



Complaints and Compliments Policy

Contents	Page
Introduction	2
Why we have a complaints and compliments policy	2
How we deal with complaints and compliments	2
Complaints - The 2 stage process	3
What is excluded from this policy?	4
Leaflets and forms	5
Equalities statement	5
Ombudsman contact details	5

Access

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact Business Support on 01748 829100 or email enquiries@richmondshire.gov.uk

1.0 Introduction

Richmondshire District Council is committed to providing high quality services to all its communities, but in any organisation things can go wrong. When people contact us to say we have not provided a satisfactory service, we treat this as a complaint and take it seriously.

Compliments and complaints are all useful forms of customer feedback. The Council want to provide a consistent procedure for handling all types of feedback, both positive and negative, that will feed change and improve our service delivery.

2.0 Why we have a complaints policy

A clear and well-publicised complaints policy helps us provide good quality services to our customers.

The Council accept that things can go wrong with our services but that we can put things right and learn from issues that are brought to our attention. Dealing with feedback from customers fairly and consistently helps us to do that and this policy gives customers an opportunity to have their issue reviewed by an independent person if it is not resolved to their satisfaction after the initial investigation. It also means we can monitor all feedback regularly, produce valuable management information and make sure we meet our service standards.

The Council want to give customers an effective way to feedback about the services we provide; to provide an access channel for recording compliments and if possible resolving complaints straight away.

3.0 How we deal with compliments and complaints

Compliments

Everyone likes to receive compliments and council officers are no exception. More importantly, compliments can help us identify what our customers' value and highlight good practice. If you believe you have received good service, we will be pleased to hear from you. Comments and concerns may be more neutral than compliments or complaints, but can still provide valuable feedback and inform service planning and operational decision making.

Complaints

We always try to get things right but there will be occasions when customers will have cause for complaint. Such complaints can highlight areas where services could be improved.

We define a complaint as: *an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.* This includes customers who may not be permanently resident in the area of Richmondshire.

Complaints can be made in a variety of ways; by **letter, email, in person and through the council's web service.**

A complaint can be made by anyone using a service or by any other person on behalf of a service user.

The council has procedures in place to ensure that complaints are thoroughly investigated and where possible, resolved.

We look on complaints as a tool to help us feed our corporate goals of continued service improvement and customer service excellence. The information contained in a complaint is free feedback on our services and a useful form of market research. We will review complaints received at regular intervals to help identify areas where improvements can be made.

4.0 Complaints – The 2 stage process

We have a **2 stage process** to deal with complaints which is as follows:

Stage 1

It is helpful for feedback to be made at the time or as soon as possible after the issue arises.

Complaints must be brought within one year of the day in which the person affected first became aware (or ought reasonably to have been aware) of the matter complained about.

Your complaint will be investigated and dealt with as soon as possible. You should tell us what in your opinion we did wrong or did not do, how you were affected by this and what you think we should do about it.

We aim to acknowledge and register your complaint within 5 days with a full response within 10 working days of receipt. If a full response cannot be provided within 10 working days, we will advise when it will be made.

Stage 2

If not resolved at stage one, the complaint will escalate to stage two. Your complaint will be passed to the Corporate Director. Stage two will be responded to within 20 working days.

If you wish to take the matter further, you have the right to contact the Local Government, or Housing Ombudsman dependent upon the nature of your complaint.

Details of how to contact the Ombudsman and what will happen are available below.

5.0 What is excluded from this policy?

There are certain types of customer feedback that are not dealt with under the complaints and compliments policy, these include:-

- Initial or secondary requests for a service or service provision e.g. a missed bin collection where within 48 hours the situation is resolved and the customer does not wish to make a complaint under the corporate feedback procedure, i.e. the customer is satisfied with the response
 - Issues which could reasonably be the subject of court or tribunal proceedings or which need to be referred to our insurers such as compensation or personal injury
 - Feedback which is essentially a criticism of or disagreement with approved Council policy or decisions properly taken
 - If an issue has been recorded on the database and there are intended or current court proceedings, it should not be dealt with through this policy but suspended until the legal proceedings are complete.
 - An appeal made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (this would be dealt with by the Information Commissioner's Office)
 - An appeal made under the Environmental Information Regulations (this would be dealt with by the Information Commissioner's Office)
 - Whistleblowing
 - Any matter where a right of appeal exists, for example; a grant or refusal of planning permission, unless the issue relates specifically to the way the matter has been administered
 - Dissatisfaction of a member of staff about HR matters, including appointments, dismissals, pay, pensions and discipline
 - Issues involving a Member of Parliament that have been initiated from an MP's office
 - A complaint against individual Members of the Council
 - Any complaint which is not brought within one year of the day on which the complainant became aware (or ought reasonably to have been aware) of the matter complained about
-
-

6.0 Leaflets

Leaflets explaining our complaints and compliments policy, are available as follows:

- On the council's website – richmondshire.gov.uk
- At council offices

Large print versions of Council information are available on request for visually impaired customers, and service is available for the hard of hearing. Please contact the customer services manager should you require information in an alternative format.

7.0 Equalities statement

The Council is committed to providing fair services to all. This means we should not treat people unfairly because of their age, sex, disability, race, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, gender reassignment, sexual orientation. The Equality Act defines these as “protected characteristics”.

<https://www.richmondshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-the-council/equality-and-diversity/>

8.0 Reasonable Adjustment statement

In accordance with the Equality Act the council recognises the need that there may be occasion when a reasonable adjustment is required in order that all customers can access services without barriers. A reasonable adjustment may be providing the facility to access documents on line with the support of a tool such as Browsealoud, or communicate with the council using language line or Sign live. It should be noted that not all reasonable adjustments are prescribed in writing, however they are implied through the council's Equality strategy and statement.

In accordance with the councils commitment to providing fair access to services by all customers, as detailed within the councils Equality Strategy the council's aim is to address issues of complaint appropriately with fair access to support and assistance where required in accordance with the Complaint Code.

9.0 Ombudsman contact details

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/contact-us>

E: initial contact should be made via the complaints form on the LGO website

W: lgo.org.uk

T: 0300 061 0614* to talk about your complaint. We can take the details by phone so you don't have to complain in writing.

Text Relay: Text 'call back' to 0762 481 1595 (You may be charged by your provider for sending the text message)

* Calling us will cost the same (or less) as calling a national rate number starting 01 or 02. Calls to numbers starting 03 counts towards any inclusive minutes in the same way as calls to numbers starting 01 or 02. This applies to calls from any type of line including mobiles, BT lines, other fixed phone lines and payphones. We may record calls for quality and training purposes.

The Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted as follows:

Write:

The Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

E: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

W: housing-ombudsman.org.uk

T: 0300 111 3000*

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 5.15pm (except public holidays)

* Calls to 03 numbers cost no more than calls to national geographic numbers starting 01 or 02) from both mobiles and landlines and will be included as part of any inclusive call minutes or discount schemes in the same way as geographical calls)

F: 020 7831 1942

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any time to seek advice and assistance regarding a complaint. They will be able to offer support via their Dispute Support Advisors. They will not be able to formally investigate a complaint until the council has been given the opportunity to respond in accordance with its own complaints policy.