

Feedback Policy

For Comments, Compliments and
Complaints



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Introduction

This document sets out how Chorley Council manages and responds to customer comments, compliments, and feedback.

We are committed to providing high quality customer services, and this policy supports our continuing commitment to improve services. We want to recognise good practice, and also investigate when things have gone wrong.

The views of our customers are important to the council. They help us to:

- Shape services to support the needs of our communities
- Provide an insight into where we are performing well, and where we can improve
- Provide a responsive service that changes and adapts in accordance with customer need.

Process

The processes below detail what to expect when providing different types of feedback to the Council. The Council will aim to resolve problems at the time they are brought to our attention. Where possible, we aim to do this informally at the first point of contact to allow for issues to be resolved quickly.

Comments

A comment is a volunteered personal opinion or belief, feedback or remark expressed by a customer. Unless specifically requested, there is not an automatic assumption that the Council will reply to comments. All comments are considered by the relevant officers, and a reply will be issued where appropriate.

Compliments

A compliment is defined as a customer statement of positive recognition or praise for a service or member of staff. Compliments are forwarded onto the relevant officer, and amongst teams and service areas to celebrate good work and practice and promote continued improvement and excellence.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern made by the customer about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions by the Council and its staff, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

The complaints procedure **should not** be used in the following circumstances:

- A request for service
- To make a report where there is a separate form available (e.g. fly tipping or missed bin collections)
- An appeal against a decision

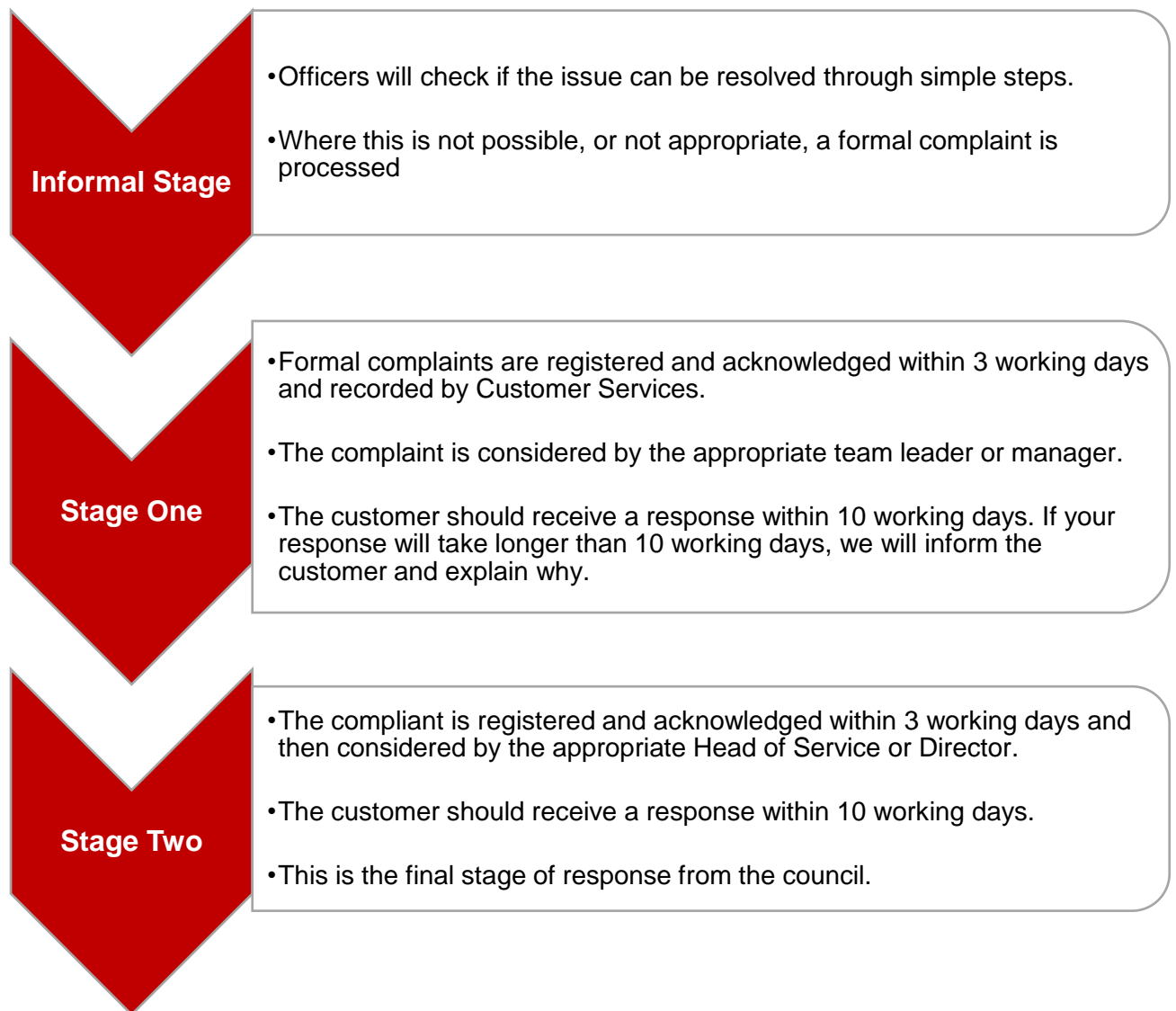
Further information about exemptions to the complaints procedure are outlined on page 5 of the policy.

