



CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Updated November 2019
Next Review 2021

We welcome your feedback

We are committed to providing high quality services and we welcome your feedback on how we are performing.

Our staff take great pride in their work and we love hearing from customers who have received excellent service.

We always try to get things right first time, but we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and if they do, we want to know, so we can put them right and learn from any mistakes.

This policy explains how you can make a compliment, comment or complaint and how we will investigate it and respond back to you.

Complaints

What is a complaint?

We consider a complaint to be an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action or lack of action whether that service is provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner. We will always encourage you to resolve your problems directly with the relevant service area before making a complaint, as this is most often the quickest way of resolving problems when they occur.

Please use our complaints process if you think the Council has not:

- Provided the standard or quality of service promised.
- Followed our own policies.
- Responded promptly to your enquiry or request for service.
- Treated you fairly.
- Treated you with courtesy.

If you make a complaint to the Council, we will investigate and respond using the procedure set out in this policy. We promise to deal with your complaint promptly, courteously and fairly.

When dealing with complaints, the Council works in line with the Local Government Ombudsmen's (December 2018) six principles of good administration:

1. Getting it right...
2. Being service user focused...
3. Being open and accountable...
4. Acting fairly and proportionately...
5. Putting things right ...
6. Seeking continuous improvement...

If you would prefer us not to investigate and respond, you can still make a comment on our services, which we will feed back to the relevant manager.

The Council also recognises that sometimes serious dissatisfaction with our services may be expressed informally. In these cases, due to the nature of the service failure, the Council itself may choose to invoke the complaints procedure, to ensure that the issue is properly investigated, resolved and that lessons learned are captured.

Not a complaint?

Sometimes the complaint process is not the most appropriate route to address your concern. If this is the case, we will contact you and explain what statutory or other processes are open to you. Examples of issues that we cannot address through our complaints process include:

- When you first report a fault or problem (e.g. reporting a bin has not been collected or a leaking roof in a Council-owned property).
- When you have concerns about an issue in the District, such as a noise or public nuisance – these should be directed to our Environmental Protection team who will investigate and may need to take enforcement action.
- Where there is a statutory right of appeal – this will be the case if you are unhappy with your council tax band or you have had your planning application refused.
- A request for information or an explanation of Council policy or practice.
- Matters relating to a request for a service that has been previously notified to the Council and is awaiting action within an agreed timescale (e.g. a non-urgent housing repair that may be actioned up to 28 days after notification).

If you would like more information on any of the issues listed above, please contact Customer Services on 01530 454545 who will be happy to advise you.

How can I make a comment or complaint?

The complaints process is open to everyone who receives, should receive, or requests a service from the Council. You can contact us via the following channels:

- Click [here](#) to complete our online Have Your Say form
- Calling our Customer Services team on 01530 454545.
- Through your Councillor, Housing Officer, or Support Worker
- Visiting in person at the Council Offices or writing to us:

Feedback Team
NWLDC Council Offices
Whitwick Road
Coalville,
Leicestershire LE67 3FJ

What will happen when I make a complaint?

We investigate all complaints thoroughly and with an open mind. If you want a friend or relative to take your complaint forward on your behalf, please let us know and we will be happy to work through your representative. You might also want to seek help from your local ward councillor – a key part of a councillor's role is to act as a community champion and he or she would be happy to help you. Contact details for your councillor can be found on the Council website, or by calling the Customer Services team on 01530 454545.

All complaints are acknowledged within two working days. We will provide a complaint reference number and advise when you can expect a response.

We will then look into your complaint and aim to provide a response within 10 working days.

Sometimes this process may take longer, for example if we need further information or the complaint is very complex, but we will update you on the progress of your investigation every 10 working days until a full response can be given.

If we are at fault then we will apologise and try to put things right. If we do not think we are at fault then we will explain why.

This is the first stage of the Council's complaint process.

How will we respond?

The Manager investigating your complaint will select the most appropriate means to respond to your complaint.

We encourage, where appropriate; managers to have informal discussions with complainants before issuing the final response. This ensures that the Council has understood the issue and your expectations correctly, allowing us to explain the proposed action and closure.

In issuing the final response, the Council may respond in a variety of means depending on the nature of the complaint and your needs. Possible channels may include verbal, face to face, email or in writing.

We will always write or email you to confirm that the complaint has been closed.

What if you are unhappy with the response to your complaint?

If you are unhappy with the response to your complaint then you can ask for the complaint to be reviewed by a Senior Manager, who will reconsider your case and respond.

