

# Corporate Comments, Complaints & Compliments Policy

This document is available in Welsh /  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.



## **Comments, Complaints & Compliments**

We are committed to dealing effectively with any complaints you have about our services and if you make a complaint it will not affect your right to Council services. If we have made a mistake we will apologise and try to put things right. If we have failed to provide a service that you are entitled to and you let us know about this, we will provide it.

We review complaints regularly and produce an annual report that contains information about the number and type of complaints we have received. Wherever possible, we use this information to improve the way we do things. We also welcome comments and compliments about the services we have provided.

This policy also applies to how we will deal with complaints from members of the public relating to our compliance with the Welsh language standards, which we have a statutory duty to comply with under the Welsh Language [Wales] Measure 2011.

### **How to Complain**

We want it to be simple and convenient for you to complain, make a comment or pay us a compliment. We welcome complaints in both English and Welsh, and we will respond in whichever language you contact us by. You can contact us by:

- filling in an online complaint form at [www.cardiff.gov.uk](http://www.cardiff.gov.uk)
- calling our contact centre, Connect to Cardiff (C2C), on 029 2087 2087
- visiting our Citizen Hubs



- using our Minicom service if you are deaf or hard of hearing (029 2087 2085)
- filling in a Complaint, Compliment & Comment Form and sending it to Complaints & Compliments, Room 412, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff CF10 4UW
- e-mailing us at [C2C@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:C2C@cardiff.gov.uk)

We aim to make forms available at all Council buildings and appropriate locations in the community. If you need information in another format or language, please contact us.

### **What can you expect from us when you make a complaint?**

If we receive a complaint from you, we will do all that we can to help you and we will try to find a solution to any problems you have brought to our attention. We will ensure that your complaint is sent to the relevant department/s for a response and ask them to:

- acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of the date that they receive it
- aim to resolve the complaint within 20 working days - if your complaint is more complex they may need more time.
- let you know within the 20 working day period if they think it may take longer to investigate your complaint and tell you how long they expect it to take, providing regular updates

We will respect your right to confidentiality and privacy and we will treat you fairly and in accordance with our commitment to equality.



If you are asking us for a service for the first time - such as reporting a faulty street light or a pothole - you should give us a chance to put things right. If you are not happy with our response and you let us know, we will then treat it as a complaint.

The person who is investigating your concerns will firstly aim to establish the facts. In some instances we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

The extent of the investigation will depend on the seriousness and complexity of the issues you have raised and in more complicated cases we may have to draw up an investigation plan. We will set out our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for. In some cases we may ask an officer from another service area to investigate your complaint or we may appoint an independent investigator from outside the Council – this would mainly apply to very serious situations or cases where there is a statutory procedure for dealing with the complaint, such as that used by Social Services.

We will look at relevant evidence and this could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular complaint. If you do not want the person investigating the complaint to see the files that we hold in relation to your complaint, it is important for you to let us know about this. If necessary, we will also talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.



## **Outcome**

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found and we will use your preferred form of communication, such as letter or e-mail, when we contact you. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we have done something wrong, we will tell you this, explain what happened and apologise. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

## **Putting Things Right**

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it; we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right. If you had to pay for a service, when you should have had one from us, or if you were entitled to funding you did not receive, we will usually aim to make good what you have lost.



## **Training for Council Employees**

We will make sure that our staff are trained to handle complaints effectively and receive appropriate training in the use of the Council's Complaints Policy. We will arrange workshops to take place in English or Welsh depending on the requirements of staff.

## **What we expect from you**

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, our employees have the same rights and we will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour such as aggressive or abusive behaviour or unreasonable demands. We have separate guidelines to help us manage unacceptable behaviour.

## **The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**

You can contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales about your complaint at any time. However, the Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly



You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- e-mailing: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)
- phoning: 0300 790 0203
- visiting the website: [www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Are there any time limits that I should be aware of?

Normally, we will only be able to look at your complaint if you tell us about it within six months of the date that you first became aware of the problem. However, we may still consider your complaint if you provide strong reasons for taking longer than six months to tell us about the problem. In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than twelve months ago.

### 2. What if my complaint involves more than one organisation or department?

If your complaint involves more than one department, we will ask each department to prepare a response and, where possible, we will incorporate these into one letter of response.

If your complaint involves more than one organisation, we will work with these organisations to address your complaint and to decide who will take the lead in dealing with and responding to your concerns. For example, we sometimes work with South Wales Police, housing associations, the NHS and bailiffs.



Where possible, we will try to put you in touch with other organisations that might be able to help.

### 3. Are there any complaints that are not covered by this policy?

This policy does not apply if the complaint relates to a **Freedom of Information** or **Data Protection** request because there is a separate process for making complaints about this service. You can register these complaints by:

- e-mailing: [FOI@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:FOI@cardiff.gov.uk)
- phoning: 029 2087 3317
- visiting the Council website at [www.cardiff.gov.uk](http://www.cardiff.gov.uk)
- writing to Improvement & Information, Cardiff Council, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF10 4UW

There are some other complaints that will be dealt with outside our complaints policy, such as: complaints involving a statutory right of appeal; complaints that are covered by a separate grievance process; complaints involving objections to planning permission and complaints about a decision not to give a child a place at a particular school.

However, if you have concerns about these processes we can offer advice about how to make your concerns known. We can also give you more information about other organisations that might be able to help you with your complaint.





**4. Do you start from the date that I contacted you when you are counting the number of working days?**

We count the number of working days from the date that we receive your complaint and we do not include weekends or bank holidays.

**5. Do you always send letters when you are acknowledging complaints?**

No, we sometimes contact complainants by telephone to acknowledge their complaints. We try to base the method of communication on individual preferences and, for example, if you have asked to be contacted by e-mail we will respond by e-mail.

**6. Can I complain on behalf of another person?**

Yes, but you must normally have their permission (signed permission) and you must explain why you are representing them and why they are unable to make the complaint.

**7. I am under 18 – can I use the policy?**

You can use this policy if you are under the age of 18 and if you need help to use it, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline (phone 080880 23456, [www.meiccymru.org](http://www.meiccymru.org)) or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales using the details below.

01792 765600 (South Wales)



01492 523333 (North Wales)

post@childcomwales.org.uk

[www.childcom.org.uk](http://www.childcom.org.uk)

**South Wales Office:**

Oystermouth House

Phoenix Way

Llansamlet

Swansea

SA7 9FS

**North Wales Office:**

Penrhos Manor

Oak Drive

Colwyn Bay Conwy

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