Complaints Process

The complaints process follows three stages. We will aim to resolve and provide a solution to any issues or complaints informally wherever possible as this offers the quickest resolution for our customers. If we are unable to resolve the issue informally, complaints will follow the process set out below.

In all cases, officers responding to complaints are encouraged to speak with complainants during the investigation of the complaint to gain a greater understanding of the nature of the complaint and collect all relevant information.

To contact the council about a complaint, use the online form on our website or contact Customer Services at 01257 515151.



Local Ombudsman

If an individual remains dissatisfied with the response from the Council after the two stages, they can contact the Local Government Ombudsman who can be contacted via:

- [The Local Government Ombudsman Website](http://www.lgo.org.uk) at www.lgo.org.uk
- In writing:
The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH
- Telephone: 0845 602 1983
- Email: advice@lgo.org.uk

Feedback Received via Social Media

The Council receives an increasing amount of feedback via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Where possible comments, compliments, and services requests are dealt with at the first point of contact, which in many cases will involve a response using social media. Complaints received through social media will be dealt with in accordance with the Complaints Process.

Exemptions

Some complaints are subject to automatic escalation or have dedicated procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals so will not be considered through the standard complaints process. Serious complaints are likely to be escalated directly to the Chief Executive.

Nature of Complaint	Automatic Escalation
Allegations of financial impropriety	Chief Executive
Allegations of discrimination or harassment	Head of Human Resources
Allegations of criminal behaviour against the Council or a member of staff	Chief Executive
Complaints against elected members or Chief Officers	Director of Governance for Members. Chief Executive for Chief Officers. Executive Leader for Chief Executive.

The complaints process outlined above will not be

used to deal with the following matters and we will advise customers during the informal stage whether it would be appropriate for the complaint to be received through a different channel.

- where there is a statutory appeal process in place to enable customers to challenge decisions. Examples would include planning applications and housing benefit entitlement.
- where complaints relate to issues that are greater than 12 months old unless the Chief Executive or Director determines that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant investigation.
- complaints made by our suppliers, partners, and other public authorities regarding our business relations.

Unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complaints

The council recognises that occasionally customers may exert pressure on the authority when making a complaint, but in most cases, this is reasonably and acceptable.

A small minority of complainants may pursue their complaints in a way that can impede the investigation of their complaint or pose a significant and disproportionate resource requirement on the authority. Such actions can occur during the investigation of a complaint, or once investigations have been completed. In these cases, a complainant may be considered unreasonably persistent.

Unreasonable complaints and violent or abusive behaviour towards staff will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's procedures.

Confidentiality

The Council will maintain confidentiality of all personal information, and the privacy policy should be referred to when understanding how the Council processes information. Records of complaints will be stored securely, and access will be limited to officers who have a valid need to access information in order to deal with the complaint. Records will be disposed of in strict accordance with government guidance.

Learning from Feedback

The Council values feedback and uses it to inform service planning and to help shape services that support customer needs. Learning from feedback provides an opportunity for officers to review feedback and identify any lessons learnt, and corrective action taken.

Feedback Monitoring

All complaints and responses will be stored centrally by the Customer Services team to allow for regular monitoring and capturing of feedback. Any complaints received by members of officers should be directed to Customer Services who will register all complaints that are received by the Council. officers who are responding to a complaint should ensure that a copy is provided to Customer Services prior to responses being sent out.

Feedback and complaints information will be reported to the Leadership Team and the Portfolio Holder on a regular as part of the Corporate Performance monitoring process.

The Feedback Policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure it continues to reflect the feedback channels of the Council. It may be reviewed prior to the two-year review period if statutory requirements change.