You will need to explain which aspects of the previous reply you are not happy with and what more you think we should do. This must be received no later than one calendar month from the date of the stage one reply.

We will acknowledge your request for a review within 2 working days and aim to provide a written response within 10 working days, again this process might sometimes take longer and we will keep you informed of progress every 10 working days until a full response can be given.

This is the second stage of the Council's complaint process.

Complaining to the Local Government Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman

We aim to resolve your complaint through our internal process, but if you are still not satisfied with our response you can write to the Local Government Ombudsman; or the Housing Ombudsman in the case of tenants in Council-owned properties with complaints about housing matters. Please be aware that both Ombudsman will normally only deal with your complaint if you have previously given the Council the chance to consider your complaint through stages one and two listed above.

This is the third stage of the Council's complaint process.

Local Government Ombudsman

Contact details for the Local Government Ombudsman are:

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint

Housing Ombudsman

Tenants in Council-owned properties with unresolved complaints about housing matters can complain to the Housing Ombudsman. Before contacting the Housing Ombudsman, it is recommended that tenants ask a 'Designated Person' (an MP, an Elected Member of the Council) to help them resolve their complaint. A 'Designated Person' will help to mediate between the Council and the tenant, and can make a

referral to the Housing Ombudsman if they feel a resolution cannot be achieved through mediation.

It is up to tenants who they approach to take on the 'Designated Person' role on their behalf. Please contact the Customer Services on 01530 454545 who can provide assistance with contacting a 'Designated Person' (MP or Local Councillor).

Tenants may choose to refer their complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman (without a referral from a 'Designated Person') 8 weeks after receiving a stage 2 response from the Council, however the Housing Ombudsman may choose to refer complaints received directly from complainants back to a 'Designated Person' if this stage has not been completed prior to self-referral to the Ombudsman.

Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman are:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Complaints about third parties

Where there is a complaint about a service which the Council is responsible for but is delivered by a third party, for example a contractor, the Council remains accountable to its customers and for any service failure. We advise in the first instance that you contact the third party directly to discuss and resolve the issue. If an outcome cannot be agreed the Council should then be contacted. Please be aware that we may need to share your personal details with the third party in order to proceed with our investigations.

Anonymous complaints

When taking details of a complaint, staff will always encourage customers to provide their identity in order for their complaint to be effectively processed. However, complaints may be made anonymously and will still be treated with the same degree of importance and within the relevant timescales set out in our procedure above. Anonymous complaints may be more difficult to investigate, and therefore in most cases will be recorded as informal complaints and investigated by the service involved in order to identify possible areas for service improvement.

What we ask of our customers

When you make a complaint, it may take some time to thoroughly investigate and respond. Our complaints procedure sets out the timescales in which you can expect to receive either an update into the progress of the investigation into your complaint or a response. We ask that the Council is given time to investigate in order to respond properly.

Customers should appreciate that not all complaints may be resolved to their satisfaction; however we will always apologise and try to make things right if we find we are at fault. We will not tolerate abusive or unreasonable behaviour whilst investigating your complaint and ask that our staff are treated with courtesy and respect.

A very small minority of customers persist unreasonably with their complaints. This may be by:

- Continued complaints about the same issue for which they have already received a response
- Frequent complaints about a number of issues
- Frequent or abusive contact with our staff while complaints are being investigated
- Vexatious complaints targeted at individuals or teams within the Council or at Elected Members.

This can hinder our consideration of their and other people's complaints and make it difficult to resolve genuine grievances. The Council will take action as appropriate against customers that we consider to be persisting unreasonably with their complaints against the Council. Actions may include but are not limited to; restriction of points of access, a consolidated and/or a limited number of replies, or in very severe cases; legal action and withdrawal of service.

A decision to act against a persistent or vexations complainant, will be made by the Head of Customer Services, in conjunction with the appropriate service area Head of Service and Legal Services (as required). Where this action is used, the customer will be notified in writing of; this, the level of restriction and the length of time that it will be applied for.

Equal Opportunities

The Council uses the same process to investigate all complaints, and every complainant will receive the same level of service regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We recognise that some groups are more vulnerable than others. Complaints involving equality issues will be handled with particular sensitivity to ensure that the matter is resolved quickly and fairly and in accordance with the Council's equality commitments.

All complaints received will be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Compliments

If we have done something particularly well, or if you think one of our staff deserves a special thank you, please let us know. You can contact us using the same methods.

Complaints process summary flow chart

