



## CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

### We welcome your feedback

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

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 provided by the Council, its staff, or contractors that requires a formal response. We will always encourage you to resolve your problems directly with the relevant service area before making a formal 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.

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.

## Not a complaint?

Sometimes the complaint process is not the most appropriate route to address your concern. If this is the case, we will write to 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 Health 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 (eg 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 01530454545 who will be happy to advise you.

## How can I make a comment or complaint?

The complaints process is open to everyone who receives or requests a service from North West Leicestershire District Council. You can complain to us by:

- Completing our online complaints form at:  
[http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/complaints\\_comments\\_and\\_compliments](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/complaints_comments_and_compliments)
- Emailing us on [feedback@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@nwleicestershire.gov.uk)
- Using the Have your Say form available by telephoning 01530454545
- Through your Councillor, Housing Officer, or Support Worker
- Visiting in person at the Council Offices or writing to us:

Complaints Officer  
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 01530454545.

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 provide a written 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 you receive a response.

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.**

### **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 the Chief Executive, who will review your case and respond. You will need to put your concerns in writing, stating 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 you receive a response.

**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  
Fax: 024 7682 0001  
Website: [www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint](http://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, or a Designated Tenant Panel) 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 Complaints Officer on 01530454784 who can provide a referral form and assistance with contacting a 'Designated Person'.

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  
81 Aldwych  
London  
WC2B 4HN

Telephone : 0300 111 3000

Fax : 020 7831 1942

Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/resolve-a-complaint](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/resolve-a-complaint)

**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.

**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 be 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 respect.

A very small minority of customers persist unreasonably with their complaints, either 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, or 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 we consider to be persisting unreasonably with their complaints against the Council.

## Compensation

In some circumstances an apology is not enough. In these situations we will offer a complainant compensation to make up for failure or poor standard of service.

Evidence of any financial loss should be sought which can include copies of bills, receipts and written estimates from a registered business. When deciding on the amount of compensation payable, we will make reference to the following:

- Right to Repair Scheme
- Right to compensation for Improvements
- Housing Compensation process

If you believe you may be eligible for compensation, please request a copy of our Compensation Policy by contacting 01530454784 or emailing [feedback@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@nwleicestershire.gov.uk) which sets out how to make a claim.

## Equal Opportunities

The Council uses the same process to investigate all complaints, and every complainant will receive the same level of service regardless of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or faith.

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 Equal Opportunities Statement.

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

## Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

## 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 set out for making a comment or complaint.

## Reviewing this policy

In order to ensure North West Leicestershire District Council continue to provide the best possible complaints handling service for their customers, this policy will be subject to ongoing evaluation and review by the Performance & Projects Team.

Reference has been made to the following documents when producing this policy:

- Guidance on running a complaints system/good practice - Local Government Ombudsman).
- Good practice guides on remedies – Local Government Ombudsman.

This policy was last reviewed on 04/06/2014

**Equality Impact Assessment undertaken and approved on: DD/MM/YYYY**

**Complaints process summary flow chart**

