

## Do you have a complaint?

By complaint we mean any situation in which you are unhappy with the service or lack of service you have received from the Authority. This applies whether the action was taken or the service was provided by the Authority itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Authority.

You can make your complaint by requesting or downloading a [Complaints Form](#).

Please do not use this form for routine requests for services (for example reporting everyday problems) or initial requests for action (such as reporting a broken gate on a right of way) - matters like these should be directed to the service concerned by contacting us as detailed above. We do receive a number of complaints that are related to services provided by the District and County Councils e.g. waste management and highways. To avoid a delay in your complaint being resolved please check your complaint is regarding a service that we provide - these can be found on our [services we provide leaflet](#).

You can help us consider your complaint by providing us with as much information as possible about what you feel has gone wrong and what you feel the Authority should do to put it right. If you find it difficult to put your complaint in writing you can telephone our main number and speak to one of our Corporate and Customer Support Assistants who will write down your complaint for you.

The identity of a person making a complaint will be made known only to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to any other person or made public by the Authority. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

The Authority operates a three stage complaints procedure to ensure complaints are dealt with impartially, objectively and professionally:

**Stage 1:** many complaints can be dealt with quickly and satisfactorily by the "front line" staff who provide the service. This is an opportunity for an informal and quick solution to a complaint. An answer will be given within 10 working days and at the end of this stage complainants will be told what they may do if they remain dissatisfied.

**Stage 2:** complex and serious complaints and those where the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 1, will be considered by the Authority's Complaints Officer, the Head of Personnel and Corporate Support. An answer will be given within 10 working days and at the end of this stage complainants will be told what they may do if they remain dissatisfied.

**Stage 3:** if a complainant is still dissatisfied after Stages 1 and 2 the Chief Executive can be asked to consider the complaint. A response will be given by the Chief Executive within 10 working days.

Some complaints may be complex and take longer than 10 days to deal with properly. In such cases the complainant will be notified within 10 days and given a date when a reply may be expected.

### **The Ombudsman**

If you are still dissatisfied after going through Authority's procedures outlined above, you may complain to the [Local Government Ombudsman](#) at the Commission for Local Administration in England. The Ombudsman will not question what the Authority has done simply because you do not agree with its decision. The complaint must be about maladministration, i.e. that something went wrong procedurally. You may also claim to have suffered injustice as a consequence.

The Ombudsman will expect claimants to have first raised their complaint with the Authority and given the Authority a chance to respond. The Ombudsman would normally allow about 12 weeks for a response but may get involved earlier if there are extenuating circumstances.

### **Learning from complaints**

The Authority wants to resolve problems as soon as possible and, ideally, prevent them from happening again. Your reporting of problems gives the Authority chance to put matters right. If your complaint is upheld you will receive a written apology and an undertaking to prevent recurrence of the problem and efforts will be made to remedy the problem.