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Cardiff Council

Corporate Comments, Complaints & Compliments Policy

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



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Corporate Comments, Complaints & Compliments Policy

Cardiff Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our services. We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we'll put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you're entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we'll apologise and, where possible, try to put things right for you. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.

Asking us to provide a service?

If you are approaching us to request a service, e.g. reporting a faulty street light, a missed bin collection or a housing repair, this policy doesn't apply. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

When to use this policy

When you express your complaint to us, we will usually respond in accordance with this policy. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal. For example, against a refusal to grant you planning permission, or a decision not to give your child a place in a particular school. Rather than investigate your complaint, we will explain how you can appeal.

This policy does not apply to complaints relating to Social Services. These are dealt with separately and can be made by contacting:

Social Services Complaints Officer
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW

Telephone: 02920 873663

Email: socialservicescomplaints@cardiff.gov.uk



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The statutory responsibility for responding to school related complaints lies with the school and governing body. The Education Act 2002 requires that the governing bodies of all maintained schools in Wales, including nursery schools, to establish procedures for dealing with complaints from parents, pupils, staff, governors and members of the local community.

Each individual school has their own complaints procedure. You can find contact details for Cardiff schools [here](#).

The Corporate Complaints process is not able to address a complaint regarding a Councillor. All Councillors at Cardiff Council are subject to a Code of Conduct.

Formal complaints that a Councillor may have breached this Code should be addressed to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman's web site contains explanations on the standards of behaviour expected by the Code and the basis on which the Ombudsman decides whether or not to investigate a complaint. For further information visit our website [here](#).

The complaints procedure cannot consider appeals relating to Fixed Penalty Notices or Parking Charge Notices. These matters follow a legal process, using the details provided on the ticket issued by the Enforcement Officer.

This policy does not apply to 'Freedom of Information' or data access issues. Please contact foi@cardiff.gov.uk or write to Improvement and Information, County Hall, Cardiff, CF10 4UW

Other areas where this policy may not apply and which may have separate appeal mechanisms include allegations of criminal activity, complaints about approved council policies, Council Tax appeals, Employment matters, Homelessness appeals, Legal and insurance claims and Planning applications.

Complaints Officers can advise you on the type and scope of complaints they can consider.

Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away. If you have a concern, please raise it with the person you're dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern, the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.



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How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern in any of the following ways:

- Ask for a copy of our form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern formally. ☐ Call us on 029 2087 2087.
- Use the form on our website at [Comments, complaints and compliments \(cardiff.gov.uk\)](#)
- Visit us in person at one of our Hubs or offices.
- Write to us at: Complaints and Compliments, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF10 4UW.

We aim to have concern and complaint forms available at all of our public areas. Copies of this policy are available in Welsh, but should you need the policy in another language or any other format, please contact us.

Dealing with your concern

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you need documents in large type.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint. Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within six months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to explain why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than twelve months ago. If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.



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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 and the NHS. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf e.g. housing repair contractors, you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

Can I complaint 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.

Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we'll usually ask somebody from the relevant service area to look into it and respond to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere in the Council or, in certain cases (including those concerning social services where a statutory procedure applies), we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we are right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.



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If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're 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 response.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days.

If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- Let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate.
- Tell you how long we expect it to take.
- Let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- Give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will firstly aim to establish the facts. The extent of the investigation will depend upon how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We'll look at relevant evidence. This could include information you have provided, our case files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies, any legal entitlement and guidance.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we find. If necessary, we will produce a report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we made a mistake, we'll tell you what happened and why.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we make a mistake, we will always apologise for it.



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Putting Things Right

If we didn't provide you with a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide it now, if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we'll aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we'll try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd done things properly.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, when we should have provided it for you, or if you were entitled to funding you did not receive, we will try to refund the cost.

The Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, 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 service provider.
- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- Phone: 0300 790 0203
- Email: ask@ombudsman.wales
- The website: www.ombudsman.wales
- Writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office deals with complaints about services in Welsh. Should you wish to complain about the lack of services in Welsh or that someone is interfering with your freedom to use Welsh, you can contact the Welsh Language Commissioner by:

- Phone: 0845 6033221
- Email: post@welshlanguagecommissioner.org
- Writing to: The Welsh Language Commissioner, Market Chambers, 5-7 St Mary Street, Cardiff CF10 1AT



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Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. Our senior management team considers a summary of all complaints quarterly and is made aware of all serious complaints. Our Cabinet / Informal Cabinet also considers our response to complaints at least twice a year. We share summary (anonymised) information on complaints received and complaints outcomes with the Ombudsman as part of our commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.

Where there is a need for significant change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it. We will let you know when changes we've promised have been made.

What if you need help?

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

You may wish to contact organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Advocacy Support Cymru, Age Cymru and Shelter who may be able to assist you. You can find contact details for these and other organisations at the end of this policy.

Older People

If you are over the age of 60, you can also get help from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, whose contact details are:

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Butetown, Cardiff CF10 5FL

- Phone 08442 640 670 ☐ Fax 08442 640 680.
- Website www.olderpeoplewales.com
- Email ask@olderpeoplewales.com

Children and Young People

You can also use this policy if you are under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline:

- Phone 0808 802 3456
- Website www.meiccymru.org



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You could also contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales whose contact details are:

- Phone 0808 801 1000
- Email post@childcomwales.org.uk
- Website www.childcom.org.uk

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

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations when we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

Comments and Compliments

Your comments and suggestions are important to us so please let us know if you have any comments for improving our services.

Alternatively, if you think we have done something well, then we would love to hear from you. Please let us know so that other colleagues or services can follow the example. Any compliments we receive are recorded and passed onto the relevant member of staff and the appropriate manager.



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APPENDIX A – Advice and Advocacy Organisations

Advocacy Support Cymru
Charterhouse 1
Links Business Park
Fortran Road
St Mellons
Cardiff
CF3 0LT
Tel: 029 2054 0444
info@ascymru.org.uk
www.ascymru.org.uk

Age Cymru
Trident Court
Ground Floor
Mariners House
East Moors Rd
Cardiff
CF24 5TD
Tel: 029 2043 1555
advice@agecymru.org.uk
www.ageuk.org.uk

BAWSO
Clarence House
Clarence Road
Cardiff
CF10 5FB
Tel: 029 2064 4633
Fax: 029 20644 588
info@bawso.org.uk
www.bawso.org.uk

Cardiff and Vale Citizens Advice
Central Library
The Hayes
Cardiff
CF10 1FL
Tel: 029 2087 1016
www.cacv.org.uk



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Disability Wales
Bridge House
Caerphilly Business Park
Van Road Caerphilly
CF83 3GW
Tel: 029 2088 7325
info@disabilitywales.org
www.disabilitywales.org

Diverse Cymru
3rd Floor Alexandra House
Cowbridge Road East
Cardiff
CF5 1JD
Tel: 029 2036 8888
info@diverseecymru.org.uk
www.diverseecymru.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights
Commission
3 More London Riverside
Tooley Street
London
SE1 2RG
Tel: 0845 604 6610
info@equalityhumanrights.com
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Llamau
23 Cathedral Road
Riverside
Cardiff
CF11 9HA
Tel: 029 2023 9585
www.llamau.org.uk



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Shelter Cymru
2-3 Norbury Road
Fairwater
Cardiff
CF5 3AU
Tel: 08000 495 495 www.sheltercymru.org.uk