaint investigations as appropriate.

Where feedback concerns both the Council and another organisation, we maintain a single channel of communication and co-ordinate responses.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial response from the relevant organisation, they can escalate the matter through the complaints process described below. The matter will then be dealt with by the Council's Corporate Feedback Team.

How we deal with compliments and suggestions

We record compliments received from customers when an officer has gone out of their way to help or provided a level of service which is considered to be above and beyond their daily role. The officer who is the subject of the compliment will receive a letter of appreciation from their Head of Service.

Our [e-form](#) is the preferred way to provide a compliment or suggestion.

Customers will be signposted to the [e-form](#) in the first instance. However, where appropriate, we will accept compliments and suggestions provided in other ways, such as face to face or by telephone. We also make reasonable adjustments to support customers unable to use alternative means of communication as a result of a disability.

We will acknowledge suggestions and refer them for consideration to the appropriate service. Within 10 working days the service officer will advise the customer of action taken to implement the suggestion or give reasons why it cannot be implemented.

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How we deal with complaints

How to make a complaint

Our [e-form](#) is the preferred way to make a complaint. This is because it sets out all the information we need customers to provide to us in order to deal with the complaint fully and in a timely manner.

Customers will be signposted to the [e-form](#) in the first instance. However, where appropriate, we will accept complaints provided in other ways, such as face to face or by telephone. We also make reasonable adjustments to support customers unable to use alternative means of communication as a result of a disability.

What is a complaint?

Our definition of a complaint is “an expression of dissatisfaction about a Council service (whether that service is provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner) that requires a response”.

A simple enquiry, request or report of a single service failure will not be recorded as a complaint (e.g. a report of a missed bin collection, streetlight not working, or repair being needed). This is because such issues can usually be put right reasonably quickly and without detailed investigation.

Matters excluded from our complaints policy are set out at the end of this policy.

Designated point of contact

All complaints are overseen by the Corporate Feedback Team, who provide a designated point of contact responsible for co-ordinating each individual complaint. The feedback team also regularly monitor timescales and review the process periodically.

A complaint will be referred to the relevant service area(s) within the Council to provide a response.

Stages

There is a two-stage procedure:

- Stage One, service resolution – investigated by an officer within the service complained about, and
- Stage Two, independent review – conducted by the Corporate Feedback Team (CFT) on behalf of the Chief Executive.

All complaints are dealt with at Stage One and some progress to Stage Two.

At Stage One, we will endeavour to resolve all issues. However, if an individual is not happy with the response provided, they can escalate their complaint to Stage Two with details of:

- aspects of the Stage One response they are dissatisfied with; and
- action they now want the Council to take.

Complaints about members of staff and about the application of a Council policy are dealt with as a one-stage internal process.

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Complaints about members of staff

Complaints about members of staff are investigated by the person’s line manager. There is only one internal stage. Complaints about members of staff cannot be considered at the Independent Review stage.

The line manager will discuss the complaint with the employee. Where the customer and/or employee have witnesses to the incident, the manager may decide to contact them and ask them to make a statement. If the manager decides that the employee’s actions should be dealt with under our disciplinary process, the customer will be notified of this but will not be informed of the outcome.

Complaints about policy

Where a complaint is solely related to the application of a council policy, the complaint will be investigated under the customer feedback procedure at the first stage only. The complaint investigation will be undertaken by an officer of sufficient seniority to have full knowledge of the details of the policy and its practical application. The officer will make sure that:

- the policy is up to date and consistent with appropriate legislation and standards,
- the policy has been properly and fairly applied in this particular case, and
- the response provides a clear explanation of both the policy and its application in this particular case.

A Stage Two complaint is investigated at our discretion depending on why the complainant is unhappy with the response provided, and whether we would be able to achieve the result the complainant wants or in some cases whether it would be better to ask the service area to look at the issues again.

	Stage One	Stage Two
Timescale for making a complaint	Ordinarily within 12 months of the incident occurring	Within 6 months of the Stage One response.
Acknowledgement	Within two working days of the complaint being submitted as long as all necessary information has been provided.	Within five working days of the complaint being submitted as long as all necessary information has been provided.
Response	Within ten working days of the complaint being submitted as long as all necessary information has been provided.	Within twenty working days of the complaint being submitted as long as all necessary information has been provided.
Next step if still dissatisfied	Escalate to Stage Two	Contact relevant Ombudsman

Timescale

It is much easier to put things right if a complaint is received at the time. Therefore, complaints should be made as soon as possible and within 12 months from the incident complained of.

