

Summary of Comments, Compliments and Complaints

The Council wants to know what the public think of its services.

They can let us know in person, telephone us, send us a fax, e-mail us, write to us or use our website.

When a customer contacts us with a comment or suggestion we consider what they say and see if we can improve the service we provide.

If a customer makes a compliment about us, we pass it on to the employee or service areas involved.

Most problems can be resolved by talking to us.

The 'complaint' aspect of the 3Cs service comes to the fore when a customer has tried to resolve a problem with the Council on an informal basis but they remain unhappy.

Notwithstanding our desire to resolve problems informally it does not mean that a customer cannot make a complaint whenever they want to.

Customers can complain when:

- We have failed to do something we should have done
- We have done something badly or in the wrong way
- We have treated them unfairly or impolitely

All complaints are recorded on the corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. As well as being able to record details of who has made a complaint the CRM system allows us to record who or what the complaint is about and what the customer would like to happen in order for the matter to be resolved.

The CRM system provides reminders to staff when response deadlines are due and allows managers to track progress of complaints in their area.

All complaints are acknowledged and customers are provided with a unique reference number that is allocated to their complaint and a leaflet which explains the procedure including their escalation rights if they remain unhappy.

We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible - our policy states that we should resolve all complaints within 10 working days of receipt.

If we are unable to provide a response within 10 working days we will contact the customer to explain why and provide details of when we expect to complete our investigation.

A senior person in the service area (usually a Team Leader or Service Manager) undertakes a full investigation of the complaint. They record details of the outcome of their investigation on the CRM system.

This initial stage is known as Stage 1 of the process.

If the customer is unhappy with the initial response we have a review process – known as Stage 2.

The customer is required to contact the Head of Service or Director of the service area they are complaining about (exactly who will depend on who provided the Stage 1 response). The customer will be provided of the name and contact details of who they can escalate their complaint to and they are asked to explain why they are unhappy with the initial response. They have 14 days in which to do this.

The Stage 2 review takes place and a further response is issued. This response will provide contact details of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) – if the customer remains unhappy with the Council's response the LGO is the next escalation point, or Stage 3 of the process.

The customer is given the opportunity to discuss their complaint in person if they wish to.

At all stages during the process we tell the customer that they can also get advice and support from their local councillor with the relevant contact details being provided to them.

Key targets

- All complaints to be acknowledged within 4 working days of receipt
- Response to LGO enquiries to be made within 28 days of receipt of request