The Council will not normally accept complaints made after more than 12 months. However, the Council may decide to investigate a later complaint in exceptional circumstances. An explanation for the delay with supporting evidence will normally be required. When deciding whether to accept a complaint after 12 months have passed from the incident complained of, the Council will consider all relevant factors including:

- The reasons for the delay in making the complaint;
- The extent to which any Council service is responsible for the delay;
- The personal circumstances of the complainant; and
- The extent to which any disability or vulnerability of the complainant has contributed to the delay.

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Information sharing

A member of staff who is the subject of the complaint will not be responsible for investigating or responding to that complaint. Where a complaint is made against a member of staff, they will be informed and given the opportunity to comment. A complaint will be investigated by a different person at Stage Two than at Stage One.

Information about the complainant will be treated as confidential and disclosed only so far as is necessary to investigate and respond to the complaint. Where appropriate, anonymous complaints will be accepted.

Response

Complaints will be considered fairly, impartially, and with an open mind. The relevant service area will respond to the customer and ensure any appropriate action is taken. Responses will be clear and evidence based. Where appropriate, mediation and/or conciliation will be considered.

Learning

We are committed to learning from complaints in order to improve Council services. The feedback team produce regular reports about complaints in order to ensure that lessons are learnt, and any patterns are identified. These reports are sent to the respective Heads of Service, the investigator of the complaint, the relevant Directors and to the Chief Executive. All new staff are informed of their role and responsibilities under this policy. Periodic updates are provided to existing staff and additional training is provided as and when needed.

An annual report is produced about complaints, member enquiries, freedom of information requests and Ombudsman cases. This reflects on the results achieved, and it includes comparisons with other authorities' results and with the Council's results from previous years. The report is sent to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who consider any action that should be taken to ensure the Council learns from its mistakes.

Exclusions

Where a member of the public has raised their concerns about a Council Service through an elected member (a Councillor or MP) rather than through the complaints process, this is dealt with as a Member Enquiry rather than a complaint.

Complaints about Councillors have a separate process dealt with by the [Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee](#).

Complaints relating to Adult Social Care and / or Children and Young Peoples Social Care are dealt with under different regulations set out in Appendix One and Two.

We will not usually investigate complaints which fall into one of the following categories:

- The commencement or conduct of legal proceedings.
- Matters of law or central government policy.
- Personnel matters, including an employee or ex-employee's appointment, removal, pay, discipline or pension.
- Where there is an alternative appeal process before a court or tribunal, e.g. about the refusal of planning permission, school admissions or exclusions, housing benefit, penalty charge notices, contractors or suppliers disputing invoices, terms of contracts or alleging a breach of contract.
- General disagreement with Council policy.
- Matters that are best dealt with by an insurer (e.g. about the merits of an insurance claim).

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- Matters already decided by a court, tribunal or ombudsman ruling.
- Data protection breaches.
- Freedom of information / environmental information requests.
- Complaints relating to Child Protection Conferences
Complaints about the conduct or operation of a Child Protection (CP) conference are not dealt with through the Council's complaints Procedure. Instead, they will be referred to the [Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership](#).
Such complaints may be about:
 - the process of the conference;
 - the outcome, in terms of the fact of and/or the category of primary concern at the time the child became the subject of a child protection plan; and/or
 - a decision for the child to become, or not to become, the subject of a child protection plan or not to cease the child being the subject of a child protection plan.
- Children and young people's social care complaints falling within the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 ([these are dealt with under a separate statutory procedure](#)).
- Adult social care complaints falling within the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 ([these are dealt with under a separate statutory procedure](#)).

Unreasonably Persistent Complainants and Unreasonable Customer Behaviour

We are committed to dealing with all customers fairly, ensuring we provide high quality services, and a clear, and timely response when they contact us. In a minority of cases where customers exhibit unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour this impacts on resources, the wellbeing of our staff and can hinder our service provision to others. Exceptionally, we may need to take proportionate action to limit these customers' contact with the Council. The Policy for Managing Unreasonable or Unacceptable Customer Behaviour sets out how we deal with unreasonable complainants and customers.

Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that our feedback process is accessible to all and understood by staff and the public. The Council will comply with its duties under equalities and human rights legislation. We will make reasonable adjustments for customers with a disability and arrange translations or an interpreter where appropriate.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months, or earlier if a specific change needs to be made.

Version 1.1

Last updated by Debbie Darling on 10th September 2019

Version 1.2.

Reviewed by Debbie Darling, Vivienne Sedgley & Sue Dyos June 2020